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# The Popular Magazine

AUG. 20, 1921

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

Volume LXI  
Number 3



Beginning "FIRST DOWN, KENTUCKY!" thrilling FOOTBALL SERIAL BY RALPH D. PAINE

# New Discovery Takes Off Flesh Almost "While You Wait!"

**A pound a day the very first week without medicine, special foods, starving, baths or exercise. Results in 48 hours!**

At last a simple secret has been discovered by the world's greatest food specialist which enables you to eat a pound a day off your weight without the slightest discomfort. In fact you will enjoy your meals as never before.

Thousands of men and women who have tried strenuous diets, special reducing baths, salts, medicine and violent exercising without results have found this new scientific way a revelation. A pound or more a day from the very start can be counted on in most cases and with each pound you lose you will note a remarkable increase in energy and general health.

Women so stout they could never wear light colors or attractive styles without being conspicuous marvel at the sudden change that has enabled them to wear the most vividly colored and fluffily-styled clothes. Men who used to puff when they walked the least bit quickly—men who were rapidly becoming inactive and sluggish—unable to enjoy outdoor exercise or pleasure, find their return to youthful energy almost miraculous.

## How the Secret Works

The whole thing about this wonderful new way to reduce, which makes losing flesh a pleasure instead of a task, is a simple system of food combination worked out by Eugene Christian.

Some of us eat food that is immediately converted into muscle, bone and blood. Others eat food that is immediately converted into useless fat. In this latter case, the muscles, bones and blood are robbed of just so much strength and nutrition. That is why fat people succumb first in case of illness.

Eugene Christian, the famous Food Specialist while engaged in one of his extensive food experiments, discovered the perfect cure for the "disease of obesity" as he calls it. He found that merely by following certain little natural laws food is converted into essential tissues like bone and muscle, while only enough fat is stored up to provide the necessary energy. Elated with his discovery and what it would mean to thousands of men and women, Christian has incorporated all his valuable information in the form of little, easy-to-follow lessons under the name of "Weight Control, the Basis of Health," which is offered on free trial.

There are no fads in this course, no special baths, no self-denying diets, no medicines, no exercises—nothing but pure common sense, practical help that will do just what we say—take off flesh "While you wait." Eat all the delicious foods you like, observing of course the one vital rule. Do whatever you please, give up all diets and reduction baths—just follow the directions outlined in Christian's wonderful course, and watch your superfluous weight vanish.

## Nothing Like It Before

You've never tried anything like this wonderful new method of Eugene Christian's before. It's entirely different. Instead of starving you, it shows you how



*The shadow of her former self—result of the new discovery!*

to eat off weight—a pound of it a day! No trouble, no self-denial. All so simple that you'll be delighted—and amazed.

Here's what Christian's course in Weight Control will do for you. First it will bring down your weight to normal, to what it should naturally be. Then it will make your flesh firm and solid. It will bring a new glory to your cheeks, a new sparkle to your eyes, a new spring to your step. It will give you charm, grace, attractiveness. And all naturally, mind you! Nothing harmful.

We want you to prove it yourself. We want you to see results, to see your own unnecessary flesh vanish. We want you to see why all dieting, medicines, bathing and exercising are a mistake—why this new discovery gets right down to the real reason for your stoutness, and removes it by natural methods.

## No Money in Advance

Just put your name and address on the coupon. Don't send any money. The coupon alone will bring Eugene Christian's complete course to your door, where \$1.97 (plus postage) paid to the postman will make it your property.

As soon as the course arrives, weigh yourself. Then glance through the lessons carefully, and read all about the startling revelations regarding weight, food and health. Now put the course to the test. Try the first lesson. Weigh yourself in a day or two again and notice the wonderful results. Still you've taken no medicines, put yourself to no hardships, done nothing you would not ordinarily have done. It's wonderful—and you'll have to admit it yourself.

Mail the coupon NOW. You be the sole judge, if you do not see a remarkable improvement in 5 days, return the course to us and your money will be immediately refunded. But mail the coupon this very minute, before you forget. Surely you cannot let so positive an opportunity to reduce to normal weight pass, by unheeded.

Remember, no money just the coupon. As we shall receive an avalanche of orders for this remarkable course, it will be wise to send your order at once. Some will have to be disappointed. Don't wait to lose weight. But mail the coupon NOW and profit immediately by Dr. Christian's wonderful discovery.

The course will be sent in a plain container.

### Corrective Eating Society, Inc.

Dept. W-1268 43 West 16th St., New York.

You may send me prepaid in plain container Eugene Christian's Course "Weight Control the Basis of Health," in 12 lessons. I will pay the postman only \$1.97 plus postage in full payment on arrival. If I am not satisfied with it I have the privilege of returning the course to you within 5 days. It is, of course, understood that you are to refund my money if I return the course.

Name .....  
Street .....

HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS will have a complete novel of the West, "The Fourth Man's Share," in the next issue. Among the other favorite writers represented will be Buchan, Wilde, Stacpoole, Paine and Brown.



Vol. LXI. No. 3

CONTENTS

August 20, 1921

Huntingtower. A Two-Part Story—Part I, . . . John Buchan . . . . .	3
How an elderly Scots merchant of Glasgow set forth in quest of adventure and found more than he reckoned for; how he came to Huntingtower; and how he enlisted in the service of a beautiful lady.	
The Cyclone and the Rope. A Short Story, . . . J. H. Greene . . . . .	54
An air-mail pilot gets mixed up in the workings of Providence.	
"First Down, Kentucky!" . . . . . Ralph D. Paine . . . . .	59
A Five-Part Story—Part I.	
"Bo" McMurray makes a friend who teaches him football and other things, falls in love with Nancy Overton, and decides that a rival who packs a punch like Len Garretson's is worthy of his friendship.	
Lost and Found. A Novelette, . . . . . Elmer Davis . . . . .	86
A gentleman from Kentucky embarks upon a career of crime in New York, with surprising results.	
Moments of Destiny. A Short Story, . . . . . Lincoln Colcord . . . . .	126
At sea the things you think you see may be as deadly as the things you do see.	
Caught in the Net. Editorials, . . . . . The Editor . . . . .	134
Our Friends to the South. Industries Readjusting Themselves. Jail as a Home. Graphomania. Popular Topics.	
The End of the Road. A Short Story, . . . . . H. de Vere Stacpoole . . . . .	139
A night of Carnival in Perugia ends in a double tragedy.	
An Injun Maid. A Short Story, . . . . . Frederick Niven . . . . .	145
Steve Benson tells a story of the West.	
Chanting Wheels. A Four-Part Story—Part II., Hubbard Hutchinson . . . . .	149
Mr. Stokes doesn't enjoy his tea at Eleanor Grayson's, and Raleigh meets the girl with the wonderful eyes and convinces one of her brothers that he has made a mistake.	
The Good Thing. A Short Story, . . . . . Charles Somerville . . . . .	168
There was just one fault in slick Mr. Chambers' scheme—he picked the wrong victim.	
Git Along, Cayuse, Git Along. Verse, . . . . . Henry Herbert Knibbs . . . . .	179
Jules Dutot's Soul Agent. A Short Story, . . . . . Hugh Kennedy . . . . .	181
Spooks are good ammunition to use against spookists.	
A Chat With You . . . . .	191

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The next POPULAR will be on the news stands September 7th

# Taken from the Mail Bag

## From One Who Has Been There

*Editor of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE.*

I have been wanting to write to you for a number of years to let you know what I think of *THE POPULAR MAGAZINE*. I have been a reader of your stories for a long time, and it just seems that they are getting finer every year. But no doubt you receive hundreds of letters praising the merits of *THE POPULAR*.

There is one story, though, that you published some time ago, called "The Rock Pile," which made a particularly strong impression on me, for, believe me, the writer of that story knows what he is talking about. Well do I know it, for I have been through the mill in that line—yes, even to the "rock pile." Therefore I say again that the writer deserves a lot of credit for so skillfully mapping out the details of his story. But perhaps some of your readers may think it is impossible for a man to go down and out so easily; if it has left an impression of that sort with a few of your readers, I will say that they have never really lived. Very friendly. (Name Withheld.)

West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

## Women As Critics

*Editor of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE.*

I have already expressed my appreciation of *THE POPULAR* as a whole, so this note is to tell you how much I have enjoyed some of the stories published recently. Those two stories, "The Red Headed Kids," and "Little Fish," were particularly good, and I would willingly have followed the fortunes of the two principal characters through several more numbers of *THE POPULAR*. "Poor Man's Rock," the serial story, was everything I anticipated. I have been an interested spectator of many of the scenes described by him, in connection with the salmon fishing fleet, and I have at times trolled for salmon both in rowboats and motor boats. I certainly hope we shall have another novel by this author soon.

I like best, clean, stirring stories of outdoor life, especially those of the far North, the West, or the sea. But I also enjoy your short humorous stories. Do you think the argument started in a letter, some time ago, as to whether men or women have more sense, will ever be settled to everyone's satisfaction? I think the fellow that wrote that women have no sense was going it a bit strong, but perhaps after reading some of the replies he brought forth he will have more sense than to write such a letter in the future. As long as you continue to keep us supplied with the class of stories we are getting in *THE POPULAR* at present, here is one reader who can contribute her share of humor, at any rate. With renewed good wishes for your every success, I remain, Yours very sincerely,

MRS. E. MORRISEY.

North Gabriola, British Columbia.

## Caroline Lockhart and B. M. Bower

*Editor of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE.*

Since reading "The Dude Wrangler," by Caroline Lockhart, I feel that I must write a few lines to *THE POPULAR MAGAZINE*. I certainly appreciated the story very much; Miss Lockhart is a clever writer and I feel pleasure in finding *THE POPULAR* fortunate enough to be the magazine publishing such a tale. She has a manner of writing which appeals, and humor written in a pleasing way. Another favorite author is B. M. Bower—whose work has a great appeal for me. Yours very truly,

VICTOR L. SIMENSEN.

Sutton, North Dakota.

## A Northern Idyl

*Editor of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE.*

Permit me to congratulate you on the ever-increasing excellence of your magazine—the June 7th number is a gem. Especially the story, "Musket House," which is an idyl and worthy of book form. Yours very truly,

C. A. SHAW.

Lake Charles, Louisiana.

## Ourselves in General

*Editor of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE.*

For years I have prided myself on never reading anything but high-grade stuff. Some time ago, having nothing to read—and I am self-educated and an indefatigable reader—I picked up a copy of *THE POPULAR*. I read it from cover to cover, and since that time the magazine has had no more devoted booster and champion. The magazine is clean; it is absorbingly interesting and original; it is uplifting and fills the reader with healthful thrills.

In no story I have read does the skill and ability of its writer come out stronger than in "In Bonanza," published last spring. As a lifelong admirer of Mark Twain I was delighted to see "In Bonanza" weave him and his Nevada experiences of his "Roughing It" days so cleverly into its web and woof. The story won my unstinted admiration. The same with every *POPULAR* story I have. So, I am sure, will *POPULAR* stories to come. I have a fourteen-year-old son. I am wisely watchful of his reading. And I encourage his reading *THE POPULAR*. I frequently read some of the stories to him and his mother. The "Casey" Ryan stories, by B. M. Bower, are among these.

If you have the success you deserve—and which I earnestly wish you—then your cup will be full to overflowing. I shall contribute to it whenever and wherever opportunity presents. Very cordially yours,

Cleveland, Ohio.

HENRY GUIMOND.

# THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LXI.

AUGUST 20, 1921.

No. 3

## Huntingtower

By John Buchan

*Author of "Mr. Standfast," "Prester John," Etc.*

Do you ever dream dreams of high adventure? Of course you do! The boy in us doesn't die that easily! No more had the boy died in that incurable romantic, Dickson McCunn, retired provision dealer of Glasgow. But when he set out, that spring day, on that carefree walking trip, he ran into more excitement just outside that little Scotch coast village than he had bargained for. Old McCunn will be a joy to you forever, as will young Dougal of the "Gorbals Die-Hards" and all the others in this tale so chock-full of humor and "true romance." Told by a great artist; here is one of those stories you don't find every day.

(A Two-Part Story--Part I.)

### PROLOGUE.

THE girl came into the room with a darting movement like a swallow, looked round her with the same bird-like quickness, and then ran across the polished floor to where a young man sat on a sofa with one leg laid along it.

"I have saved you this dance, Quentin," she said, pronouncing the name with a pretty staccato. "You must be so lonely not dancing, so I will sit with you. What shall we talk about?"

The young man did not answer at once, for his gaze was held by her face. He had never dreamed that the gawky and rather plain little girl whom he had romped with long ago in Paris would grow into such a being. The clean, delicate lines of her figure, the exquisite, pure coloring of hair and skin, the charming young arrogance of the eyes—this was beauty, he reflected, a miracle, a revelation. Her virginal fineness and her dress, which was the tint of pale fire, gave her the air of a creature of ice and flame.

"About yourself, please, Saskia," he said. "Are you happy now that you are a grown-up lady?"

"Happy!" Her voice had a thrill in it like music, frosty music. "The days are

far too short. I grudge the hours when I must sleep. They say it is sad for me to make my debut in a time of war. But the world is very kind to me and, after all, it is a victorious war for our Russia. And listen to this, Quentin. To-morrow I am to be allowed to begin nursing at the Alexander Hospital. What do you think of that?"

The time was January, 1916, and the place a room in the great Nivski Palace. No hint of war, no breath from the snowy streets, entered that curious chamber where Prince Peter Nivski kept some of the chief of his famous treasures. It was notable for its lack of drapery and upholstery—only a sofa or two and a few fine rugs on the cedar floor. The walls were of a green marble veined like malachite, the ceiling was of darker marble inlaid with white intaglios. Scattered everywhere were tables and cabinets laden with celadon china and carved jade and ivories and shimmering Persian and Rhadian vessels. In all the room there was scarcely anything of metal and no touch of gilding or bright color. The light came from green alabaster censers, and the place swam in a clear, cold, green radiance like some cavern below the sea. The air was warm and scented and, though it was very quiet there, a hum of voices and the strains

of dance music drifted to it from the pillared corridor in which could be seen the glare of lights from the great ballroom beyond.

The young man had a thin face with lines of suffering round the mouth and eyes. The warm room had given him a high color, which increased his air of fragility. He felt a little choked by the place, which seemed to him for both body and mind a hothouse, though he knew very well that the Nivski Palace on this gala evening was in no way typical of the land or its masters. Only a week ago he had been eating black bread with its owner in a hut on the Volhynian front.

"You have become amazing, Saskia," he said. "I won't pay my old playfellow compliments; besides, you must be tired of them. I wish you happiness all the day long like a fairy-tale princess. But an old crock like me can't do much to help you to it. The service seems to be the wrong way round, for here you are wasting your time talking to me."

She put her hand on his. "Poor Quentin! Is the leg very bad?"

He laughed. "Oh, no. It's mending famously. I'll be able to get about without a stick in another month, and then you've got to teach me all the new dances."

The jiggling music of a two-step floated down the corridor. It made the young man's brows contract, for it brought to him a vision of dead faces in the gloom of a November dusk. He had once had a friend who used to whistle that air, and he had seen him die in the Hollebeke mud. There was something macabre in the tune——

He was surely morbid this evening, for there seemed something macabre about the house, the room, the dancing, all Russia. These last days he had suffered from a sense of calamity impending, of a dark curtain drawing down upon a splendid world. They did not agree with him at the embassy, but he could not get rid of the notion.

The girl saw his sudden abstraction.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked. It had been her favorite question as a child.

"I was thinking that I rather wished you were still in Paris."

"But why?"

"Because I think you would be safer."

"Oh, what nonsense, Quentin, dear. Where should I be safe if not in my own Russia, where I have friends—oh, so many

—and tribes and tribes of relations? It is France and England that are unsafe with the German guns grumbling at their doors. My complaint is that my life is too cosseted and padded. I am too secure, and I do not want to be secure."

The young man lifted a heavy casket from a table at his elbow. It was of dark-green jade with a wonderfully carved lid. He took off the lid and picked up three small oddments of ivory—a priest with a beard, a tiny soldier, and a draft ox. Putting the three in a triangle, he balanced the jade box on them.

"Look, Saskia! If you were living inside that box you would think it very secure. You would note the thickness of the walls and the hardness of the stone, and you would dream away in a peaceful green dusk. But all the time it would be held up by trifles—brittle trifles."

She shook her head. "You do not understand. You cannot understand. We are a very old and strong people with roots deep, deep in the earth."

"Please God you are right," he said. "But, Saskia, you know that if I can ever serve you, you have only to command me. Now I can do no more for you than the mouse for the lion—at the beginning of the story. But the story had an end, you remember, and some day it may be in my power to help you. Promise to send for me."

The girl laughed merrily. "The King of Spain's daughter," she quoted:

"Came to visit me,  
And all for the love  
Of my little nut tree"

The other laughed also, as a young man in the uniform of the Preobrajenski Guard approached to claim the girl. "Even a nut tree may be a shelter in a storm," he said.

"Of course I promise, Quentin," she said. "Au revoir. In a little I will come and take you to supper, and we will talk of nothing but nut trees."

He watched the two leave the room, her gown glowing like a tongue of fire in the shadowy archway. Then he slowly rose to his feet, for he thought that for a little he would watch the dancing. Something moved beside him and he turned in time to prevent the jade casket from crashing to the floor. Two of the supports had slipped.

He replaced the thing on its proper table and stood silent for a moment.

"The priest and the soldier gone, and only a beast of burden left. If I were inclined to be superstitious, I should call that a dashed bad omen."

## CHAPTER I.

### HOW A RETIRED PROVISION MERCHANT FELT THE IMPULSE OF SPRING.

Mr. Dickson McCunn completed the polishing of his smooth cheeks with the towel, glanced appreciatively at their reflection in the looking-glass, and then permitted his eyes to stray out of the window. In the little garden lilacs were budding, and there was a gold line of daffodils beside the tiny greenhouse. Beyond the sooty wall a birch flaunted its new tassels, and the jackdaws were circling about the steeple of the Guthrie Memorial Church. A blackbird whistled from a thorn bush, and Mr. McCunn was inspired to follow its example. He began a tolerable version of "Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch."

He felt singularly light-hearted, and the immediate cause was his safety razor. A week ago he had bought the thing in a sudden fit of adventurousness, and now he shaved in five minutes where before he had taken twenty, and no longer confronted his fellows at least one day in three, with a countenance ludicrously mottled by sticking plaster. Calculation revealed to him the fact that in his fifty-five years, having begun to shave at eighteen, he had wasted three thousand three hundred and seventy hours—or one hundred and forty days—or between four or five months—by his neglect of this admirable invention. Now he felt that he had stolen a march on Time. He had fallen heir, thus late, to a fortune in unpurchasable leisure.

He began to dress himself in the somber clothes in which he had been accustomed for thirty-five years and more to go down to the shop in Mearne Street. And then a thought came to him which made him discard the gray-striped trousers, sit down on the edge of his bed, and muse.

Since yesterday the shop was a thing of the past. Yesterday, at half past three to the accompaniment of a glass of dubious sherry, he had completed the arrangements by which the provision shop in Mearne Street which had borne so long the legend of D. McCunn, together with the branches in Crossingloff and the Shaws, became the property of a company, called the United

Supply Stores, Limited. He had received in payment cash, debenture, and preference shares, and his lawyers and his own acumen had acclaimed the bargain. But all evening he had been a little sad. It was the end of so old a song, and he knew no other tune to sing. He was comfortably off, healthy, free from any particular cares in life, but free too from any particular duties. "Will I be going to turn into a useless old man?" he asked himself.

But he had woke up to the sound of the blackbird, and the world, which had seemed rather empty twelve hours before, was now brisk and alluring. His prowess in quick shaving assured him of his youth. "I'm not that dead old," he observed, as he sat on the edge of the bed, to his reflection in the big looking-glass.

It was not an old face. The sandy hair was a little thin on the top and a little gray at the temples, the figure was perhaps a little too full for youthful elegance, and an athlete would have censured the neck as too fleshy for perfect health. But the cheeks were rosy, the skin clear, and the pale eyes singularly childlike. They were a little weak, those eyes, and had some difficulty in looking for long at the same object, so that Mr. McCunn did not stare people in the face, and had in consequence, at one time in his career, acquired a perfectly undeserved reputation for cunning. He shaved clean, and looked uncommonly like a wise, plump schoolboy.

As he gazed at his simulacrum he stopped whistling "Roy's Wife" and let his countenance harden into a noble sternness. Then he laughed, and observed in the language of his youth that "There was life in the auld dog yet." In that moment the soul of Mr. McCunn conceived the Great Plan.

The first sign of it was that he swept all his business garments unceremoniously onto the floor. The next that he rooted at the bottom of a deep drawer and extracted a most disreputable tweed suit. It had once been what I believe is called a Lovat mixture, but was now a nondescript dark brown, with bright patches of color like moss on black rock. He regarded it lovingly, for it had been for twenty years his holiday wear, emerging annually for a hallowed month to be stained with salt and bleached with sun.

He put it on, and stood shrouded in an odor of camphor. A pair of thick nailed boots and a flannel shirt and collar com-

pleted the equipment of the sportsman. He had another long look at himself in the glass, and then descended whistling to breakfast. This time the tune was "Macgregor's Gathering," and the sound of it stirred the grimy lips of a man outside who was delivering coals, himself a Macgregor, to follow suit. Mr. McCunn was a very fountain of music that morning.

Tibb, the aged maid, had his newspaper and letters waiting by his plate, and a dish of ham and eggs frizzling near the fire. He fell to ravenously, but still musingly; and he had reached the stage of scones and jam before he glanced at his correspondence. There was a letter from his wife now holidaying at the Neuk Hydropathic. She reported that her health was improving and that she had met various people who had known somebody who had known somebody else whom she had once known herself. Mr. McCunn read the dutiful pages and smiled. "Mamma's enjoying herself fine," he observed to the teapot.

He knew that for his wife the earthly paradise was a hydropathic, where she put on her afternoon dress and every jewel she possessed when she rose in the morning, ate large meals of which the novelty atoned for the nastiness, and collected an immense casual acquaintance with whom she discussed ailments, ministers, sudden deaths, and the intricate genealogies of her class. For his part he rancorously hated hydro-paths, having once spent a black week under the roof of one in his wife's company. He detested the food, the Turkish baths—he had a passionate aversion to baring his body before strangers—the inability to find anything to do and the compulsion to endless small talk. A thought flitted over his mind which he was too loyal to formulate. Once he and his wife had had similar likings, but they had taken different roads since their child died. Janet! He saw again—he was never quite free from the sight—the solemn little white-frosted girl who had died long ago in the spring.

It may have been the thought of the Neuk Hydropathic, or more likely the thin, clean scent of the daffodils with which Tibb had decked the table, but long ere breakfast was finished the Great Plan had ceased to be an airy vision and become a sober well-masoned structure. Mr. McCunn—we may confess it at the start—was an incurable romantic.

He had had a humdrum life since the day when he had first entered his uncle's shop with the hope of some day succeeding that honest grocer; and his feet had never strayed a yard from his sober rut. But his mind, like the *Dying Gladiator's*, had been far away. As a boy he had voyaged among books, and they had given him a world where he could shape his career according to his whimsical fancy. Not that Mr. McCunn was what is known as a great reader. He read slowly and fastidiously and sought in literature for one thing alone. Sir Walter Scott had been his first guide, but he read the novels not for their insight into human character or for their historical pageantry, but because they gave him material wherewith to construct fantastic journeys.

It was the same with Dickens. A lit tavern, a stagecoach, post horses, the clack of hooves on a frosty road, went to his head like wine. He was a Jacobite, not because he had any views on Divine Right, but because he had always before his eyes a picture of a knot of adventurers in cloaks, new landed from France among the western heather.

On this basis he had built up his small library—Defoe, Hakluyt, Hazlitt, and the essayists, Boswell, some indifferent romances and a shelf of spirited poetry. His tastes became known, and he acquired a reputation for a scholarly habit. He was president of the Library Society of the Guthrie Memorial Church, and read to its members a variety of papers full of a gusto which rarely became critical. He had been three times chairman at Burns anniversary dinners, and had delivered orations in eulogy of the national bard, not because he greatly admired him—he thought him rather vulgar—but because he took Burns as an emblem of that un-Burnslike literature which he loved.

Mr. McCunn was no scholar and was sublimely unconscious of background. He grew his flowers in his small garden plot oblivious of their origin so long as they gave him the color and scent he sought. Scent, I say, for he appreciated more than the mere picturesque. He had a passion for words and cadences, and would be haunted for weeks by a cunning phrase, savoring it as a connoisseur savors a vintage. Wherefore, long ago, when he could ill afford it, he had purchased the Edinburgh "Stevenson." They were the only large books on



his shelves, for he had a liking for small volumes—things he could stuff into his pocket in that sudden journey which he loved to contemplate.

Only he had never taken that journey. The shop had tied him up for eleven months in the year, and the twelfth had always found him settled decorously with his wife in some seaside villa. He had not fretted, for he was content with dreams. He was always a little tired, too, when the holidays came, and his wife told him he was growing old. He consoled himself with tags from the more philosophic of his authors, but he scarcely needed consolation. For he had large stores of modest contentment.

But now something had happened. A spring morning and a safety razor had convinced him that he was still young. Since yesterday he was a man of a large leisure. Providence had done for him what he would never have done for himself. The rut in which he had traveled so long had given place to open country. He would go journeying—who but he? Pleasantly. He repeated to himself one of the quotations with which he had been wont to stir the literary young men at the Guthrie Memorial Church:

"What's a man's age? He must hurry more,  
that's all;  
Cram in a day, what his youth took a year to  
hold;  
When we mind labor, then only, we're too  
old—  
What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul?"

Mr. McCunn's resolve to pilgrimage sounds like a trivial one, but it quickened him to the depths of his being. A holiday, and alone! On foot, of course, for he must travel light. He would buckle on a pack after the approved fashion. He had the very thing in a drawer upstairs, which he had bought some years ago at a sale. That and a waterproof and a stick, and his outfit was complete. A book, too, and, as he lit his first pipe, he considered what it should be. Poetry, clearly, for it was the spring, and, besides, poetry could be got in pleasantly small bulk.

He stood before his bookshelves trying to select a volume, rejecting one after another as inapposite. Browning, Keats, Shelley—they seemed more suited for the hearth than for the roadside. He did not want anything Scots, for he was of the opinion that spring came more richly in England and

that English people had a better notion of it. He was tempted by the "Oxford Anthology," but was deterred by its thickness, for he did not possess the thin-paper edition. Finally he selected Izaak Walton. He had never fished in his life, but "The Compleat Angler" seemed to fit his mood. It was old and curious—and fragrant with the youth of things. He remembered its falling cadences, its country songs and wise meditations. Decidedly it was the right scrip for his pilgrimage.

Characteristically, he thought last of where he was to go. Every bit of the world beyond his front door had its charms to the seeing eye. There seemed nothing common or unclean that fresh morning. Even a walk among coal pits had its attractions. But since he had the right to choose, he lingered over the question of his itinerary like an epicure. It would not be the Highlands, for spring came late among their sour mosses. Better some place where there were fields and woods and inns, somewhere, too, within call of the sea. It must not be too remote, for he had no time to waste on train journeys; nor too near, for he wanted a countryside untainted.

Presently he thought of Carrick—a good, green land, as he remembered it, with purposeful white roads and public houses sacred to the memory of Burns; near the hills but yet lowland, and with a bright sea chafing on its shore. He decided on Carrick, found a map and planned his journey.

Then he routed out his knapsack, packed it with a modest change of raiment, and sent out Tibb to buy chocolate and tobacco and to cash a check at the Strathclyde Bank. Till Tibb returned he occupied himself with delicious dreams. He saw himself daily growing browner and leaner, swinging along broad highways or wandering in bypaths. He pictured his seasons of ease, when he unslung his pack and smoked in some clump of lilacs by a brookside—he remembered a phrase of Stevenson's somewhat like that. He would meet and talk with all sorts of folk, an exhilarating prospect, for Mr. McCunn loved his kind.

There would be the evening hour before he reached his inn, when, pleasantly tired, he would top some ridge and see the welcoming lights of a little town. There would be the lamplit after-supper time when he would read and reflect; and the start in

the gay morning, when tobacco tastes sweetest and even fifty-five seems young. It would be holiday of the purest, for no business now tugged at his coat tails. He was beginning a new life, he told himself, when he could cultivate the seedling interests which had withered beneath the far-reaching shade of the shop. Was ever a man more fortunate or more free?

Tibb was informed that he was going off for a week or two. No letters need be forwarded, for he would be constantly moving, but Mrs. McCunn at the Neuk Hydro-pathic would be kept advised of his whereabouts. Presently he stood on his doorstep, a stocky figure in ancient tweeds, with a bulging pack slung on his arm, and a stout hazel stick in his hand. A passer-by would have remarked an elderly shopkeeper bent apparently on a day in the country, a common little man on a prosaic errand. But the passer-by would have been wrong, for he could not see into the heart. The plump citizen was the eternal pilgrim, he was Jason, Ulysses, Eric the Red, Albuquerque, Cortez—starting out to discover new worlds.

Before he left Mr. McCunn had given Tibb a letter to post. That morning he had received an epistle from a benevolent acquaintance, one Mackintosh, regarding a group of urchins who called themselves the "Gorbals Die-Hards." Behind the premises in Mearne Street lay a tract of slums, full of mischievous boys with whom McCunn's staff had waged truceless war. But lately there had started among them a kind of unauthorized and unofficial Boy Scouts, who without uniform or badge or any kind of paraphernalia followed the banner of Sir Robert Baden-Powell and subjected themselves to a rude discipline. They were far too poor to join an orthodox company, but they faithfully followed what they believed to be the practices of more fortunate boys. Mr. McCunn had witnessed their pathetic parades, and had even passed the time of day with their leader, a red-haired savage called Dougal. The philanthropic Mackintosh had taken an interest in the gang and now desired subscriptions to send them to camp in the country.

Mr. McCunn, in his new exhilaration, felt that he could not deny to others what he proposed for himself. His last act before leaving was to send Mackintosh ten pounds.

## CHAPTER II.

### OF MR. JOHN HERITAGE AND THE DIFFERENCE IN POINTS OF VIEW.

Dickson McCunn was never to forget the first stage in that pilgrimage. A little after midday he descended from a grimy, third-class carriage at a little station whose name I have forgotten. In the village near by he purchased some new-baked buns and ginger biscuits, to which he was partial, and followed by the shouts of urchins, who admired his pack—"Look at the auld man goin' to the school!"—he emerged into open country. The late April noon gleamed like a frosty morning, but the air, though tonic, was kind. The road ran over sweeps of moorland where curlews wailed, and into lowland pastures dotted with very white, very vocal lambs. The young grass had the warm fragrance of new milk.

As he went he munched his buns, for he had resolved to have no plethoric midday meal; and presently he found the brookside nook of his fancy, and halted to smoke. On a patch of turf close to a graystone bridge he had out his Walton and read the chapter on "The Chavender or Chub." The collocation of words delighted him and inspired him to verse. "Lavender or Lub"—"Pavender or Pub"—"Gravender or Grub"—but the monosyllables proved too vulgar for poetry. Regretfully he desisted.

The rest of the road was as idyllic as the start. He would tramp steadily for a mile or so and then saunter, leaning over bridges to watch the trout in the pools, admiring from a dry-stone dyke the unsteady gambols of new-born lambs. Once by a fir wood he was privileged to surprise three lunatic hares waltzing. His cheeks glowed with the sun, he moved in an atmosphere pastoral, serene and contented. When the shadows began to lengthen he arrived at the village of Cloncae where he proposed to lie. The inn looked dirty, but he found a decent widow, above whose door ran the legend in home-made lettering, "Mrs. brockie tea and Coffee," who was willing to give him quarters. There he supped handsomely off ham and eggs and dipped into a work called "Covenanting Worthies," which garnished a table decorated with sea shells. At half past nine, precisely, he retired to bed and unhesitating sleep.

Next morning he awoke to a changed world. The sky was gray and so low that

his outlook was bounded by a cabbage garden, while a surly wind prophesied rain. It was chilly, too, and he had his breakfast beside the kitchen fire. Mrs. Brockie could not spare a capital letter for her surname on the signboard, but she exalted it in her talk. He heard of a multitude of Brockies, ascendant, descendant, and collateral, who seemed to be in a fair way to inherit the earth. Dickson listened sympathetically, and lingered by the fire. He felt stiff from yesterday's exercise, and the edge was off his spirit.

The start was not quite what he had pictured. His pack seemed heavier, his boots tighter, and his pipe drew badly. The first miles were all uphill, with a wind tingling his ears, and no colors in the landscape but brown and gray. Suddenly he awoke to the fact that he was dismal and thrust the notion behind him. He expanded his chest and drew in long drafts of air. He told himself that this sharp weather was better than sunshine. He remembered that all travelers in romances battled with mist and rain. Presently his body recovered vigor, and his mind worked itself into cheerfulness.

He overtook a party of tramps and fell into talk with them. He had always had a fancy for the class, though he had never known anything nearer it than city beggars. He pictured them as philosophic vagabonds, full of quaint turns of speech, unconscious Borrovians. With these samples his disillusionment was speedy. The party was made up of a ferret-faced man with a red nose, a draggle-tailed woman, and a child in a crazy perambulator. Their conversation was one-sided, for it immediately resolved itself into a whining chronicle of misfortunes and petitions for relief. It cost him half a crown to be rid of them.

The road was alive with tramps that day. The next one did the accosting. Hailing Mr. McCunn as "Guvnor," he asked to be told the way to Manchester. The objective seemed so enterprising that Dickson was impelled to ask questions, and heard in what appeared to be in the accents of the Colonies, the tale of a career of unvarying calamity. There was nothing merry or philosophic about this adventurer. Nay, there was something menacing. He eyed his companion's waterproof covetously, and declared that he had had one like it which had been stolen from him the day before. Had the place been lonely he might have contem-

plated highway robbery, but they were at the entrance to a village, and the sight of a public house awoke his thirst. Dickson parted with him at the cost of sixpence for a drink.

He had no more company that morning except an aged stone breaker whom he conveyed for half a mile. The stone breaker also was soured with the world. He walked with a limp, which, he said, was due to an accident years before, when he had been run into by "one o' thae damned velocipeeds." The word revived in Dickson memories of his youth, and he was prepared to be friendly. But the ancient would have none of it. He inquired morosely what he was after, and, on being told, remarked that he might have learned more sense. "It's a daftlike thing for an auld man like you to be traivelin' the roads. Ye must be ill off for a job." Questioned as to himself he became, as the newspapers say, "reticent," and having reached his bug of stones, turned rudely to his duties. "Off home wi' ye," were his parting words. "It's idle scoundrels like you that makes wark for honest folk like me."

The morning was not a success, but the strong air had given Dickson such an appetite that he resolved to break his rule, and, on reaching the little town of Kilchrist, he sought luncheon at the chief hotel. There he found that which revived his spirit. A solitary commercial traveler shared the meal, who revealed the fact that he was in the grocery line. There followed a well-informed and most technical conversation. He was drawn to speak of the United Supply Stores, Limited, of their prospects and of their predecessor, Mr. McCunn, whom he knew well by repute but had never met.

"There's the clever one," he observed. "I've always said there's no longer head in the city of Glasgow than McCunn. An old-fashioned firm, but it has aye managed to keep up with the times. He's just retired, they tell me, and in my opinion it's a big loss to the provision trade."

Dickson's heart glowed within him. Here was Romance; to be praised incognito; to enter a casual inn and find that fame had preceded him. He warmed to the man, insisted on giving him a liqueur and a cigar, and finally revealed himself. "I'm Dickson McCunn," he said, "taking a bit of a holiday. If there's anything I can do for you when I get back, just let me know." With mutual esteem they parted.

He had need of all his good spirits, for he emerged into an unremitting nasty drizzle. The environs of Kilchrist are at the best unlovely, and in the wet they were as melancholy as a graveyard. But the encounter with the traveling man had worked wonders with Dickson, and he strode lustily into the weather, his waterproof collar buttoned round his chin. The road climbed to a bare moor, where lagoons had formed in the ruts, and the mist showed on each side only a yard or two of soaking heather. Soon he was wet; presently every part of him, boots, body and pack, was one vast sponge. The waterproof was not waterproof, and the rain penetrated to his most intimate garments.

Little he cared. He felt lighter, younger than on the idyllic previous day. He enjoyed the buffets of the storm, and one wet mile succeeded another to the accompaniment of Dickson's shouts and laughter. There was no one abroad that afternoon, so he could talk aloud to himself and repeat his favorite poems. About five in the evening there presented himself at the Black Bull Inn at Kirkmichael a soaked, disreputable, but most cheerful traveler.

Now the Black Bull at Kirkmichael is one of the few very good inns left in the world. It is an old place and an hospitable, for it has been for generations a haunt of anglers, who, above all other men, understand comfort. There are always bright fires there and hot water and old, soft, leather armchairs, and an aroma of good food and good tobacco, and giant trout in glass cases, and pictures of Captain Barclay, of Urie, walking to London, and Mr. Ramsay, of Barton, winning a horse race, and the thirty-volume edition of the "Waverley Novels" with many volumes missing, and, indeed, all those things which an inn should have.

Also there used to be—there may still be—sound vintage claret in the cellars. The Black Bull expects its guests to arrive in every stage of dishevelment, and Dickson was received by a cordial landlord, who offered dry garments as a matter of course. The pack proved to have resisted the elements, and a suit of clothes and slippers were provided by the house. Dickson, after a glass of toddy, wallowed in a hot bath, which washed all the stiffness out of him. He had a fire in his bedroom, beside which he wrote the opening passages of that diary he had vowed to keep, descanting lyrically

upon the joys of ill weather. At seven o'clock, warm and satisfied in soul and with his body clad in raiment several sizes too large for it, he descended to dinner.

At one end of the long table in the dining room sat a group of anglers. They looked jovial fellows, and Dickson would fain have joined them: but, having been fishing all day on the Loch of the Threshes, they were talking their own talk, and he feared that his admiration for Izaak Walton did not qualify him to butt into the erudite discussions of fishermen. The landlord seemed to think likewise, for he drew back a chair for him at the other end, where sat a young man absorbed in a book. Dickson gave him good evening and got an abstracted reply. The young man supped the Black Bull's excellent broth with one hand, and with the other turned the pages of his volume. A glance convinced Dickson that the work was French, a literature which did not interest him. He knew little of the tongue and suspected it of impropriety.

Another guest entered and took the chair opposite the bookish young man. He was also young—not more than thirty-three—and to Dickson's eye, was the kind of person he would have liked to resemble. He was tall and free from any superfluous flesh; his face was lean, fine drawn, and deeply sunburned, so that the hair above showed oddly pale; the hands were brown and beautifully shaped, but the forearm revealed by the loose cuffs of his shirt was as brawny as a blacksmith's. He had rather pale-blue eyes, which seemed to have looked much at the sun, and a small mustache the color of ripe hay. His voice was low and pleasant, and he pronounced his words precisely, like a foreigner.

He was very ready to talk, but in defiance of Doctor Johnson's warning, his talk was all questions. He wanted to know everything about the neighborhood—who lived in what houses, what were the distances between the towns, what harbors would admit what class of vessel. Smiling agreeably, he put Dickson through a catechism to which the latter knew none of the answers. The landlord was called in, and proved more helpful. But on one matter he was fairly at a loss. The catechist asked about a house called Darkwater, and was met with a shake of the head. "I know no such name in this countryside, sir," said the landlord, and the catechist looked disappointed.

The literary young man said nothing but ate trout abstractedly, one eye on his book. The fish had been caught by the anglers in the Loch o' the Threshes, and phrases describing their capture floated from the other end of the table. The young man had a second helping, and then refused the excellent hill mutton that followed, contenting himself with cheese. Not so Dickson and the catechist. They ate everything that was set before them, topping up with a glass of port. Then the latter, who had been talking illuminatingly about salmon, rose, bowed, and left the table, leaving Dickson, who liked to linger over his meals, to the society of the fish-eating student.

He nodded toward the book. "Interesting?" he asked.

The young man shook his head and displayed the name on the cover. "Anatole France. I used to be crazy about him, but now he seems rather a back number." Then he glanced toward the just vacated chair. "Australian," he said.

"How d'you know?"

"Can't mistake them. There's nothing else so lean and fine produced on the globe to-day. I was next door to them at Pozières and saw them fight. Lord! Such men! Now and then you had a freak, but most looked like Phœbus Apollo."

Dickson gazed with a new respect at his neighbor for he had not associated him with battlefields. During the war he had been a fervent patriot, but, though he had never heard a shot himself, so many of his friends' sons and nephews, not to mention cousins of his own, had seen service, that he had come to regard the experience as commonplace. Lions in Africa and bandits in Mexico seemed to him novel and romantic things, but not trenches and aeroplanes which were the whole world's property. But he could scarcely fit his neighbor into even his haziest picture of war.

The young man was tall and a little round-shouldered; he had short-sighted, rather prominent brown eyes, untidy hair, and dark eyebrows which came near to meeting. He wore a knickerbecker suit of bluish-gray tweed, a pale-blue shirt, a pale-blue collar, and a dark-blue tie—a symphony of color which seemed too elaborately considered to be quite natural. Dickson had set him down as an artist or a newspaper correspondent, objects to him of lively interest. But now the classification must be reconsidered.

"So you were in the war," he said encouragingly.

"Four blasted years," was the savage reply. "And I never want to hear the name of the beastly thing again."

"You said he was an Australian," said Dickson, casting back. "But I thought Australians had a queer accent, like the English."

"They've all kinds of accents, but you can never mistake their voice. It's got the sun in it. Canadians have got grinding ice in theirs, and Virginians have got butter. So have the Irish. In Britain there are no voices, only speaking tubes. It isn't safe to judge men by their accents only. You yourself I take to be Scotch, but for all I know you may be a senator from Chicago or a Boer general."

"I'm from Glasgow. My name's Dickson McCunn." He had a faint hope that the announcement might affect the other as it had affected the traveling man at Kilchrist.

"Golly, what a name!" exclaimed the young man rudely.

Dickson was nettled. "It's very old Highland," he said. "It means the son of a dog."

"Which—Christian name or surname?" Then the young man appeared to think he had gone too far, for he smiled pleasantly. "And a very good name, too. Mine is prosaic by comparison. They call me John Heritage."

"That," said Dickson, mollified, "is like a name out of a book. With that name by rights you should be a poet."

Gloom settled on the young man's countenance. "It's a dashed sight too poetic. It's like Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Real poets have vulgar monosyllables for names, like Keats. The new Shakespeare when he comes along will probably be called Grubb or Jubber, if he isn't Jones. With a name like yours I might have a chance. You should be the poet."

"I'm very fond of reading," said Dickson modestly.

A slow smile crumpled Mr. Heritage's face. "There's a fire in the smoking room," he observed as he rose. "We'd better bag the armchairs before these fishing louts corner them." Dickson followed obediently. This was the kind of chance acquaintance for whom he had hoped, and he was prepared to make the most of him.

The fire burned bright in the little, dusky

smoking room, lighted by one oil lamp. Mr. Heritage flung himself into a chair, stretched his long legs, and lit a pipe.

"You like reading?" he asked. "What sort? Any use for poetry?"

"Plenty," said Dickson. "I've always been fond of learning it up and repeating it to myself when I had nothing to do. In church and waiting on trains, like. It used to be Tennyson, but now it's more Browning. I can say a lot of Browning. Are you a poet, Mr. Heritage?"

"No, Dogson, I'm a paper maker."

This was a new view to Mr. McCunn. "I just once knew a paper maker," he observed reflectively. "They called him Tosh. He drank a bit."

"Well, I don't drink," said the other. "I'm a paper maker, but that's for my bread and butter. Some day for my own sake I may be a poet."

"Have you published anything?"

The eager admiration in Dickson's tone gratified Mr. Heritage. He drew from his pocket a slim book. "My first fruits," he said rather shyly.

Dickson received it with reverence. It was a small volume in gray paper boards with a white label on the back, and it was lettered: "Whorls—John Heritage's Book." He turned the pages and read a little. "It's a very nice wee book," he observed at length.

"Good God! If you call it nice, I must have failed pretty badly," was the irritated answer.

Dickson read more deeply and was puzzled. It seemed worse than the worst of Browning to understand. He found one poem about a garden entitled "Revue."

"Crimson and resonant clangs the dawn,"

said the poet. Then he went on to describe noonday:

"Sunflowers, tall grenadiers, ogle the roses'  
short-skirted ballet.

The fumes of dark, sweet wine hidden in frail  
petals

Madden the drunkard bees."

This seemed to him an odd way to look at things, and he boggled over a phrase about an "epicene lily." Then came evening:

"The painted gauze of the moon flutters in a  
fold of twilight crape,"

sang Mr. Heritage; and again:

"The moon's pale leprosy sloughs the fields."

Dickson turned to other verses which ap-

parently enshrined the writer's memory of the trenches. They were largely compounded of oaths, and were rather horrible, lingering lovingly over sights and smells which every one is aware of but most people contrive to forget. He did not like them. Finally he skimmed a poem about a lady who turned into a bird. The evolution was described with intimate anatomical details which scared the honest reader.

He kept his eyes on the book, for he did not know what to say. The trick seemed to be to describe nature in metaphors mostly drawn from music halls and haberdashers' shops, and, when at a loss, to fall to cursing. He thought it frankly very bad, and he labored to find words which would combine politeness and honesty.

"Well?" said the poet.

"There's a lot of fine things here, but—but the lines don't just seem to scan very well."

Mr. Heritage laughed. "Now I can place you exactly. You like the meek rhyme and the conventional epithet. Well, I don't. The world has passed beyond that prettiness. You want the moon described as a huntress or a gold disk or a flower. I say it's oftener like a beer barrel or a cheese. You want a wealth of jolly words and real things ruled out as unfit for poetry. I say there's nothing unfit for poetry. Nothing, Dogson! Poetry's everywhere, and the real thing is commoner among drabs and pothouses and rubbish heaps than in your Sunday parlors. The poet's business is to—but let's hear about your taste in prose."

Mr. McCunn was much bewildered, and a little inclined to be cross. He disliked being called Dogson, which seemed to him an abuse of his confidences. But his habit of politeness held. He explained rather haltingly his preferences in prose.

Mr. Heritage listened with wrinkled brows.

"You're even deeper in the mud than I thought," he remarked. "You live in a world of painted laths and shadows. All this passion for the picturesque! Trash, my dear man, like a schoolgirl's novelette heroes. You make up romances about gypsies and sailors and the blackguards they call pioneers, but you know nothing about them. If you did, you would find they had none of the gilt and gloss you imagine. But the great things they have got in common with all humanity you ignore. It's like—it's like

sentimentalizing about a pancake because it looked like a buttercup, and all the while not knowing that it was good to eat."

At that moment the Australian entered the room to get a light for his pipe. He wore a motor cyclist's overalls and appeared to be about to take the road. He bade them good night and it seemed to Dickson that his face, seen in the glow of the fire, was drawn and anxious, unlike that of the agreeable companion at dinner.

"There," said Mr. Heritage, nodding after the departing figure, "I dare say you have been telling yourself stories about that chap—life in the bush, stock riding, and the rest of it. But probably he's a bank clerk from Melbourne. Your romanticism is one vast self-delusion and it blinds your eye to the real thing.

"That's the value of the war. It has burst up all the old conventions, and we've got to finish the destruction before we can build. It is the same with literature and religion and society and politics. At them with the ax, say I. There's only one class that matters—the workers who live close to life."

"The place for you," said Dickson dryly, "is in Russia among the bolsheviks."

"We needn't imitate all their methods," said Mr. Heritage. "They're a bit crude—but they've got hold of the right end of the stick. They seek truth and reality."

Mr. McCunn was slowly being roused.

"What brings you wandering hereaways?" he asked.

"Exercise," was the answer. "I've been kept pretty closely tied up all winter. And I want leisure and quiet to think over things."

"Well, there's one subject you might turn your attention to. You'll have been educated like a gentleman?"

"Nine wasted years—five at Harrow, four at Cambridge."

"See here, then. You're daft about the working class and seem to have no use for any other. But what in the name of goodness do you know about workingmen? I come out of them myself, and have lived next door to them all my days. Take them one way and another, they're a decent sort, good and bad like the rest of us. But there's a lot of daft folk that would set them up as models—close to truth and reality, says you. It's sheer ignorance, for you're about as well acquainted with the workingman as with King Solomon.

"You say I make up fine stories about

tinkers and sailormen because I know nothing about them. That's maybe true. But you're at the same job yourself. You idolize the workingman, you and your kind, because you're ignorant. You say that he's seeking for truth, when he's only looking for a drink and a rise in wages. You tell me he's near reality, but I tell you that his notion of reality is often just a short working day and looking on at a football match on Saturday. When you run down what you call the middle classes, then I tell you you're talking nonsense!"

Mr. McCunn, having delivered his defense of his own kind, rose abruptly and went to bed. He felt jarred and irritated. His innocent little private domain had been badly trampled by this stray bull of a poet. But as he lay in bed, before blowing out his candle, he had recourse to Walton, and found a passage on which, as on a pillow, he went peacefully to sleep. It ran:

As I left this place, and entered into the next field, a second pleasure entertained me; 'twas a handsome milkmaid, that had not yet attained so much age and wisdom as to load her mind with any fears of many things that will never be, as too many men too often do; but she cast away all care, and sang like a nightingale; her voice was good, and the ditty fitted for it; it was the smooth song that was made by Kit Marlow, now at least fifty years ago. And the milkmaid's mother sung an answer to it, which was made by Sir Walter Raleigh in his younger days. They were old-fashioned poetry, but choicely good; I think much better than the strong lines that are now in fashion in this critical age.

### CHAPTER III.

#### HOW CHILDE ROLAND AND ANOTHER CAME TO THE DARK TOWER.

Dickson woke with a vague sense of irritation. As his recollections took form they produced a very unpleasant picture of Mr. John Heritage. The poet had loosened all his placid idols, so that they shook and rattled in the niches where they had been erstwhile so secure. Mr. McCunn had a mind of a singular candor and was prepared most honestly at all times to revise his views. But by this radical he had been only irritated and in no way convinced.

He breakfasted alone, having outstripped even the fishermen, and as he ate he arrived at conclusions. He had a great respect for youth, but a line must be drawn somewhere. "The man's a child," he decided, "and not like to grow up. The way he's besotted on

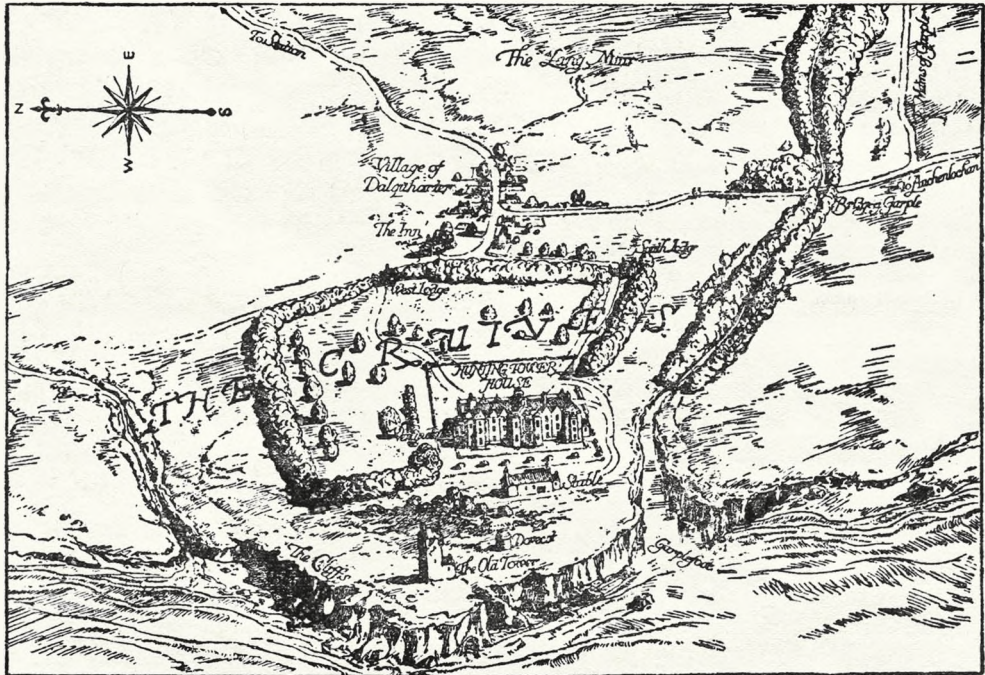
everything daftlike—if it's only *new*. And he's no rightly young, either—speaks like an auld pedagogue, at times. And he's pretty impident," he concluded, with memories of "Dogson."

He was very clear that he never wanted to see him again; that was the reason of his early breakfast. Having clarified his mind by definitions, Dickson felt comforted. He paid his bill, took an affectionate farewell of the landlord, and at seven-thirty precisely stepped out into the gleaming morning.

It was such a day as only a Scots April

lightly over small beer. I will not dwell on his leisurely progress in the bright weather, or on his luncheon in a coppice of young firs, or on his thoughts. I take up the narrative at about three o'clock in the afternoon, when he is revealed seated on a milestone examining his map. For he had come, all unwitting, to a turning of the ways, and his choice is the cause of this veracious history.

The place was high up on a bare moor, which showed a white lodge among pines, a white cottage in a green nook by a brookside, and no other signs of human dwelling.



WHERE DICKSON M'CUNN MET HIS ADVENTURE.

can show. The cobbled streets of Kirk-michael still shone with the night's rain, but the storm clouds had fled before a mild south wind, and the whole circumference of the sky was a delicate translucent blue. Homely breakfast smells came from the houses and delighted Mr. McCunn's nostrils. He bought his ration of buns and ginger biscuits at a baker's shop, whence various ragamuffin boys were preparing to distribute the householders' bread, and took his way up the Gallows Hill to the Burgh Muir almost with regret at leaving so pleasant a habitation.

A chronicle of ripe vintages must pass

To his left, which was the east, the heather rose to a low ridge of hill, much scarred with peat bogs, behind which appeared the blue shoulder of a considerable mountain. Before him the road was lost momentarily in the woods of a game preserve, but reappeared at a great distance, climbing a swell of upland which seemed to be the glacis of a jumble of bald summits. There was a pass there, the map told him, which led into Galloway. It was the road he had meant to follow, but as he sat on the milestone his purpose wavered. For there seemed greater attractions in the country which lay to the westward. Mr. McCunn, be it remembered,



was not in search of brown heath and shaggy wood; he wanted greenery and the spring.

Westward there ran out a peninsula in the shape of an isosceles triangle, of which his present highroad was the base. At a distance of a mile or so a railway ran parallel to the road, and he could see the smoke of a freight train waiting at a tiny station islanded in acres of bog. Thence the moor swept down to meadows and scattered copses, above which hung a thin haze of smoke which betokened a village. Beyond it were further woodlands, not firs, but old shady trees, and as they narrowed to a point the gleam of two tiny estuaries appeared on either side. He could not see the final cape, but he saw the sea beyond it, flawed with cat's-paws, gold in the afternoon sun, and on it a small herring smack flapping listless sails.

Something in the view caught and held his fancy. He coned his map, and made out the names. The peninsula was called the Cruives—an old name apparently, for it was in antique lettering. He vaguely remembered that "cruives" had something to do with fishing—doubtless in the two streams which flanked it. One he had already crossed, the Laver, a clear, tumbling water springing from green hills; the other, the Garpie, descended from the rougher mountains to the south. The hidden village bore the name of Dalquharter, and the uncouth syllables awoke some vague recollection in his mind. The great house in the trees beyond—it must be a great house, for the map showed estates—was Huntingtower.

The last name fascinated and almost decided him. He pictured an ancient keep by the sea, defended by converging rivers, which some old Comyn lord of Galloway had built to command the shore road and from which he had sallied to hunt in his wild hills. He liked the way the moor dropped down to green meadows, and the mystery of the dark woods beyond. He wanted to explore the twin waters, and see how they entered that strange shimmering sea. The odd names, the odd cul-de-sac of a peninsula, powerfully attracted him. Why should he not spend a night there, for the map showed clearly that Dalquharter had an inn? He must decide promptly, for before him a side road left the highway, and the signpost bore the legend "Dalquharter and Huntingtower."

Mr. McCunn, being a cautious and pious

man, took the omens. He tossed a penny—heads go on, tails turn aside. It fell tails.

He knew as soon as he had taken three steps down the side road that he was doing something momentous, and the exhilaration of enterprise stole into his soul. It occurred to him that this was the kind of landscape that he had always especially hankered after and had made pictures of when he had a longing for the country on him—a wooded cape between streams, with meadows inland and then a long lift of heather. He had the same feeling of expectancy, of something most interesting and curious on the eve of happening, that he had experienced long ago when he waited on the curtain going up at his first play.

His spirits soared like the lark, and he took to singing. If only the inn at Dalquharter were snug and empty, this was going to be a day in ten thousand. Thus mirthfully he swung down the rough, grass-grown road, past the railway, till he came to a point where heath began to merge in pasture, and dry stone walls split the moor into fields. Suddenly his pace slackened and song died on his lips. For, approaching from the right by a tributary path, was the poet.

Mr. Heritage saw him afar off and waved a friendly hand. In spite of his chagrin Dickson could not but confess that he had misjudged his critic. Striding with long steps over the heather, his jacket open to the wind, his face aglow and his capless head like a whin bush for disorder, he cut a more wholesome and picturesque figure than in the smoking room the night before. He seemed to be in a companionable mood, for he brandished his stick and shouted greetings.

"Well met!" he cried, "I was hoping to fall in with you again. You must have thought me a pretty fair cub last night."

"I did that," was the dry answer.

"Well, I want to apologize. God knows what made me treat you to a university-extension lecture. I may not agree with you, but every man's entitled to his own views, and it was dashed poor form for me to start jawing you."

Mr. McCunn had no gift of nursing anger, and was very susceptible to apologies.

"That's all right," he murmured. "Don't mention it. I'm wondering what brought you down here, for it's off the road."

"Caprice. Pure caprice. I liked the look of this butt-end of nowhere."

"Same here. I've always thought there was something terrible nice about a wee cape with a village at the neck of it and a brook each side."

"Now that's interesting," said Mr. Heritage. "You're obsessed by a particular type of this butt end of nowhere."

Dickson shook his head.

"Well, you've got an odd complex somewhere. I wonder where the key lies. Cape—woods—two rivers—moor behind. Ever been in love, Dogson?"

Mr. McCunn was startled. "Love" was a word rarely mentioned in his circle except on deathbeds. "I've been a married man for thirty years," he said hurriedly.

"That won't do. It should have been a hopeless affair—the last sight of the lady on a spur of coast with water on three sides—that kind of thing, you know. Or it might have happened to an ancestor. But you don't look the kind of breed for hopeless attachments. More likely some scoundrelly old Dogson long ago found sanctuary in this sort of place. Do you dream about it?"

"Not exactly."

"Well, I do. The queer thing is that I've got the same prepossession as you. As soon as I spotted this Cruives place on the map this morning, I saw it was what I was after. When I came in sight of it I almost shouted. I don't very often dream, but when I do that's the place I frequent. Odd, isn't it?"

Mr. McCunn was deeply interested at this unexpected revelation of romance. "Maybe it's being in love," he daringly observed.

The poet demurred. "No. I'm not a connoisseur of obvious sentiment. That explanation might fit your case, but not mine. I'm pretty certain there's something hideous at the back of my complex—some grim, old business tucked away back in the ages. For though I'm attracted by the place, I'm frightened, too!"

There seemed no room for fear in the delicate landscape now opening before them. In front in groves of birch and rowans smoked the first houses of a tiny village. The road had become a green "loaning" on the ample margin of which cattle grazed. The moorland still showed itself in spite of heather, and some distance off, where a rivulet ran in a hollow, there were signs of a fire and figures near it. These last Mr. Heritage regarded with disapproval.

"Some infernal trippers!" he murmured. "Or Boy Scouts. They desecrate everything.

Why can't they keep away from a paradise like this!" Dickson, a democrat who felt nothing incongruous in the presence of other holiday makers, was meditating a sharp rejoinder, when Mr. Heritage's tone changed.

"What a jolly village!" he cried, as they turned a corner. There were not more than a dozen whitewashed houses, all set in little gardens of crocus and daffodil and early fruit blossoms. A triangle of green filled the intervening space, and in it stood an ancient wooden pump. There was no school-house or church; not even a post office—only a red box in a cottage side. Beyond rose the high wall and the dark trees of some estate, and to the right up a byroad which clung to the park edge, stood a two-storied building which bore the legend "The Cruives Inn."

The poet became lyrical. "At last!" he cried. "The village of my dreams! Not a sign of commerce! No church or school or beastly recreation hall! Nothing but these divine little cottages and an ancient pub! Dogson, I warn you I'm going to have the devil of a tea." And, he declaimed:

"Thou shalt hear a song  
After a while which gods may listen to;  
But place the flask upon the board and wait  
Until the stranger hath allayed his thirst,  
For poets, grasshoppers and nightingales  
Sing cheerily but when the throat is moist."

Dickson, too, longed with gusto for tea. But as they drew nearer, the inn lost its hospitable look. The cobbles of the yard were weedy, as if rarely visited by traffic; a pane in a window was broken, and the blinds hung tattered. The garden was a wilderness, and the doorstep had not been scoured for weeks. But the place had a landlord, for he had seen them approach and was waiting at the door to meet them.

He was a big man in his shirt sleeves, wearing old riding breeches unbuttoned at the knees, and thick plowman's boots. He had no leggings, and his fleshy calves were imperfectly covered with woolen socks. His face was large and pale, his neck bulged, and he had a gross, unshaven jowl. He was a type familiar to students of society; not the innkeeper, which is a thing consistent with good breeding and all the refinements; he was a type not unknown in the House of Lords—especially among recent creations; common enough in the House of Commons and the City of London, and by no means infrequent in the governing circles of labor;

the type known to the discerning as the Licensed Victualer.

His face was wrinkled in official smiles, and he gave the travelers a hearty good afternoon.

"Can we stop here for the night?" Dickson asked.

The landlord looked sharply at him, and then replied to Mr. Heritage. His expression passed from official bonhomie to official contrition.

"Impossible, gentlemen. Quite impossible. Ye couldn't have come at a worse time. I've only been here a fortnight myself, and we haven't got right shaken down yet. Even then I might have made shift to do with ye, but the fact is we've illness in the house, and I'm fair at my wits' end. It breaks my heart to turn gentlemen away and me that keen to get the business started. But there it is!"

He spat vigorously as if to emphasize the desperation of his quandary. The man was clearly Scots, but his native speech was overlaid with something alien, something which might have been acquired in America or in going down to the sea in ships. He hitched his breeches, too, with a nautical air.

"Is there nowhere else we can put up?" Dickson asked.

"Not in this one-horse place. Just a few auld wives, packed together so tight they haven't room for an extra hen. But it's grand weather, and it's not above seven miles to Auchenlochan. Say the word and I'll yoke the horse and drive ye there."

"Thank you. We prefer to walk," said Mr. Heritage. Dickson would have tarried to inquire after the illness in the house, but his companion hurried him off. Once he looked back, and saw the landlord still on the doorstep gazing after them.

"That fellow's a swine," said Mr. Heritage sourly. "I wouldn't trust my neck in his pothouse. Now, Dogson, I'm hanged if I'm going to leave this place. We'll find a corner in the village somehow. Besides, I'm determined on tea."

The little street slept in the clear, pure light of an early April evening. Blue shadows lay on the white road, and a delicate aroma of cooking tantalized hungry nostrils. The near meadows shone like pale gold against the dark lift of the moor. A light wind had begun to blow from the west and carried the faintest tang of salt. The village

at that hour was pure paradise, and Dickson was of the poet's opinion. At all costs they must spend the night there.

They selected a cottage whiter and neater than the others, which stood at a corner, where a narrow lane turned southward. Its thatched roof had been lately repaired, and starched curtains of a dazzling whiteness decorated the small, closely shut windows. Likewise it had a green door and a polished brass knocker.

Tacitly the duty of envoy was intrusted to Mr. McCunn. Leaving the other at the gate, he advanced up the little path lined with quartz stones, and politely but firmly dropped the brass knocker. He must have been observed, for ere the noise had ceased the door opened, and an elderly woman stood before him. She had a sharply cut face, the rudiments of a beard, big spectacles on her nose, and an old-fashioned lace cap on her smooth white hair. A little grim she looked, at first sight, because of her thin lips and Roman nose, but her mild, curious eyes corrected the impression and gave the envoy confidence.

"Good afternoon, mistress," he said, broadening his voice to something more rustical than his normal Glasgow speech. "Me and my friend are paying our first visit here, and we're terrible taken up with the place. We would like to bide the night, but the inn is not taking folk. Is there any chance, think ye, of a bed here?"

"I'll no tell ye a lie," said the woman. "There's twa good beds in the loft. But I dinna take lodgers and I dinna want to be bothered wi' ye. I'm a auld woman and not as hale as I was. Ye'd better try doon the street. Eppie Home might take ye."

Dickson wore his most ingratiating smile. "But, mistress, Eppie Home's house is no yours. We've taken a tremendous fancy to this bit. Can you no manage to put up wi' us for the one night? We're quiet, auld-fashioned folk, and we'll not trouble ye much. Just our tea and maybe an egg to it, and a bowl o' parritch i' the morning."

The woman seemed to relent. "Where's your freend?" she asked, peering over her spectacles toward the garden gate. The waiting Mr. Heritage seeing her eyes moving in his direction, took off his cap with a brave gesture and advanced. "Glorious weather, madam," he declared.

"English," whispered Dickson to the woman, in explanation.

She examined the poet's neat clothes and Mr. McCunn's homely garments, and apparently found them reassuring. "Come in," she said shortly. "I see ye're willful folk and I'll have to dae my best for ye."

A quarter of an hour later the two travelers, having been introduced to two spotless beds in the loft, and having washed luxuriously at the pump in the back yard, were seated in Mrs. Morran's kitchen before a meal which fulfilled their wildest dreams. She had been baking that morning, so there were white scones and barley scones, and oaten cakes. There were three boiled eggs for each of them; there was a segment of an immense currant cake—"a present from my brother last Hogmanay;" there was skim-milk cheese; there were several kinds of jam, and there was a pot of dark, gold heather honey. "Honey and aircake," said their hostess. "My man used to say he never found onything as good in a' his days."

Presently they heard her story. She had been a widow these ten years. Of her family her son was in South Africa, one daughter, a lady's maid, in London, and the other married to a schoolmaster in Kyle. The son had been in France, fighting, and had come safely through. He had spent a month or two with her before his return, and, she feared, had found it dull. "There's not a man body in the place—only auld wives."

Mr. McCunn inquired concerning the inn.

"There's new folk just come. What's this they call them?—Robson—Dobson—aye, Dobson. What for would they not take ye in? Does the man think he's a laird to refuse folk like that?"

"He said he had illness in the house."

Mrs. Morran meditated. "Who in the world can be lyin' there? The man bides alone. He got a lassie frae Auchenlochan to cook, but she and her trunk went awa' in the post cart yestreen. I doubt he tell't ye a lie, though it's no for me to judge him. I've never spoken a word to one o' those new folk."

Dickson inquired about the "new folk."

"They're a' new come in the last three weeks and there's not a man o' the ould stock left. John Blackstocks at the West Lodge died o' pneumonia last back-end, and auld Simon Tappie at the Gardens flitted to Maybole a year come Martinmas. There's naebody at the Gardens now; but there's a man come to the West Lodge, a wee black-vised body wi' a face like bend leather.

Tam Robinson used to bide at the South Lodge, but Tam got lamed about Mesopotamy, and his wife took the children to her grandfather up at the Garplehead. I seen the man that's in the South Lodge goin' up the street when I was finishin' my dinner—a aried-up body and a cripple, but he stumps along as fast as ither folk run. He's not bonny to look at. I canna think what the factor's gettin' at to let such ill-favored a one come about the town."

Their hostess was rapidly rising in Dickson's esteem. She sat very straight in her chair, eating with the careful gentility of a bird and primming her thin lips after every mouthful of tea. Here was clearly a student of character and he rejoiced in her tart tones and the sparkle in her shrewd old eyes.

"Who bides in the Big House?" he asked. "Huntingtower is the name, isn't it?"

"When I was a lassie they called it Dalquharter house, and Huntingtower was the auld pile o' stones at the sea end. But naething would serve the last laird's faither but he must change the name, for he was clean daft about what they call antickities. Ye ask who bides in the house? Naebody, since the young laird died. It's standin' cauld and lonely, and it once the cheeriest dwellin' in a' Carrick."

Mrs. Morran's tone grew tragic. "It's a queer warld wi'out the auld gentry. My father any my grandsire and his father afore him served the Kennedys, and my man David Morran was gamekeeper to them, and afore I married I was one o' the table maids. They were kind folk, the Kennedys, and, like a' the real gentry, most mindful o' them that served them. Such merry nights I've seen in the auld house, at Halloween and Hogmanay, and at the servants' balls and the weddin's o' the young leddies! But the auld laird wasted his money in stone and lime, and hadna that much to leave to his children. And now they're a' scattered or dead."

Her grave face wore the tenderness which comes from affectionate reminiscence.

"There was never such a laddie as young Master Quentin. Not a week went by but he was in here, cryin' 'Phemie Morran, I'm come to my tea!' Fine he liked my treacle scones! There wasna one in the countryside so bold a rider at the hunt, or such a handy fisher. And he was clever at his books, too, a grand scholar, they said, and

headin' for bein' what they call a dipple-mat. But that's all done with."

"Quentin Kennedy—the fellow in the Tins?" Heritage asked. "I saw him in Rome when he was with the Mission."

"I dinna know. He was a brave sodger, but he wasna long fightin' in France before he got a bullet in his breast. Then we heard tell o' him in far-away bits like Russia; and then came the end o' the war and we looked to see him back, fishin' the waters and ridin' like Jehu as in the auld days. But woe's me! It wasna permitted. The next news we got the poor laddie was dead o' influenzy and buried somewhere about France. The bullet must have weakened his chest, nae doubt. So that's the end o' the good stock o' Kennedy o' Huntingtower, who has been great folk since the time o' Robert Bruce. And now the house is shut up till the lawyers can get somebody so far daft as to take it on lease, and in these dear days it's not just anybody that wants a great castle."

"Who are the lawyers?" Dickson asked.

"Glendonan & Speirs in Edinburgh. But they never look near the place, and Master Loudoun in Auchenlochan takes charge of it. He's let the public house and filled the twa lodges, and he'll be thinkin', nae doubt that he's done enough."

Mrs. Morran had poured some hot water into the big slop bowl, and had begun the operation known as rinsing out the cups. It was a hint that the meal was over and Dickson and Heritage rose from the table. Followed by an injunction to be back for supper "on the stroke o' nine," they strolled out into the evening. Two hours of some sort of daylight remained, and the travelers had that impulse to activity which comes to all men who after a day of exercise and emptiness are stayed with a satisfying tea.

"You should be happy, Dogson," said the poet. "Here we have all the materials for your blessed romance—old mansion, extinct family, village deserted of men and an inn-keeper whom I suspect of being a villain. I feel almost a convert to your nonsense myself. We'll have a look at the house."

They turned down the road which ran north by the park wall, past the inn, which looked more abandoned than ever, till they came to an entrance which was clearly the West Lodge. It had once been a pretty, modish cottage, with a thatched roof and dormer windows, but now it was badly in need of repair. A windowpane was broken

and stuffed with a sack, the posts of the porch were giving inward, and the thatch was crumbling under the attentions of a colony of starlings. The great iron gates were rusty, and on the coat of arms above them the gliding was patchy and tarnished.

Apparently the gates were locked, and even the side wicket failed to open to Heritage's vigorous shaking. Inside, a weedy drive disappeared among ragged rhododendrons.

The noise brought a man to the lodge door. He was a sturdy fellow in a suit of black clothes which had not been made for him. He might have been a butler *en déshabille*, but for the presence of field boots into which he had tucked the ends of his trousers. The curious thing about him was his face, which was decorated with features so tiny as to give the impression of a monstrous child. Each in itself was well enough formed, but eyes, nose, mouth, and chin were of a smallness curiously out of proportion to the head and body. Such an anomaly might have been redeemed by the expression; good humor would have invested it with an air of agreeable farce. But there was no friendliness in the man's face. It was set like a judge's in a stony impassiveness.

"May we walk up to the house?" Heritage asked. "We are here for a night and should like to have a look at it."

The man advanced a step. He had either a bad cold, or a voice comparable in size to his features.

"There's no entrance here," he said huskily. "I have strict orders."

"Oh, come now," said Heritage. "It can do nobody any harm if you let us in for half an hour."

The man advanced another step.

"You shall not come in. Go away from here. Go away, I tell you. It is private." The words spoken by the small mouth in the small voice had a kind of childish ferocity.

The travelers turned their backs on him and continued their way.

"A curmudgeon!" Dickson commented. His face had flushed, for he was susceptible to rudeness. "Did ye notice? That man's a foreigner."

"He's a brute," said Heritage. "But I'm not going to be done in by that class of lad. There can be no gates on the sea side, so we'll work round that way, for I won't sleep till I've seen the place."

Presently the trees grew thinner, and the

road plunged through thickets of hazel till it came to a sudden stop in a field. There the cover ceased wholly, and below them lay the glen of the Laver. Steep green banks descended to a stream which swept in coils of gold into the eye of the sunset. A little farther down, the channel broadened, the slopes fell back a little, and a tongue of glittering sea ran up to meet the hill waters. The Laver is a gentle stream after it leaves its cradle heights, a stream of clear pools and long, bright shallows, winding by moorland farms and upland meadows; but in its last half mile it goes mad, and imitates its childhood when it tumbled over granite shelves. Down in that green place the crystal water gushed and frolicked as if determined on one hour of rapturous life before joining the sedater sea.

Heritage flung himself on the turf.

"Ye gods, what a good place! Dogson, aren't you glad you came? I think everything's bewitched to-night. That village is bewitched, and that old woman's tea. Good white magic! And that foul innkeeper and that brigand at the gate. Black magic! And now here is the home of all enchantment—'island valley of Avilion'—'waters that listen for lovers'—all the rest of it!"

Dickson observed and marveled.

"I can't make you out, Mr. Heritage. You were saying last night you were a great democrat, and yet you were objecting to yonder laddies camping on the moor. And you very near bit the nose off me when I said I liked Tennyson. And now——"

Mr. McCunn's command of language was inadequate to describe the transformation.

"You're the precise, practical Scot," was the answer. "Damn it, man, don't remind me that I'm inconsistent. I've a poet's license to play the fool, and if you don't understand me, I don't in the least understand myself. All I know is that I'm feeling young and jolly and that it's the spring!"

Mr. Heritage was assuredly in a strange mood. He began to whistle with a far-away look in his eye.

"Do you know what that is?" he asked suddenly.

Dickson, who could not detect any tune, said "No."

"It's an aria from a Russian opera that came out just before the war. I've forgotten the name of the fellow who wrote it. Jolly thing, isn't it? I always remind myself of it when I'm in this mood, for it is linked

with the greatest experience of my life. You said, I think, that you had never been in love?"

Dickson replied in the native fashion. "Have you?" he asked.

"I have, and I am—have been for two years. I was down with my battalion on the Italian front early in 1918, and because I could speak the language they lifted me out and sent me to Rome on a liaison job. It was Easter time and fine weather and, being glad to get out of the trenches, I was pretty well pleased with myself and enjoying life.

"In the place where I stayed there was a girl. She was a Russian, a princess of a great family, but a refugee and, of course, as poor as sin. I remember how badly dressed she was among all the well-to-do Romans. But what a beauty! She was little more than a child, and she used to sing that air in the morning as she went down the stairs.

"They sent me back to the front before I had a chance of getting to know her, but she used to give me little, timid good mornings, and her voice and eyes were like an angel's. I'm over my head in love, but it's hopeless—quite hopeless. I shall never see her again."

"I'm sure I'm honored by your confidence," said Dickson reverently.

The poet, who seemed to draw exhilaration from the memory of his sorrows, arose and fetched him a clout on the back. "Don't talk of confidence, as if you were a reporter," he said. "What about that house? If we're to see it before the dark comes we'd better hustle."

The green slopes on their left, as they ran seaward, were clothed toward their steep part with a tangle of broom and light scrub. The two forced their way through this, and found to their surprise that on this side there were no defenses of the Huntingtower estate. Along the rest ran a path which had once been graveled and trimmed. Beyond lay a grove of beech and holly, through which showed a dim shape of masonry. By a common impulse they moved stealthily, crouching in cover, till at the far side of the wood they found a sunk fence and in the softening light of the sinking sun looked over an acre or two of what had once been lawn and flower beds to the front of the mansion.

The outline of the building was clearly silhouetted against the glowing west, but

since they were looking at the east face the detail was all in shadow. But, dim as it was, the sight was enough to give Dickson the surprise of his life. He had expected something old and baronial. But this was new, raw and new, not twenty years built. Some madman had prompted its creator to set up a replica of a Tudor house in a countryside where the thing was unheard of. All the tricks were there—oriel windows, lozenge panes, high, twisted chimney stacks; the very stone was red, as if to imitate the mellow brick of some ancient Kentish manor. It was new, but it was also decaying. The creepers had fallen from the walls, the pilasters on the terrace were tumbling down, lichen and moss were on the doorsteps. Shuttered, silent, abandoned, it stood like a harsh *memento mori* of human hopes.

Dickson had never before been affected by an inanimate thing with so strong a sense of disquiet. The decadence of the brand-new always repels as something against nature; and this new thing was decadent. But there was a mysterious life in it, for, though not a chimney smoked, it seemed to enshrine a personality and to wear a sinister aura. He felt a lively distaste, which was almost fear. He wanted to get far away from it as fast as possible.

It was well that the two had moved quietly and kept in shadow. Footsteps fell on their ears, on the path which threaded the lawn just beyond the sunk fence. It was the keeper of the West Lodge and he carried something on his back. But both that and his face were indistinct in the half light.

Other footsteps were heard, coming from the other side of the lawn. A man's shod feet rang on the stone of a flagged path, and from their irregular fall it was plain that he was lame. The two men met near the door and spoke together. Then they separated and moved one down each side of the house. To the two watchers they had the air of warders pacing the corridors of a prison.

"Let's get out of this," said Dickson, and turned to go.

The air had the curious stillness which precedes the moment of sunset, when the birds of day have stopped their noises and the sounds of night have not begun. But suddenly in the silence fell notes of music. They seemed to come from the house, a voice singing softly but with great beauty and clearness.

Dickson halted in his steps. The tune, whatever it was, was like a fresh wind to blow aside his depression. The house no longer looked sepulchral. He saw that the two men had hurried back from their patrol, had met and exchanged some message, and made off again as if alarmed by the music. Then he noticed his companion.

Heritage was on one knee, his face rapt and listening. He got to his feet and appeared to be about to make for the house. Dickson caught him by the arm and dragged him into the bushes, and he followed unresistingly, like a man in a dream. They plowed through the thicket and made their way back to the hillside and down to the banks of the stream.

Then for the first time Dickson observed that his companion's face was very white and that sweat stood on his temples. Heritage lay down and lapped up water like a dog. Then he turned a wild eye on the other.

"I am going back," he said. "That is the voice of the girl I saw in Rome, and it is singing her song!"

## CHAPTER IV.

DOUGAL.

"You'll do nothing of the kind," said Dickson. "You're coming home to your supper. It was to be on the stroke of nine."

"I'm going back to that place."

The man was clearly demented and must be humored. "Well, you must wait till the morn's morning. It's very near dark now, and those are two ugly customers wandering about yonder. You'd better sleep the night on it."

Mr. Heritage seemed to be persuaded. He suffered himself to be led up the now dusky slopes to the gate where the road from the village ended. He walked listlessly, like a man engaged in painful reflection. Once only he broke the silence.

"You heard the singing?" he asked.

Dickson was a very poor hand at a lie. "I heard something," he admitted.

"You heard a girl's voice singing?"

"It sounded like that," was the admission. "But I'm thinking it might have been a sea gull."

"You're a fool," said the poet rudely.

The return was a melancholy business, compared to the bright speed of the outward journey. Dickson's mind was a chaos of

feelings, all of them unpleasant. He had run up against something which he blindly detested, and the trouble was that he could not tell why. It was all perfectly absurd, for why on earth should an ugly house, some overgrown trees, and a couple of ill-favored servants so malignly affect him? Yet this was the fact; he had strayed out of Arcady into a sphere that filled him with revolt and a nameless fear.

Never in his experience had he felt like this, this foolish, childish panic which took all the color and zest out of life. He tried to laugh at himself but failed. Heritage, stumbling along by his side, effectually crushed his effort to discover humor in the situation. Some exhalation from that infernal place had driven the poet mad. And then that voice singing! A sea gull, he had said. More like a nightingale, he reflected—a bird whom in the flesh he had never met.

Mrs. Morran had the lamp lit and a fire burning in her cheerful kitchen. The sight of it somewhat restored Dickson's equanimity, and to his surprise he found that he had an appetite for supper. There was new milk, thick with cream, and most of the dainties which had appeared at tea, supplemented by a noble dish of shimmering "potted head." The hostess did not share their meal, being engaged in some duties in the little cubby-hole known as the back kitchen.

Heritage drank a glass of milk, but would not touch food.

"I called this place paradise four hours ago," he said. "So it is, but I fancy it is next door to hell. There is something devilish going on inside that park wall, and I mean to get to the bottom of it."

"Nonsense!" Dickson replied with affected cheerfulness. "To-morrow you and me will take the road for Auchenlochan. We needn't trouble ourselves about an ugly old house and a couple of impudent lodge keepers."

"To-morrow I'm going to get inside the place. Don't come unless you like, but it's no use arguing with me. My mind is made up."

Heritage cleared a space on the table and spread out a section of a large-scale ordnance map.

"I must clear my head about the topography, the same as if this were a battle ground. Look here, Dogson—the road past

the inn that we went by to-night runs north and south." He tore a page from a notebook and proceeded to make a rough sketch.\* "One end we know abuts on the Laver glen, and the other stops at the South Lodge. Inside the wall which follows the road is a long belt of plantation—mostly beeches and ash; then to the west a kind of park, and beyond that the lawns of the house. Strips of plantation with avenues between follow the north and south sides of the park. On the sea side of the house are the stables and what looks like a walled garden, and beyond them what seems to be open ground with an old dovecote marked and the ruins of Huntingtower keep. Beyond that there is more open ground, till you come to the cliffs of the cape. Have you got that?"

"It looks possible, from the contouring, to get on to the sea cliffs by following the Laver, for all that side is broken up into ravines. But look at the other side—the Garple glen. It's evidently a deep-cut gully, and at the bottom it opens out into a little harbor. There's deep water there, you observe. Now the house on the south side—the Garple side—is built close to the edge of the cliffs. Is all that clear in your head? We can't reconnoiter unless we've got a working notion of the lie of the land."

Dickson was about to protest that he had no intention of reconnoitering, when a hubbub arose in the back kitchen. Mrs. Morran's voice was heard in shrill protest.

"Ye ill laddie! Eh—ye—ill—laddie! Makin' a hash o' my back floor wi' your dirty feet! What are ye slinkin' roond here for, when I tell't ye this mornin' that I'd sell ye nae more scones till ye paid for the last lot? Ye're a lot of thievin', hungry rogues, and if there were a polisman in the place I'd give ye in charge. What's that ye say? Ye're not wantin' meat? Ye want to speak to the gentlemen that's bidin' here? Ye know the auld one, says you? I believe it's a big lie, but there's the gentlemen to answer ye themsels."

Mrs. Morran, brandishing a dishcloth dramatically, flung open the door, and with a vigorous push propelled into the kitchen a singular figure.

It was a stunted boy, who from his face

\*The reader is referred to the improved version of Mr. Heritage's sketch reproduced on page 14.



might have been fifteen years old, but had the stature of a child of twelve. He had a thatch of fiery red hair above a pale, freckled countenance. His nose was snub and his wide mouth disclosed large and damaged teeth. On his head was the regulation Boy Scout hat, but it was several sizes too big and was squashed down upon his immense red ears. He wore a very ancient khaki shirt, which had once belonged to a full-grown soldier, and the spacious sleeves were rolled up at the shoulders and tied with string, revealing a pair of skinny arms. Round his middle hung what was meant to be a kilt—a kilt of home manufacture, which had once been a tablecloth, for its bold pattern suggested no known clan tartan. He had a massive belt, in which was stuck a broken gully knife, and round his neck was knotted the remnant of what had once been a silk bandanna. His legs and feet were bare, blue, scratched, and very dirty, and his toes had the prehensile look common to monkeys and small boys who summer and winter go bootless. In his hand was a long ash pole, new cut from some coppice.

The apparition stood glum and lowering on the kitchen floor. As Dickson stared at it he recalled Mearne Street and the band of irregular Boy Scouts who paraded to the roll of tin cans. Before him stood Dougal, chieftain of the Gorbals Die-Hards. Suddenly he remembered the philanthropic Mackintosh, and his own subscription of ten pounds to the camp fund. It pleased him to find the rascals here, for in the unpleasant affairs on the verge of which he felt himself they were a comforting reminder of the peace of home.

"I'm glad to see you, Dougal," he said pleasantly. "How are you all getting on?" And then, with a vague reminiscence of the scouts' code, "Have you been minding to perform a good deed every day?"

The chieftain's brow darkened.

"*Good deeds!*" he repeated bitterly. "I tell ye I'm fair wore out wi' good deeds. That man Mackintosh tell't me this was going to be a grand holiday. Holiday! Govey Dick! It's been like a Saturday night in Main Street—all fightin', fightin'!"

No collocation of letters could reproduce Dougal's accent. There was a touch of Irish in it, a spice of music-hall patter, as well as the odd lilt of the Glasgow vernacular. He was strong in vowels, but the consonants were only aspirations.

"Sit down and let's hear about things," said Dickson.

The boy turned his head to the still open back door, where Mrs. Morran could be heard at her labors. He stepped across and shut it. "I'm not wantin' that auld wife to hear," he said. Then he squatted down on the patchwork rug by the hearth, and warmed his blue-black shins. Looking into the glow of the fire, he observed, "I seen you two up by the big house to-night."

"The devil you did," said Heritage, roused to a sudden attention. "And where were you?"

"Seven feet from your head—up a tree. It's my chief hiding hole, and gosh! I need one, for Lean's after me wi' a gun. He got a shot at me two days since."

Dickson exclaimed, and Dougal with morose pride showed a rent in his kilt. "If I had had on breeches, he'd ha' got me."

"Who's Lean?" Heritage asked.

"The man wi' the black coat. The other—the lame one—they call Spittal."

"How d'you know?"

"I've listened to them talkin' together."

"But what for did the man want to shoot at you?" asked the scandalized Dickson.

"What for? Because they're frightened to death o' anybody going near their auld house. They're a pair o' deevils, worse nor any red Indian, but for all that they're sweatin' wi' fright. What for? says you. Because they're hidin' a secret. I knew it as soon I seen the man Lean's face. I once seen the same kind o' scoundrel at the picters. When he opened his mouth to swear, I knowed he was a foreigner, like the lads down at the Broomielaw. That looked black, but I hadn't got at the worst of it. Then he loosed off at me wi' his gun."

"Were you not scared?" said Dickson.

"Aye, I was scared. But ye'll not choke off the Gorbals Die-Hards wi' a gun. We held a meetin' round the camp fire, and we resolved to get to the bottom o' the business. Me bein' their chief, it was my duty to make what they ca' a reckonissince, for that was the dangerous job. So all this day I've been going on my belly about those grounds. I've found out some queer things."

Heritage had risen and was staring down at the small, squatting figure.

"What have you found out? Quick. Tell me at once." His voice was sharp and excited.

"Bide a wee," said the unwinking Dougal.

"I'm no going to let ye into this business till I know that ye'll help. It's a far bigger job than I thought. There's more in it than Lean and Spittal. There's the big man that keeps the public—Dobson, they ca' him. He's a Namerican. And there's two-three tinkers campin' down in the Garble Dean. They're in it, for Dobson was colloguin' wi' them all morning. When I seen ye, I thought ye were more o' the gang, till I remembered that one o' ye was auld McCunn that has the shop in Mearne Street. I seen that ye didna like the look o' Lean, and I followed ye here, for I was thinkin' I needed help."

Heritage plucked Dougal by the shoulder and lifted him to his feet.

"For God's sake, boy," he cried, "tell us what you know."

"Will ye help?"

"Of course, you little fool."

"Then swear," said the ritualist. From a grimy wallet he extracted a limp little volume which proved to be a damaged copy of a work entitled "Sacred Songs and Solos." "Here! Take that in your right hand and put your left hand on my pole and say after me, 'I swear not to blab what is telled me in secret and to be swift and sure in obeyin' orders, s'help me God!' Then kiss the bookie."

Dickson at first refused, declaring it was all nonsense, but Heritage's docility persuaded him to follow suit. The two were sworn.

"Now," said Heritage.

Dougal squatted again on the hearthrug, and gathered the eyes of his audience. He was enjoying himself.

"To-day," he said slowly, "I got inside the house."

"Brave fellow," said Heritage; "and what did you find there?"

"I got inside that house, but it wasn't once or twice I tried. I found a corner where I was out o' sight o' anybody unless they had come there seekin' me, and I skimmed up a water pipe, but all the windies were locked and I verra near broke my neck. Then I tried the roof, and a sore skim I had, but when I got there there were no skylights. At the end I got in by the coal hole. That's why ye're maybe thinking I'm not verra clean."

Heritage's patience was nearly exhausted.

"I don't want to hear how you got in. What did you find, you little devil?"

"Inside the house," said Dougal slowly—and there was a melancholy sense of anticlimax in his voice, as of one who had hoped to speak of gold and jewels and armed men, "inside that house there's nothing but two women."

Heritage sat down before him with a stern face.

"Describe them," he commanded.

"One o' them is dead auld, as auld as the wife here. She didna look to me very right in the head."

"And the other?"

"Oh, just a lassie."

"What was she like?"

Dougal seemed to be searching for adequate words. "She is——" he began. Then a popular song gave him inspiration. "She's pure as the lily in the dell!"

In no way discomposed by Heritage's fierce, interrogatory air, he continued: "She's either foreign or English, for she couldn't understand what I said, and I could make nothing o' her queer tongue. But I could see she had been cryin'. She looked feared, yet kind o' determined. I asked if I could do anything for her, and when she got my meaning she was terrible anxious to know if I had seen a man—a big man, she said, wi' a yellow beard. She didn't seem to know his name, or else she wouldn't tell me.

"The auld wife was mortal feared, and was always speakin' in a foreign langwidge. I seen at once that what frightened them was Lean and his friends, and I was just starting to ask about them when there came a sound like a man walking along the passage. She was for hidin' me in behind a sofy, but I wasn't going to be trapped like that, so I got out by the other door and down the kitchen stairs and into the coal hole. Gosh, it was a near thing!"

The boy was on his feet. "I must be off to the camp to give out the orders for the morn. I'm going back to that house, for it's a fight atween the Gorbals Die-Hards and the scoundrels that are frightenin' these women. The question is: Are ye comin' with me? Mind, ye've sworn. But if ye're not, I'm going mysel', though I'll no deny I'd be glad o' company. *You*, anyway," he added, nodding at Heritage. "Maybe auld McCunn wouldn't get through the coal hole."

"You're an impident laddie," said the outraged Dickson. "It's no likely we're

coming with you. Breaking into other folks' houses! It's a job for the police!"

"Please yersel'," said the chieftain, and looked at Heritage.

"I'm on," said that gentleman.

"Well, just you set out in the morning as if ye were for a walk up the Garbhe glen. I'll be on the road and I'll have orders for ye."

Without more ado Dougal left by way of the back kitchen. There was a brief denunciation from Mrs. Morran, then the outer door banged and he was gone.

The poet sat still with his head in his hands, while Dickson, acutely uneasy, prowled about the floor. He had forgotten even to light his pipe.

"You'll not be thinking of heeding that ragamuffin boy," he ventured.

"I'm certainly going to get into the house to-morrow," Heritage answered, "and if he can show me a way, so much the better. He's a spirited youth. Do you breed many like him in Glasgow?"

"Plenty," said Dickson sourly. "See here, Mr. Heritage. You won't expect me to be going about burgling houses on the word of a blagvird laddie. I'm a respectable man—have always been. Besides, I'm here for a holiday, and I've no call to be mixing myself up in strangers' affairs."

"You haven't. Only, you see, I think there's a friend of mine in that place, and, anyhow, there are women in trouble. If you like, we'll say good-by after breakfast, and you can continue as if you had never turned aside to this damned peninsula. But I've got to stay."

Dickson groaned. What had become of his dream of idyl, his gentle, bookish romance? Vanished before a reality which smacked horribly of crude melodrama and possibly of sordid crime. His gorge rose at the picture, but a thought troubled him. Perhaps all romance in its hour of happening was rough and ugly like this, and only shone rosy in the retrospect. Was he being false to his deepest faith?

"Let's have Mrs. Morran in," he ventured. "She's a wise old body, and I'd like to hear her opinion of this business. We'll get common sense from her."

"I don't object," said Heritage. "But no amount of common sense will change my mind."

Their hostess forestalled them by returning at that moment to the kitchen.

"We want your advice, mistress," Dickson told her and, accordingly, like a barrister with a client, she seated herself carefully in the big easy-chair, found and adjusted her spectacles, and waited with hands folded on her lap to hear the business. Dickson narrated their presupper doings, and gave a sketch of Dougal's evidence. His exposition was cautious and colorless, and without conviction. He seemed to expect a robust incredulity in his hearer.

Mrs. Morran listened with the gravity of one in church. When Dickson finished she seemed to meditate.

"There's no blagvird trick that would surprise me in those new folk. What's that ye call them—Lean and Spittal? Eppie Home told me they were furriners, and those are no furrin names."

"What I want to hear from you, Mrs. Morran," said Dickson impressively, "is whether you think there's anything in that boy's story?"

"I think it's most likely true. He's a terrible impident rascal, but he's no a liar."

"Then you think that a gang of ruffians have got two lone women shut up in that house for their own purposes?"

"I wouldna wonder."

"But it's ridiculous! This is a Christian and law-abiding country. What would the police say?"

"They never troubled Dalquharter much. There's not a policeman nearer than Knockrawd—one Johnnie Trummle, and he's as useless as a frozen potato."

"The wiselike thing, as I think," said Dickson, "would be to turn the procurator fiscal onto the job. It's his business, not ours."

"Weel, I wouldna say but ye're right," said the lady.

"What would you do if you were us?" Dickson's tone was subtly confidential. "My friend here wants to get into the house in the morning with that red-haired laddie to satisfy himself about the facts. I say no—let sleeping dogs lie, and if you think the beasts are mad, report to the authorities. What would you do yourself?"

"If I were you," came the emphatic reply. "I would take the first train home in the morning, and when I got home I'd stay there. Ye're a dacent body, but ye're not the kind to be travelin' the roads."

"And if you were me?" Heritage asked with his queer, crooked smile.

"If I was a young and yauld like you I would go into the house, and I wouldna rest till I had riddled out the truth and jailed every scoondrel about the place. If ye dinna go, faith, I'll kilt up my petticoats and go mysel'. I havena served the Kennedys for forty year not to have the honor o' the house in my heart. Ye asked my advice, sirs, and ye've gotten it. Now I must clear away your supper."

Dickson asked for a candle, and, as on the previous night, went abruptly to bed. The oracle of prudence to which he had appealed had betrayed him and counseled folly. But was it folly? For him assuredly, for Dickson McCunn, late of Mearne Street, Glasgow, wholesale and retail provision merchant, elder in the Guthrie Memorial Church, and fifty-five years of age.

Aye, that was the rub. He was getting old. The woman had seen it and had advised him to go home. Yet the plea was curiously irksome, though it gave him the excuse he needed. If you played at being young, you had to take up the obligations of youth, and he thought derisively of his boyish exhilaration of the past days. Derisively, but also sadly. What had become of that innocent joviality he had dreamed of, that happy morning pilgrimage of spring enlivened by tags from the poets? His goddess had played him false. Romance had put upon him too hard a trial.

He lay long awake, torn between common sense and a desire to be loyal to some vague, whimsical standard. Heritage, a yard distant, appeared also to be sleepless, for the bed creaked with his turning. Dickson found himself envying one whose troubles, whatever they might be, were not those of a divided mind.

## CHAPTER V.

### OF THE PRINCESS IN THE TOWER.

Very early next morning, while Mrs. Morran was still cooking breakfast, Dickson and Heritage might have been observed taking the air in the village street. It was the poet who had insisted upon this walk, and he had his own purpose. Dickson was glum, but Heritage seemed in high spirits. He varied his garrulity with spells of cheerful whistling.

They strolled along the road by the park wall till they reached the inn. There Heritage's music waxed peculiarly loud. Pres-

ently from the yard, unshaven and looking as if he had slept in his clothes, came Dobson, the innkeeper.

"Good morning," said the poet. "I hope the sickness in your house is on the mend?"

"Thank ye, it's no worse," was the reply, but in the man's heavy face there was little civility. His small gray eyes searched their faces.

"We're just waiting on breakfast to get on the road again. I'm jolly glad we spent the night here. We found quarters after all, you know."

"So I see. Whereabouts, may I ask?"

"Mrs. Morran's. We could always have got in there, but we didn't want to fuss an old lady, so we thought we'd try the inn first. She's my friend's aunt."

At this amazing falsehood Dickson started, and the man observed his surprise. The eyes were turned on him like a searchlight. They roused antagonism in his peaceful soul, and with that antagonism came an impulse to back up the poet. "Aye," he said, "she's my Auntie Phemie, my mother's half sister."

The man turned to Heritage.

"Where are ye for the day?"

"Auchenlochan," said Dickson hastily. He was still determined to shake the dust of Dalquharter from his feet.

The innkeeper sensibly brightened. "Well, ye'll have a fine walk. I must go in and see about my own breakfast. Good day to ye, gentlemen."

"That," said Heritage as they entered the village street again, "is the first step in camouflage, to put the enemy off his guard."

"It was an abominable lie," said Dickson crossly.

"Not at all. It was a necessary and proper trick of war. It explained why we spent the night here, and now Dobson and his friends can get about their day's work with an easy mind. Their suspicions are temporarily allayed, and that will make our job easier."

"I'm not coming with you."

"I never said you were. By 'we' I refer to myself and the red-headed boy."

"Mistress, you're my auntie," Dickson informed Mrs. Morran as she set the porridge on the table. "This gentleman has just been telling the man at the inn that you're my Auntie Phemie."

For a second their hostess looked be-

wildered. Then the corners of her prim mouth moved upward in a slow smile.

"I see," she said. "Weel, maybe it was well done. But if ye're my nevoy ye'll have to keep up my credit, for we're a bold and enterprising lot."

Half an hour later there was a furious dissension when Dickson attempted to pay for the night's entertainment. Mrs. Morran would have none of it. "Ye're no awa yet," she said tartly, and the matter was complicated by Heritage's refusal to take part in the debate. He stood aside and grinned, till Dickson in despair returned his note case to his pocket, murmuring darkly that "he would send it from Glasgow."

The road to Auchenlochan left the main village street at right angles by the side of Mrs. Morran's cottage. It was a better road than that which they had come yesterday, for by it, twice daily, the post cart traveled to the post town. It ran on the edge of the moor and on the tip of the Garple glen, till it crossed that stream and, keeping near the coast, emerged after five miles into the cultivated flats of the Lochan valley. The morning was fine, the keen air invited to high spirits. There was a solid breakfast behind McCunn, and the promise of a cheerful road till luncheon. But Dickson's heart, which should have been ascending with the larks, stuck leadenly in his boots. He was not even relieved at putting Dalquharter behind him. The atmosphere of that unhallowed place still lay on his soul. He hated it, but he hated himself more.

Here was one, who had hugged himself all his days as an adventurer waiting his chance, running away at the first challenge of adventure; a lover of romance who fled from the earliest overture of his goddess. He was ashamed and angry, but what else was there to do? Burglary in the company of a queer poet and a queerer urchin? It was unthinkable.

Presently as they tramped silently on they came to the bridge beneath which the peaty waters of the Garple ran in porter-colored pools and tawny cascades. From a clump of elders on the other side Dougal emerged. A barefoot boy, dressed in much the same parody of a Boy Scout's uniform, but with corduroy shorts instead of a kilt, stood before him at rigid attention. Some command was issued, the child saluted, and trotted back past the travelers with never a look at

them. Discipline was strong among the Gorbals Die-Hards; no chief of staff ever conversed with his general under a stricter etiquette.

Dougal received the travelers with the condescension of a regular toward civilians.

"They're off their guard," he announced. "Thomas Yownie has been shadowing them since break o' day, and he reports that Dobson and Lean followed ye till ye were out o' sight o' the houses, and then Lean got a spy glass and watched ye till the road turned in among the trees. That satisfied them, and they're both away back to their jobs, Thomas Yownie's the cute one! Ye'll not fool Thomas Yownie."

Dougal extricated from his pouch the bag of a cigarette, lit it, and puffed meditatively. "I did a reckonisince mysel' this morning. I was up at the house afore it was light, and tried the door o' the coal hole. I think they've gotten on our tracks, for it was locked—aye, and wedged from the inside."

Dickson brightened. Was the insane venture off?

"For a wee bit I was fair beat. But I remembered that the lassie was allowed to walk in a kind o' a glass house on the side farthest away from the Garple. That was where she was singin' yest'reen. So I reckonisince in that direction, and I found a queer place." The book "Sacred Songs and Solos," was requisitioned and on a page of it Dougal proceeded to make marks with the stump of a carpenter's pencil. "See here," he commanded. "There's the glass place wi' a door into the house. That door must be open or the lassie must have the key, for she comes there whenever she likes. At each end o' the place it's built up, and no way in, but the front that looks on the garden is open, wi' lots of posts and flower pots. The trouble is that that side there's maybe twenty feet o' wall between the paw-rapet and the ground. It's an auld wall wi' cracks and holes in it, and it wouldna be hard to climb. That's why they let her gang there when she wants, for a lassie couldna get away without brekkin' her neck."

"Could we climb it?" Heritage asked.

The boy wrinkled his brows. "I could manage it mysel'—I think—and maybe you. I doubt if auld McCunn could get up. Ye'd have to be mighty carefu' that nobody saw ye, for your hinder end, as ye were gettin' over, wad be a grand mark for a gun."

"Lead on," said Heritage. "We'll try the veranda."

They both looked at Dickson, and Dickson, scarlet in the face, looked back at them. He had suddenly found the thought of the lonely road to Auchenlockan intolerable. Once again he was at the parting of the ways, and once more caprice determined his decision. That the coal hole was out of the question had worked a change in his views. Somehow it seemed to him less burglarious to enter by a veranda. He felt very frightened but—for the moment—quite resolute.

"I'm coming with you," he said.

"Sportsman!" said Heritage and held out his hand. "Well done the auld one!" said the chieftain of the Gorbals Die-Hards. Dickson's quaking heart experienced a momentary bound as he followed Heritage down the track into the Garple Dean. The track wound through a thick covert of hazels, now close to the rushing water, now high up on the side so that clear sky showed through the fringes of the wood. When they had gone a little way Dougal halted them.

"It's a ticklish job," he whispered. "There's the tinkers, mind, that's campin' in the Dean. If they're still in their camp we can get by easy enough, but they're maybe wanderin' about the wood after rabbits. Then we must ford the water, for ye'll not cross it lower down where it's deep. Our road is on the house side o' the Dean, and it's awfu' public, if there's onybody on the ither side, though it's hid well enough from folk up in the grounds. Ye must do exactly what I tell ye. When we get near danger I'll scout on ahead, and I dare ye to move a hair o' your head till I give the word."

Presently when they were at the edge of the water, Dougal announced his intention of crossing. Three bowlders in the stream made a bridge for an active man and Heritage hopped lightly over. Not so Dickson, who stuck fast on the second stone, and would certainly have fallen in had not Dougal plunged into the current and steadied him with a grimy hand. The leap was at last successfully taken, and the three scrambled up a rough slope, all reddened with iron springs, till they struck a slender track running down the Dean on its northern side. Here the undergrowth was very thick, and they had gone the better part of half a mile before the covert thinned sufficiently to show them the stream beneath. Then Dougal

halted them with a finger on his lips, and crept forward alone.

He returned in three minutes. "Coast's clear," he whispered. "The tinkers are eatin' their breakfast. They're late at their meat, though they're up early seekin' it."

Progress was now very slow and secret and mainly on all fours. At one point Dougal nodded downward, and the other two saw on a patch of turf, where the Garple began to widen into its estuary, a group of figures round a small fire. There were four of them, all men, and Dickson thought he had never seen such ruffianly looking customers. After that they moved high up the slope, in a shallow glade of a tributary brook, till they came out of the trees and found themselves looking seaward.

On one side was the house, built flush with the edge, the masonry merging at the foot in the dark rock. Under it the slope was easier, a jumble of bowlders and boiler plates, till it reached the waters of the small haven, which lay calm as a mill pond in the windless forenoon. The haven broadened out at its foot and revealed a segment of blue sea. The opposite shore was flatter and showed what looked like an old wharf and the ruins of buildings, behind which rose a bank clad with scrub and surmounted by some gnarled and wind-crooked firs.

"There's dashed little cover here," said Heritage.

"There's not much," Dougal assented. "But they can't see us from the policies, and it's no like there's anybody watchin' from the house. The danger is somebody on the ither side, but we'll have to risk it. Once among those big stones we're safe. Are ye ready?"

Five minutes later Dickson found himself gasping in the lee of a bowlder, while Dougal was making a cast forward. The scout returned with a hopeful report. "I think we're safe, till we get into the policies. There's a road that the auld folk made when ships used to come here. Down there it's deeper than Clyde at the Broomileaw. Has the auld one got his wind yet? There's no time to waste."

Up that broken hillside they crawled, well in the cover of the tumbled stones, till they reached a low wall which was the boundary of the garden. The house was now behind them on their right rear, and as they topped the crest they had a glimpse of an ancient dovecot and the ruins of the old Hunting-

tower on the short thymy turf which ran seaward to the cliffs. Dougal led them along a sunk fence which divided the downs from the lawns behind the house, and, avoiding the stables, brought them by devious ways to a thicket of rhododendrons and broom. On all fours they traveled the length of the place and came to the edge where some forgotten gardeners had once tended a herbageous border. The border was now rank and wild, and, lying flat under the shade of an azalea, and peering through the young spears of iris, Dickson and Heritage regarded the northwestern façade of the house.

The ground before them had been a sunken garden, from which a steep wall, once covered with creepers and rock plants, rose to a long veranda, which was pillared and open on that side; but at each end built up halfway and glazed for the rest. There was a glass roof, and inside untended shrubs sprawled in broken plaster vases.

"Ye must stay here," said Dougal, "and not talk above your breath. Afore we dare to try that wall, I must know where Lean and Spittal and Dobson are. I'm off to spy the policies." He glided out of sight.

For hours, so it seemed, Dickson was left to his own unpleasant reflections. His body, prone on the moist earth, was fairly comfortable, but his mind was ill at ease. The scramble up the hillside had convinced him that he was growing old, and there was no rebound in his soul to counter the conviction. He felt listless, spiritless—an apathy with fright trembling somewhere at the back of it. He regarded the veranda wall with foreboding. How on earth could he climb that? And if he did there would be his exposed hinderparts inviting a shot from some malevolent gentleman among the trees. He reflected that he would give a large sum of money to be out of this preposterous adventure.

Heritage's hand was stretched toward him, containing two of Mrs. Morran's jellied scones, of which the poet had been wise enough to bring a supply in his pocket. The food cheered him, for he was growing very hungry, and he began to take an interest in the scene before him instead of his own thoughts. He observed every detail of the veranda. There was a door at one end, he noted, giving on a path which wound down to the sunk garden. As he looked he heard a sound of steps and saw a man ascending this path.

It was the lame man whom Dougal had called Spittal, the dweller in the South Lodge. Seen at closer quarters, he was an odd-looking being, lean as a heron, wry-necked, but amazingly quick on his feet. Had not Mrs. Morran said that he hobbled as fast as other folk ran? He kept his eyes on the ground and seemed to be talking to himself as he went, but he was alert enough, for the dropping of a twig from a dying magnolia transferred him in an instant into a figure of active vigilance. No risks could be run with that watcher. He took a key from his pocket, opened the garden door, and entered the veranda. For a moment his shuffle sounded on its tiled floor and then he entered the door admitting from the veranda to the house. It was clearly unlocked, for there came no sound of a turning key.

Dickson had finished the last crumbs of his scones before the man emerged again. He seemed to be in a greater hurry than ever, as he locked the garden door behind him and hobbled along the west front of the house till he was lost to sight. After that the time passed slowly. A pair of yellow wagtails arrived and played at hide and seek among the stuccoed pillars. The little dry scratch of their claws was heard clearly in the still air. Dickson had almost fallen asleep when a smothered exclamation from Heritage woke him to attention. A girl had appeared in the veranda.

Above the parapet he saw only her body from the waist up. She seemed to be clad in bright colors, for something red was round her shoulders and her hair was bound with an orange scarf. She was tall—tall and slim and very young. Her face was turned seaward, and she stood for a little scanning the broad channel, shading her eyes as if to search for something on the extreme horizon. The air was very quiet and he thought that he could hear her sigh. Then she turned and reentered the house, while Heritage, by his side, began to curse under his breath with a shocking fervor.

One of Dickson's troubles had been that he did not really believe Dougal's story, and the sight of the girl removed one doubt. That bright exotic thing did not belong to the Cruives or to Scotland at all, and that she should be in the house removed the place from the conventional dwelling to which the laws against burglary applied.

There was a rustle among the rhododendrons and the fiery face of Dougal appeared.

He lay between the other two, his chin on his hands, and grunted out his report.

"After they had their dinner Dobson and Lean harnessed up a horse and went off to Auchenlochan. I seen them pass the Garple brig, so that's two accounted for. Has Spittal been round here?"

"Half an hour ago," said Heritage, consulting a wrist watch.

"It was him that kept me waiting so long. But he's safe enough now, for five minutes ago he was splittin' firewood at the back door o' his house. I've found a ladder, an auld one, in behind yonder bushes. It'll help wi' the wall. There! I've gotten my breath again and we can start."

The ladder was fetched by Heritage and proved to be ancient and wanting many rungs, but sufficient in length. The three stood silent for a moment, listening like stags, and then ran across the intervening lawn to the foot of the veranda wall. Dougal went up first, then Heritage, and lastly Dickson, stiff and giddy from his long lie under the bushes. Below the parapet the veranda floor was heaped with old garden litter, rotten matting, dead or derelict bulbs, fiber and strawberry nets. It was Dougal's intention to pull up the ladder and hide it among the rubbish against the hour of departure. But Dickson had hardly put his foot on the parapet when there was a sound of steps within the house approaching the veranda door.

The ladder was left alone. Dougal's hand brought Dickson summarily to the floor where he was fairly well concealed by a mess of matting. Unfortunately his head was in the vicinity of some upturned pot plants so that a cactus ticked his brow and a spike of aloe supported painfully the back of his neck. Heritage was prone behind two old water butts and Dougal was in a hamper which had once contained seed potatoes. The house door had panels of opaque glass so the newcomer could not see the doings of the three till it was opened, and by that time all were in cover.

The man—it was Spittal—walked rapidly along the veranda and out of the garden door. He was talking to himself again, and Dickson, who had a glimpse of his face, thought he looked both evil and furious. Then came some anxious moments, for had the man glanced back when he was once outside, he must have seen the telltale ladder. But he seemed immersed in his own reflec-

tions, for he hobbled steadily along the house front till he was lost to sight.

"That'll be the end o' them for the night," said Dougal, as he helped Heritage to pull up the ladder and stow it away. "We've got the place to ourselves, now. Forward, men, forward." He tried the handle of the house door and led the way in.

A narrow-paved passage took them into what had once been the garden room, where the lady of the house had arranged her flowers, and the tennis rackets and croquet mallets had been kept. It was very dusty and on the cobwebbed walls still hung a few soiled garden overalls. A door beyond opened into a huge, murky hall, murky, for the windows were shuttered and the only light came through things like portholes far up in the wall. Dougal, who seemed to know his way about, halted then. "Wait here till I scout a bit. The women are in a wee room through that big door." Bare feet stole across the oak flooring, there was the sound of a door swinging on its hinges, and then silence and darkness. Dickson put out a hand for companionship and clutched Heritage's. To his surprise it was cold and all a-tremble. They listened for voices, and thought they could detect a far-away sob.

It was some minutes before Dougal returned. "A bonny kettle o' fish," he whispered. "They're both weepin'. We're just in time. Come on, the pair o' ye!"

Through a green baize door they entered a passage which led to the kitchen regions and turned in at the first door on their right. From its situation Dickson calculated that the room lay on the seaward side of the house next to the veranda. The light was bad, for the two windows were partially shuttered, but it had plainly been a smoking room, for there were pipe racks by the hearth, and on the walls a number of old school and college photographs, a couple of oars with emblazoned names, and a variety of stags' and roebucks' heads. There was no fire in the grate, but a small oil stove burned inside the fender. In a stiff-backed chair sat an elderly woman, who seemed to feel the cold, for she was muffled to the neck in a fur coat. Beside her, so that the late afternoon light caught her face and head, stood a girl.

Dickson's first impression was of a tall child. The pose, startled and wild and yet curiously stiff and self-conscious, was that of a child striving to remember a forgotten



lesson. One hand clutched a handkerchief, the other was closing and unclosing on a knob of the chair back. She was staring at Dougal who stood like a gnome in the center of the floor. "Here's the gentlemen I was tellin' ye about," was his introduction, but her eyes did not move.

Then Heritage stepped forward. "We have met before, mademoiselle," he said. "Do you remember Easter in 1918—in the house in the Trinitá dei Monte?"

The girl looked at him.

"I do not remember," she said slowly.

"But I was the English officer who had the apartments on the floor below you. I saw you every morning. You spoke to me sometimes."

"You are a soldier?" she asked, with a new note in her voice.

"I was then—till the war finished."

"And now? Why have you come here?"

"To offer you help, if you need it. If not, to ask your pardon and go away."

The shrouded figure in the chair burst suddenly into rapid, hysterical talk in some foreign tongue which Dickson suspected of being French. Heritage replied in the same language, and the girl joined in with sharp questions. Then the poet turned to Dickson.

"This is my friend. If you will trust us, we will do our best to save you."

The girl's eyes rested on Dickson's face, and he realized that he was in the presence of something the like of which he had never met in his life before. It was a loveliness greater than he had imagined was permitted by the Almighty to his creatures. The little face was more square than oval, with a low, broad brow and proud, exquisite eyebrows. The eyes were of a color which he could never decide on; afterward he used to allege that they were the color of spring. There was a delicate pallor in the cheeks, and the face bore signs of suffering and care, possibly even of hunger, but for all that there was youth there, eternal and triumphant. Not youth such as he had known it, but youth with all history behind it, youth with centuries of command in its blood and the world's treasures of beauty and pride in its ancestry. Strange, he thought, that a thing so fine should be so masterful. He felt abashed in every inch of him.

As the eyes rested on him their sorrowfulness seemed to be shot with humor. A ghost of a smile lurked there, to which Dick-

son promptly responded. He grinned and bowed.

"Very pleased to meet you, ma'am. I'm Mr. McCunn from Glasgow."

"You don't even know my name," she said.

"We don't," said Heritage.

"They call me Saskia. This," nodding to the chair, "is my Cousin Eugénie. We are in very great trouble. But why should I tell you? I do not know you. You cannot help me."

"We can try," said Heritage. "Part of your trouble we know already through that boy. You are imprisoned in this place by some scoundrels. We are here to help you to get out. We want to ask no questions—only to do what you bid us."

"You are not strong enough," she said sadly. "A young man—an old man—and a little boy. There are many against us, and any moment there may be more."

It was Dougal's turn to break in. "There's Lean and Spittal and Dobson and four tinkers in the Dean—that's seven; but there's us three and five more Gorbals Die-Hards—that's eight."

There was something in the boy's truculent courage that cheered her.

"I wonder," she said, and her eyes fell on each in turn.

Dickson felt impelled to intervene.

"I think this is a perfectly simple business. Here's a lady shut up in this house against her will by a few blagiyards. This is a free country and the law doesn't permit that. My advice is for one of us to inform the police at Auchenlochan and get Dobson and his friends took up and the lady set free to do what she likes. That is, if these folks are really molesting her, which is not yet quite clear to my mind."

"Alas! It is not so simple as that," she said. "I dare not invoke your English law, for, perhaps, in the eyes of that law I am a thief."

"Deary me, that's a bad business," said the startled Dickson.

The two women talked together in some strange tongue, and the elder seemed to be pleading and the younger objecting. Then Saskia seemed to come to a decision.

"I will tell you all," she said, and she looked straight at Heritage. "I do not think you would be cruel or false, for you have honorable faces. I am a Russian and for

two years have been in exile. I will not speak of my house, for it is no more, or how I escaped, for it is the common tale of all of us. I have seen things more terrible than any dream and yet lived, but I have paid a price for such experience. First I went to Italy where there were friends, and I wished only to have peace among kindly people. About poverty I do not care, for to me, who has lost all the great things, the want of bread is a little matter. But peace was forbidden me, for I learned that we Russians had to win back our fatherland again and that the weakest must work in that cause. So I was set my task, and it was very hard. There were jewels which once belonged to my emperor—they had been stolen by the brigands and must be recovered. There were others still hidden in Russia which must be brought to a safe place. In that work I was ordered to share."

She spoke in almost perfect English, with a certain foreign precision. Suddenly she changed to French, and talked rapidly to Heritage.

"She has told me about her family," he said, turning to Dickson. "It is among the greatest in Russia, the very greatest after the throne."

Dickson could only stare.

"Our enemies soon discovered me," went on Saskia. "Oh, but they are very clever, these enemies! And they have all the criminals of the world to aid them. Here you do not understand what they are. You good people in England think they are well-meaning dreamers who are forced into violence by the persecution of western Europe. But you are wrong. Some honest fools there are among them, but the power—the true power—lies with madmen and degenerates, and they have for allies the special devil that dwells in each country. That is why they cast their net as wide as mankind."

She shivered, and for a second her face wore a look which Dickson never forgot, the look of one who had looked over the edge of life into the outer dark.

"There were certain jewels of great price which were about to be turned into guns and armies for our enemies. These our people recovered and the charge of them was laid on me. Who would suspect, they said, a foolish girl? But our enemies were very clever, and soon the hunt was cried against me. They tried to rob me of them, but they failed, for I, too, had become clever.

"Then they asked the help of the law—first in Italy and then in France. Oh, it was subtly done. Respectable people, who hated the bolsheviks but had bought long ago the bonds of my country, desired to be repaid their debts out of the property of the Russian Crown which might be found in the west. But behind them were the Jews, and behind the Jews our unsleeping enemies.

"Once I was enmeshed in the law I would be safe for them, and presently they would find the hiding place of the treasure and, while the respectable bondholders were clamoring in the courts, it would be safe in their pockets. So I fled. For months I have been fleeing and hiding. They have tried to kidnap me many times, and once they have tried to kill me; but I, too, have become very clever—oh, very clever. And I have learned not to fear."

This simple staccato recital affected Dickson's honest soul with the liveliest indignation. "Such doings!" he exclaimed, and he could not forbear from whispering to Heritage an extract from that gentleman's conversation the first night at Kirkmichael. "We needn't imitate all their methods, but they've got hold of the right end of the stick. They seek truth and reality." The reply from the poet was an angry shrug.

"Why and how did you come here?" he asked.

"I always meant to come to England, for I thought it the sanest place in a mad world. Also it is a good country to hide in, for it is apart from Europe, and your police, as I thought, do not permit evil men to be their own law. But especially I had a friend, a Scottish gentleman, whom I knew in Russia in the days of the war, when we Russians were still a nation. I saw him again in Italy, and since he was kind and brave I told him some part of my troubles.

"He was called Quentin Kennedy, and now he is dead. He told me that in Scotland he had a lonely château, where I could hide secretly and safely, and against the day when I might be hard-pressed he gave me a letter to his steward, bidding him welcome me as a guest when I made application. At that time I did not think I would need such sanctuary, but a month ago the need became urgent, for the hunt in France was very close on me. So I sent a message to the steward, as Captain Kennedy told me."

"What is his name?" Heritage asked.

She spelled it "Monsieur Loudon—

L-O-U-D-O-N in the town of Auchenlochan."

"The factor," said Dickson. "And what then?"

"Some spy must have found me out. I had a letter from this Loudon bidding me come to Auchenlochan. There I found no steward to receive me, but another letter saying that that night a carriage would be in waiting to bring me here. It was midnight when we arrived, and we were brought in by strange ways to this house, with no light but a single candle. Here we were welcomed, indeed, but by an enemy."

"Which?" asked Heritage. "Dobson or Lean or Spittal?"

"Dobson I do not know. Léon was there. He is no Russian, but a Belgian who was a valet in my father's service till he joined the bolsheviki. Next day the Lett Spidal came, and I knew then I was in very truth entrapped. For of all our enemies he is, save one, the most subtle and unwearied."

Her voice had trailed off into flat weariness. Again Dickson was reminded of a child, for her arms hung limp by her sides, and her slim figure in its odd clothes was curiously like that of a boy in a school blazer. Another resemblance perplexed him. She had a hint of Janet—about the mouth—Janet, that solemn little girl these twenty years in her grave.

Heritage was wrinkling his brows. "I don't think I quite understand. The jewels? You have them with you?"

She nodded.

"These men wanted to rob you. Why didn't they do it, between here and Auchenlochan? You had no chance to hide them on the journey. Why did they let you come here where you were in a better position to baffle them?"

She shook her head. "I cannot say—except perhaps that Spidal had not arrived that night and Léon may have been waiting instructions."

The other still looked dissatisfied. "They are either clumsier villains than I took them to be, or there is something deeper in the business than we understand. These jewels—are they here?"

His tone was so sharp that she looked startled—almost suspicious. Then she saw that in his face which reassured her. "I have them hidden here. I have grown very skillful in hiding things."

"Have they searched for them?"

"The first day they demanded them of me. I denied all knowledge. Then they ransacked this house—I think they ransack it daily—but I am too clever for them. I am not allowed to go beyond the veranda, and when at first I disobeyed there was always one of them in wait to force me back with a pistol behind my head. Every morning Léon brings us food for the day—good food, but not enough, so that Cousin Eugénie is always hungry, and each day he and Spidal question and threaten me. This afternoon Spidal has told me that their patience is at an end. He has given me till to-morrow at noon to produce the jewels. If not, he says I will die."

"Mercy on us!" Dickson exclaimed.

"There will be no mercy on us," she said solemnly. "He and his kind think as little of shedding blood as of spilling water. But I do not think he will kill me. I think I will kill him first; but after that I shall surely die. As for Cousin Eugénie, I do not know."

Her level, matter-of-fact tone seemed to Dickson most shocking, but he could not treat it as mere melodrama. It carried a horrid conviction. "We must get out of this at once," he declared.

"I cannot leave. I will tell you why. When I came to this country I appointed one to meet me here. He is a kinsman who knows England well, for he fought in your army. With him by my side, I have no fear. It is altogether needful that I wait for him."

"Then there is something more which you haven't told us?" Heritage asked.

Was there the faintest shadow of a blush on her cheek? "There is something more," she said.

She spoke to Heritage in French and Dickson caught the name "Alexis" and a word which sounded like "prance." The poet listened eagerly and nodded. "I have heard of him," he said.

"But have you not seen him? A tall man with a yellow beard, who bears himself proudly. Being of my mother's race he has eyes like mine."

"That's the man she was askin' me about yesterday," said Dougal, who had squatted on the floor.

Heritage shook his head. "We only came here last night. When did you expect Prince—your friend?"

"I hoped to find him here before me. Oh, it is his not coming that terrifies me. I must

wait and hope. But if he does not come in time, another may come before him."

"The ones already here are not all the enemies that threaten you?"

"Indeed no. The worst has still to come, and till I know that that other, who may come before my friend, is here I do not greatly fear Spidal or Léon. They receive orders and do not give them."

Heritage ran a perplexed hand through his hair. The sunset which had been flaming for some time in the unshuttered panes was now passing into the dark. The girl lit a lamp after first shuttering the rest of the windows. As she turned it up the odd, dusty room and its strange company were revealed more clearly and Dickson saw with a shock how haggard was the beautiful face. A great pity seized him and almost conquered his timidity.

"It is very difficult to help you," Heritage was saying. "You won't leave this place and you won't claim the protection of the law. You are very independent, mademoiselle, but it can't go on forever. The man you fear may arrive at any moment. At any moment, too, your treasure may be discovered."

"It is that that weighs on me," she cried. "The jewels! They are my solemn trust, but they burden me terribly. If I were only rid of them and knew them to be safe I should face the rest with a braver mind."

"If you'll take my advice," said Dickson slowly, "you'll get them deposited in a bank and take a receipt for them. A Scotch bank is not in a hurry to surrender a deposit without it gets the proper authority."

Heritage brought his hands together with a smack. "That's an idea. Will you trust us to take these things and deposit them safely?"

For a little she was silent and her eyes were fixed on each of the trio in turn. "I will trust you," she said at last. "I think you will not betray me."

"By God we won't!" said the poet fervently. "Dogson, it's up to you. You march off to Glasgow in double-quick time and place the stuff in your own name in your own bank. There's not a moment to lose. D'you hear?"

"I will that." To his own surprise Dickson spoke without hesitation. Partly it was because of his tradesmen's sense of property, which made him hate the thought that miscreants should acquire that to which they

had no title; but mainly it was the appeal in those haggard, childish eyes. "But I'm not going to be trampin' the country in the night carryin' a fortune and seeking for trains that aren't there. I'll go the first thing in the morning."

"Where are they?" Heritage asked.

"That I do not tell. But I will fetch them."

She left the room and presently returned with three odd, little parcels wrapped in leather and tied with thongs of rawhide. She gave them to Heritage, who held them appraisingly in his hand and then passed them to Dickson.

"I do not ask what their contents are. We take them from you as they are, and, please God, when the moment comes they will be returned to you as you gave them. You trust us, mademoiselle?"

"I trust you, for you are a soldier. Oh, and I thank you from my heart, my friends." She held out a hand to each, which caused Heritage suddenly to grow very red.

"I will remain in the neighborhood to await developments," he said. "We had better leave you now. Dougal, lead on!"

Before going, he took the girl's hand again, and with a sudden movement bent and kissed it. Dickson shook it heartily. "Cheer up, ma'am," he observed. "There's a better time coming." His last recollection of her eyes was of a soft mistiness not far from tears. His pouch and pipe had strange company jostling them in his pocket as he followed the others down a ladder into the night.

Dougal insisted that they must return by the road of the morning. "We daurna go by the Laver, for that would bring us by the public house. If the worst comes to the worst, and we fall in wi' any of the deevils, they must think ye've changed your mind and come back from Auchenlochan."

The night smelled fresh and moist as if a break in the weather were imminent. As they scrambled along the Garple Dean a pin prick of light below showed where the tinkers were busy by their fire. Dickson's spirits suffered a sharp fall and he began to marvel at his temerity. What in Heaven's name had he undertaken? To carry very precious things, to which certainly he had no right, through the enemy to distant Glasgow. How could he escape the notice of the watchers? He was already suspected, and

the sight of him back again in Dalquharter would double that suspicion. He must brazen it out, but he distrusted his powers with such telltale stuff in his pockets. They might murder him anywhere on the moor road or in an empty railway carriage.

An unpleasant memory of various novels he had read in which such things happened haunted his mind. There was just one consolation. This job over, he would be quit of the whole business. And honorably quit, too, for he would have played a manly part in a most unpleasant affair. He could retire to the idyllic with the knowledge that he had not been wanting when romance called. Not a soul should ever hear of it, but he saw himself in the future tramping green roads or sitting by his winter fireside pleasantly retelling himself the tale.

Before they came to the Garple bridge Dougal insisted that they should separate, remarking that "it would never do if we were seen together." Heritage was dispatched by a short cut over fields to the left, which eventually after one or two plunges into ditches landed him safely in Mrs. Morran's back yard. Dickson and Dougal crossed the bridge and tramped Dalquharterward by the highway. There was no sign of human life in that quiet place, with owls hooting and rabbits rustling in the undergrowth. Beyond the woods they came in sight of the light in the back kitchen, and both seemed to relax their watchfulness when it was most needed. Dougal sniffed the air and looked seaward.

"It's coming on to rain," he observed. "There should be a big star there, and when you can't see it it means wet weather wi' this wind."

"What star?" Dickson asked.

"The one wi' the Irish-lookin' name. What's that they call it? O'Brien?" And he pointed to where the constellation of the Hunter should have been declining on the western horizon.

There was a bend of the road behind them, and suddenly round it came a dogcart driven rapidly. Dougal slipped like a weasel into a bush, and presently Dickson stood revealed in the glare of a lamp. The horse was pulled up sharply and the driver called out to him. He saw that it was Dobson, the innkeeper, with Léon beside him.

"Who is it?" cried the voice. "Oh, you! I thought ye were off the day?"

Dickson rose nobly to the occasion.

"I thought I was myself. But I didn't think much of Auchenlochan, and I took a fancy to come back and spend the last night of my holiday with my auntie. I'm off to Glasgow first thing the morn's morn."

"So!" said the voice. "Queer thing I never saw you on the Auchenlochan road, where ye can see three mile before ye."

"I left early and took it easy along the shore."

"Did ye so? Well, good-night to ye."

Five minutes later Dickson walked into Mrs. Morran's kitchen, where Heritage was busy making up for a day of short provender.

"I'm for Glasgow to-morrow, Auntie Phemie," he cried. "I want you to loan me a wee trunk with a key, and look to the doors and windows, for I've a lot to tell you."

## CHAPTER VI.

### HOW MR. M'CUNN DEPARTED WITH RELIEF AND RETURNED WITH TREPIDATION.

At seven o'clock on the following morning the post cart, summoned by a message from Mrs. Morran, appeared outside the cottage. In it sat the ancient postman, whose real home was Auchenlochan, but who slept alternate nights in Dalquharter, and beside him Dobson, the innkeeper. Dickson and his hostess stood at the garden gate, the former with his pack on his back and at his feet a small, stout wooden box, of the kind in which cheeses are transported, garnished with an immense padlock. Heritage for obvious reasons did not appear. At the moment he was crouched on the floor of the loft watching the departure through a gap in the dimity curtains.

The traveler, after making sure that Dobson was looking, furtively slipped the key of the trunk into his knapsack.

"Well, good-by, Auntie Phemie," he said. "I'm sure you've been awful kind to me, and I don't know how to thank you for all you're sending."

"Tuts, Dickson my man, they're hungry folk about Glesca that'll be glad o' my scones and jelly. Tell Mirren I'm rale pleased wi' her man and haste ye back soon."

The trunk was deposited on the floor of the cart and Dickson clambered into the back seat. He was thankful that he had not to sit next to Dobson, for he had telltale stuff on his person. The morning was wet, so he wore his waterproof, which con-

cealed his odd tendency to stoutness about the middle.

Mrs. Morran played her part well, with all the becoming gravity of an affectionate aunt, but so soon as the post cart turned the bend of the road her demeanor changed. She was torn with convulsions of silent laughter. She retreated to the kitchen, sank into a chair, wrapped her face in her apron, and rocked. Heritage, descending, found her struggling to regain composure. "D'ye know his wife's name?" she gasped. "I called her Mirren! And maybe the body's no married! Dear me, sirs!"

Meantime Dickson was bumping along the moor road on the back of the post cart. He had worked out a plan, just as he had been used aforetime to devise a deal in foodstuffs; he had expected one of the watchers to turn up, and was rather relieved that it should be Dobson, whom he regarded as the most natural beast of the three. Somehow he did not think that he would be molested before he reached the station, since his enemies would still be undecided in their minds. Probably they only wanted to make sure that he had really departed to forget all about him. But, if not, he had his plan ready.

"Are you traveling to-day?" he asked the innkeeper.

"Just as far as the station to see about some oil cake I'm expectin'. What's in your wee chest? Ye came here wi' nothing but the bag on your back."

"Aye, the chest is not mine. It's my auntie's. She's a kind body, and nothing would serve but she must pack a box for me to take back. Let me see. There's a baking of scones; three pots of honey and one of rhubarb jam—she was always famous for her rhubarb jam; a mutton ham, which you can't get for love or money in Glasgow; some homemade black puddings, and a wee skim-milk cheese. I doubt I'll have to take a cab from the station."

Dobson appeared satisfied, lit a short pipe and relapsed into meditation. The long, uphill road, ever climbing to where far off showed the tiny whitewashed buildings which were the railway station, seemed interminable this morning. The aged postman addressed strange objurgations to his aged horse and muttered reflections to himself, the innkeeper smoked, and Dickson stared back into the misty hollow where lay Dalquharter. The southwest wind had brought

up a screen of rain clouds and washed all the countryside in a soft, wet gray. But, the eye could still travel a fair distance, and Dickson thought he had a glimpse of a figure on a bicycle leaving the village two miles back. He wondered who it could be. Not Heritage, who had no bicycle. Perhaps some woman who was conspicuously late for the train. Women were the chief cyclists nowadays in country places.

Then he forgot about the bicycle and twisted his neck to watch the station. It was less than a mile off now, and they had no time to spare, for away to the south among the hummocks of the bog he saw the smoke of the train coming from Auchenlochan. The postman also saw it and whipped up his beast into a clumsy canter. Dickson, always nervous about being late for trains, forced his eyes away and regarded again the road behind them. Suddenly the cyclist had become quite plain—a little more than a mile behind—a man, and pedaling furiously in spite of the stiff ascent. It could only be one person—Léon. He must have discovered their visit to the house yesterday and be on the way to warn Dobson. If he reached the station before the train, there would be no journey to Glasgow that day for one respectable citizen.

Dickson was in a fever of impatience and fright. He dared not adjure the postman to hurry, lest Dobson should turn his head and descry his colleague. But that ancient man had begun to realize the shortness of time and was urging the cart along at a fair pace, since they were now on the flatter shelf of land which carried the railway. Dickson kept his eyes fixed on the bicycle and his teeth shut tight on his lower lip. Now it was hidden by the last dip of hill; now it emerged into view not a quarter of a mile behind, and its rider gave vent to a shrill call. Luckily the innkeeper did not hear, for at that moment with a jolt the cart pulled up at the station door, accompanied by the roar of the incoming train.

Dickson whipped down from the back seat and seized the solitary porter. "Label the box for Glasgow and into the van with it. Quick, man, and there'll be a shilling for you." He had been doing some rapid thinking these last minutes and had made up his mind. If Dobson and he were alone in a carriage, he could not have the box there; that must be elsewhere, so that Dobson could not examine it, if he were set on vio-

lence—somewhere in which it could still be a focus of suspicion and distract attention from his person.

He took his ticket, and rushed on to the platform to find the porter and the box at the door of the guard's van. Dobson was not there. With the vigor of a fussy traveler he shouted directions to the guard to take good care of his luggage, hurled a shilling at the porter, and ran for a carriage. At that moment he became aware of Dobson hurrying through the entrance. He must have met Léon and heard news from him, for his face was red and his ugly brows darkening.

The train was in motion. "Here, you," Dobson's voice shouted. "Stop! I want a word with you." Dickson plunged at a third-class carriage, for he saw faces behind the misty panes, and above all things then he feared an empty compartment. He clambered on the step, but the handle would not turn, and with a sharp pang of fear he felt the innkeeper's grip on his arm. Then some samaritan from within let down the window, opened the door and pulled him up. He fell on a seat and a second later Dobson staggered in beside him.

Thank Heaven, the dirty little carriage was nearly full. There were two shepherds, each with a dog and a long hazel crook, and an elderly woman who looked like a plowman's wife out for a day's marketing. And there was one other whom Dickson recognized with a peculiar joy—the commercial traveler in the provision line of business whom he had met three days before at Kirk-michael.

The recognition was mutual. "Mr. McCunn!" the traveler exclaimed. "My, but that was running it fine! I hope you've had a pleasant holiday, sir?"

"Very pleasant. I've been spending two nights with friends down hereaways. I've been very fortunate in the weather, for it has broke just when I'm leaving."

Dickson sank back on the hard cushions. It had been a near thing, but so far he had won. He wished his heart did not beat so fast, and he hoped he did not betray his disorder in his face. Very deliberately he hunted for his pipe and filled it slowly. Then he turned to Dobson, "I didn't know you were traveling the day. What about your oil cake?"

"I've changed my mind," was the gruff answer.

"Was that you I heard crying on me, when we were running for the train?"

"Yes. I thought ye had forgot about your chest."

"No fear," said Dickson. "I'm not likely to forget my auntie's scones."

He laughed pleasantly and then turned to the commercial friend. Thereafter the compartment hummed with the technicalities of the grocery trade. He exerted himself to draw out his companion, to have him refer to the great firm of D. McCunn, so that the innkeeper might be ashamed of his suspicions. What nonsense to imagine that a noted and wealthy Glasgow merchant—the traveling man's tone was almost reverential—would concern himself with the affairs of a forgotten village and a tumble-down house!

Presently the train drew up at Kirk-michael station. The woman descended, and Dobson, after making sure that no one else meant to follow her example, also left the carriage. A porter was shouting: "Fast train to Glasgow—Glasgow next stop." Dickson watched the innkeeper shoulder his way through the crowd in the direction of the booking office. "He's off to send a telegram," he decided. "There'll be trouble waiting for me at the other end."

When the train moved on he found himself disinclined for further talk. He had suddenly become meditative, and curled up in a corner with his head hard against the windowpane, watching the wet fields and glistening roads as they slipped past. He had his plans made for his conduct at Glasgow, but Lord! how he loathed the whole business! Last night he had had a kind of gusto in his desire to circumvent villainy; at Dalquharter station he had enjoyed a momentary sense of triumph; now he felt very small, lonely, and forlorn.

Only one thought far at the back of his mind cropped up now and then to give him comfort. He was entering on the last lap. Once get this detestable errand done and he would be a free man, free to get back to the kindly, humdrum life from which he should never have strayed. Never again, he vowed, never again! Rather would he spend the rest of his days in hydrophatics than come within the pale of such horrible adventures. Romance, forsooth! This was not the mild goddess he had sought, but an awful harpy who battered on the souls of men.

He had some bad minutes as the train

passed through the suburbs, and along the grimy embankment by which the southern lines enter the city. But as it rumbled over the river bridge and slowed down before the terminus, his vitality suddenly revived. He was a business man and there was now something for him to do.

After a rapid farewell to his companion, he found a porter and hustled his box out of the van in the direction of the left-luggage office. Spies, summoned by Dobson's telegram, were, he was convinced, watching his every movement, and he meant to see that they missed nothing. He received his ticket for the box, and slowly and ostentatiously stowed it away in his pack. Swinging the pack on his arm, he sauntered through the entrance hall to the row of waiting taxicabs, and selected that one which seemed to him to have the oldest and most doddering driver. He deposited the pack inside on the seat and then stood still as if struck with a sudden thought.

"I breakfasted terribly early," he told the driver. "I think I'll have a bite to eat. Will you wait?"

"Aye," said the man, who was reading a grubby sheet of newspaper. "I'll wait as long as ye like, for it's you that pays."

Dickson left his pack in the cab and, oddly enough for a careful man, he did not shut the door. He reëntered the station, strolled to the bookstall, and bought a *Glasgow Herald*. His steps then tended to the refreshment room, where he ordered a cup of coffee and two Bath buns, and seated himself at a small table. There he was soon immersed in the financial news, and though he sipped his coffee he left the buns untasted. He took out a penknife and cut various extracts from the *Herald*, bestowing them carefully in his pocket. An observer would have seen an elderly gentleman absorbed in market quotations.

After a quarter of an hour had been spent in this performance he happened to glance at the clock and rose with an exclamation. He hustled out to his taxi and found the driver still intent upon his reading "Here I am at last," he said cheerily, and had a foot on the step, when he stopped suddenly with a cry. It was a cry of alarm, but also of satisfaction.

"What's become of my pack? I left it on the seat, and now it's gone! There's been a thief here."

The driver, roused from his lethargy, pro-

tested in the name of his gods, that no one had been near it. "Ye took it into the station wi' ye," he urged.

"I did nothing of the kind. Just you wait here till I see the inspector. A bonny watch *you* keep on a gentleman's things!"

But Dickson did not interview the railway authorities. Instead he hurried to the left-luggage office. "I deposited a small box here a short time ago. I mind the number. Is it there still?"

The attendant glanced at a shelf. "A wee deal box with iron bands. It was took out ten minutes ago. A man brought the ticket and took it away on his shoulder."

"Thank you. There's been a mistake, but the blame's mine. My man mistook my orders."

Then he returned to the now nervous taxi driver. "I've taken it up with the station master and he's putting the police on. You'll likely be wanted, so I gave him your number. It's a fair disgrace that there should be so many thieves about this station. It's not the first time I've lost things. Drive me to West George Street and look sharp." And he slammed the door with the violence of an angry man.

But his reflections were not violent, for he smiled to himself. "That was pretty neat. They'll take some time to get the chest open, for I dropped the key out of the train after we left Kirkmichael. That gives me a fair start. If I hadn't thought of that, they'd have found some way to grip me and rifle me long before I got to the bank." He shuddered as he thought of the dangers he had escaped. "As it is, they're off the track for half an hour at least, while they're rummaging among Auntie Phemie's scones." At the thought he laughed heartily and, when he brought the taxicab to a standstill by rapping on the front window, he left it with a temper apparently restored. Obviously he had no grudge against the driver, who to his immense surprise was rewarded with ten shillings.

Three minutes later Mr. McCunn might have been seen entering the head office of the Strathclyde Bank, and inquiring for the manager. There was no hesitation about him now, for his foot was on his native heath. The chief cashier received him with deference, in spite of his unorthodox garb, for he was not the least honored of the bank's customers. As it chanced he had been talking about him that very morning



to a gentleman from London. "The strength of this city," the cashier had said—so he now informed Mr. McCunn, tapping his eyeglasses on his knuckles, "does not lie in its dozen very rich men but in the hundred or two homely folk who make no parade of wealth. Men like Dickson McCunn, for example, who live all their life in a semidetached villa and die worth half a million." And the Londoner had cordially assented.

So Dickson was ushered promptly into an inner room, and was warmly greeted by Mr. Mackintosh, the patron of the Gorbals Die-Hards.

"I must thank you for your generous donation, McCunn. Those boys will get a little fresh air and quiet after the smoke and din of Glasgow. A little country peace to smooth out the creases in their poor little souls."

"Maybe," said Dickson, with a vivid recollection of Dougal as he had last seen him. Somehow he did not think that peace was likely to be the portion of that devoted band. "But I've not come here to speak about that."

He took off his waterproof; then his coat and waistcoat and showed himself a strange figure with sundry bulges about the middle. The manager's eyes grew very round. Presently these excrescences were revealed as linen bags sewn on to his shirt, and fitting into the hollow between ribs and hip. With some difficulty he slit the bags and extracted three hide-bound packages.

"See here, Mackintosh," he said solemnly. "I hand you over these parcels, and you're to put them in the innermost corner of your strong room. You needn't open them. Just put them away as they are, and write me a receipt for them. Write it now."

Mr. Mackintosh obediently took pen in hand.

"What'll I call them?" he asked.

"Just the three leather parcels handed to you by Dickson McCunn, esquire, naming the date."

Mr. Mackintosh wrote. He signed his name with his usual flourish and handed the slip to his client.

"Now," said Dickson, "you'll put that receipt in the strong box where you keep my securities, and you'll give it up to nobody but me in person, and you'll surrender the parcels only on presentation of the receipt. D'you understand?"

"Perfectly. May I ask any questions?"

"You'd better not, if you don't want to hear lies."

"What's in the packages?" Mr. Mackintosh weighed them in his hand.

"That's asking," said Dickson. "But I'll tell ye this much, it's jewels."

"Your own?"

"No, but I'm their trustee."

"Valuable?"

"I was hearing they were worth more than a million pounds."

"God bless my soul," said the startled manager. "I don't like this kind of business, McCunn."

"No more do I. But you'll do it to oblige an old friend and a good customer. If you don't know much about the packages you know all about me. Now, mind, I trust you."

Mr. Mackintosh forced himself to a joke. "Did you maybe steal them?"

Dickson grinned. "Just what I did. And that being so, I want you to let me out by the back door."

When he found himself in the street he felt the huge relief of a boy who has emerged with credit from the dentist's chair. Remembering that there would be no midday dinner for him at home, his first step was to feed heavily at a restaurant. He had, so far as he could see, surmounted all his troubles, his one regret being that he had lost his pack which contained among other things his Izaak Walton and his safety razor. He bought another razor and a new Walton, and mounted an electric tram car en route for home.

Very contented with himself he felt as the car swung across the Clyde bridge. He had done well—but of that he did not want to think, for the whole beastly thing was over. He was going to bury that memory, to be resurrected, perhaps, on a later day when the unpleasantness had been forgotten. Heritage had his address, and knew where to come when it was time to claim the jewels. As for the watchers, they must have ceased to suspect him, when they discovered the innocent contents of his knapsack and Mrs. Morran's box.

Home for him, and a luxurious tea by his own fireside; and then an evening with his books, for Heritage's nonsense had stimulated his literary fervor. He would dip into his old favorites again to confirm his faith. To-morrow he would go for a jaunt somewhere—perhaps down the Clyde or to the

south of England which he had heard was a pleasant, thickly peopled country. No more lonely inns and deserted villages for him; henceforth he would pursue comfort and peace.

The rain had stopped and, as the car moved down the dreary vista of Eglinton Street, the sky opened into fields of blue and the April sun silvered the puddles. It was in such a place and under such weather that Dickson suffered an overwhelming experience.

It is beyond my skill, being all unskilled in the game of psychoanalysis, to explain how this thing happened. I concern myself only with facts. Suddenly the pretty veil of self-satisfaction was rent from top to bottom, and Dickson saw a figure of himself within, a smug, leaden, little figure which simpered and preened itself and was hollow as a rotten nut. And he hated it.

The horrid truth burst on him that Heritage had been right. He only played with life. That imbecile image was a mere spectator, content to applaud, but shrinking from the contact of reality. It had been all right as a provision merchant; but when it fancied itself capable of higher things it had deceived itself. Foolish little image with its brave dreams, and its swelling words from Browning! All make-believe of the feeblest. He was a coward, running away at the first threat of danger. It was as if he were watching a tall stranger with a wand pointing to the embarrassed image that was himself and ruthlessly exposing its frailties! And yet the pitiless showman was himself, too—himself as he wanted to be, cheerful, brave, resourceful, indomitable.

Dickson suffered a spasm of mortal agony. "Oh, I'm surely not so bad as all that," he groaned. But the hurt was not only in his pride. He saw himself being forced to new decisions, and each alternative was of the blackest. He fairly shivered with the horror of it. The car slipped past a suburban station, from which passengers were emerging—comfortable black-coated men such as he had once been. He was bitterly angry with Providence for picking him out of the great crowd of sedentary folk for this sore ordeal.

"Why was I tethered to such a conscience?" was his moan. But there was that stern inquisitor with his pointer exploring his soul. "You flatter yourself you have done your share," he was saying. "You will make pretty stories about it to yourself, and

some day you may tell your friends, modestly disclaiming any special credit. But you will be a liar, for you know you are afraid. You are running away when the work is scarcely begun, and leaving it to a few boys and a poet whom you had the impudence the other day to despise. I think you are worse than a coward. I think you are a cad."

His fellow passengers on the top of the car saw an absorbed, middle-aged gentleman who seemed to have something the matter with his bronchial tubes. They could not guess at the tortured soul. The decision was coming nearer, the alternatives loomed up dark and inevitable. On one side was submission to ignominy, on the other a return to that place, which he detested, and yet loathed himself for detesting. "It seems I'm not likely to have much peace either way," he reflected dismally.

How the conflict would have ended had it continued on these lines, I cannot say. The soul of Mr. McCunn was being assailed by moral and metaphysical adversaries with which he had not been trained to deal. But suddenly it leaped from negatives to positives. He saw the face of the girl in the shuttered house, so fair and young and yet so haggard. It seemed to be appealing to him to rescue it from a great loneliness and fear. Yes, he had been right; it had a strange look of his Janet—the wide-open eyes, the solemn mouth. What was to become of that child if he failed her in her great need?

Now Dickson was a practical man and this view of the case brought him into a world which he understood. "It's fair ridiculous," he reflected. "Nobody there to take a grip of things. Just a handful of Gorbals' keelies and the lad Heritage. Not a business man among the lot."

The alternatives, which hove before him like two great banks of cloud, were altering their appearance. One was becoming faint and tenuous; the other, solid as ever, was just a shade less black. He lifted his eyes and saw in the near distance the corner of the road which led to his home. "I must decide before I reach that corner," he told himself.

Then his mind became apathetic. He began to whistle dismally through his teeth, watching the corner as it came nearer. The car stopped with a jerk. "I'll go back," he said aloud, clambering down the steps. The

truth was, he had decided five minutes before when he first saw Janet's face.

He walked briskly to his house, entirely refusing to waste any more energy on reflection. "This is a business proposition," he told himself, "and I'm going to handle it as such." Tibby was surprised to see him and offered him tea in vain. "I'm just back for a few minutes. Let's see the letters."

There was one from his wife. She proposed to stay another week at the Neuk Hydropathic and suggested that he might join her and bring her home. He sat down and wrote a long, affectionate reply, declining, but expressing his delight that she was soon returning. "That's very likely the last time mamma will hear from me," he reflected, but—oddly enough—without any great fluttering of the heart.

Then he proceeded to be furiously busy. He sent out Tibby to buy another knapsack and to order a cab and to cash a considerable check. In the knapsack he packed a fresh change of clothing and the new safety razor, but no books, for he was past the need of them. That done, he drove to his solicitors.

"What like a firm are Glendonan and Speirs, in Edinburgh?" he asked the senior partner.

"Oh, very respectable. Very respectable indeed. Regular Edinburgh's W. S. lot. Do a lot of factoring."

"I want you to telephone through to them and inquire about a place in Carrick called Huntingtower, near the village of Dalquharter. I understand it's to let, and I'm thinking of taking a lease of it."

The senior partner, after some delay, got through to Edinburgh, and was presently engaged in the feverish dialectic which the long-distance telephone involves. "I want to speak to Mr. Glendonan himself—yes, yes, Mr. Caw, of Paton & Linklater. Good afternoon, sir. Huntingtower—yes, in Carrick. Not to let? But I understand it's been in the market for some months. You say you've an idea it has just been let. But my client is positive that you're mistaken, unless the agreement was made this morning. You'll inquire? Oh, I see. The actual factoring is done by your local agent, Mr. James Loudon, in Auchenlochan. You think my client had better get into touch with him at once? Just wait a minute, please."

He put his hand over the receiver. "Usual Edinburgh way of doing business," he ob-

served caustically. "What do you want done?"

"I'll run down and see this Loudon. Tell Glendonan & Speirs to advise him to expect me, for I'll go this very day."

Mr. Caw resumed his conversation: "My client would like a telegram sent at once to Mr. Loudon introducing him. He's Mr. Dickson McCunn, of Mearne Street—the great provision merchant, you know. Oh, yes! Good for any rent. Refer, if you like, to the Strathclyde Bank, but you can take my word for it. Thank you. Then that's settled. Good-by."

Dickson's next visit was to a gunmaker, who was a fellow elder with him in the Guthrie Memorial Church.

"I want a pistol and a lot of cartridges," he announced. "I'm not caring what kind it is, so long as it is a good one and not too big."

"For yourself?" the gunmaker asked. "You must have a license, I doubt, and there's a lot of new regulations."

"I can't wait on a license. It's for a cousin of mine who's off to Mexico at once. You've got to find some way of obliging an old friend, Mr. McNair."

Mr. McNair scratched his head. "I don't see how I can sell you one. But I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll lend you one. It belongs to my nephew, Peter Tait, and has been lying in a drawer ever since he came back from the front. He has no use for it, now that he's a placed minister."

So Dickson bestowed in the pockets of his waterproof a service revolver and fifty cartridges, and bade his cab take him to the shop in Mearne Street. For a moment the sight of the familiar place struck a pang to his breast, but he choked down unavailing regrets. He ordered a great hamper of food-stuffs—the most delicate kind of tinned goods, two perfect hams, tongues, Strassburg pies, chocolate, cakes, biscuits, and, as a last thought, half a dozen bottles of old liqueur brandy. It was to be carefully packed, addressed to Mrs. Morran, Dalquharter Station, and delivered in time for him to take down by the seven thirty-three train. Then he drove to the terminus and dined with something like a desperate peace in his heart.

On this occasion he took a first-class ticket, for he wanted to be alone. As the lights began to be lit in the wayside stations and the clear April dusk darkened into night.

his thoughts were somber yet resigned. He opened the window and let the sharp air of the Renfrewshire uplands fill the carriage. It was fine weather again after the rain, and a bright constellation—perhaps Dougal's friend O'Brien—hung in the western sky. How happy he would have been a week ago had he been starting thus for a country holiday! He could sniff the faint scent of plowed earth which had always been his first reminder of spring. But he had been pitchforked out of that old happy world and could never enter it again. Alas! for the roadside fire, the cozy inn, "The Compleat Angler," the Chavender or Chub!

And yet—and yet! He had done the right thing, though the Lord alone knew how it would end. He began to pluck courage from his very melancholy and hope from his reflections upon the transitoriness of life. He was austere following romance as he conceived it, and if that capricious lady had taken one dream from him she might yet reward him with a better. Tags of poetry came into his head which seemed to favor this philosophy—particularly some lines of Browning on which he used to discourse to his literary society. Uncommon silly, he considered these homilies of his must have been, mere twitterings of the unfledged. But now he saw more in the lines, a deeper interpretation which he had earned the right to make:

"Oh world, where all things change and nought abides,

Oh life, the long mutation—is it so?

Is it with life as with the body's change?—

Where, e'en tho' better follow, good must pass,  
Nor manhood's strength can mate with boy-  
hood's grace.

Nor age's wisdom, in its turn, find strength,

But silently the first gift dies away,

And though the new stays, never both at once."

Moralizing thus, he became drowsy, and was almost asleep when the train drew up at the station of Kirkmichael.

## CHAPTER VII.

### SUNDRY DOINGS IN THE MURK.

From Kirkmichael on, the train stopped at every station; but no passenger seemed to leave or arrive at the little platforms white in the moon. At Dalquharter the case of provisions was safely transferred to the porter with instructions to take charge of it till it was sent for. During the next ten minutes Dickson's mind began to work upon

his problem with a certain briskness. It was all nonsense that the law of Scotland could not be summoned to the defense. The jewels had been safely got rid of, and who was to dispute their possession? Not Dobson and his crew, who had no sort of title, and were out for naked robbery. The girl had spoken of greater dangers from new enemies—kidnaping perhaps. Well, that was felony, and the police must be brought in. Probably if all were known the three watchers had criminal records, pages long, filed at Scotland Yard.

The man to deal with that side of the business was Loudon, the factor, and to him he was bound in the first place. He had made a clear picture in his head of this Loudon—a derelict old country writer, formal, pedantic, lazy, anxious only to get an unprofitable business off his hands with the least possible trouble, never going near the place himself, and ably supported in his lethargy by conceited Edinburgh writers to the Signet. "Such notions of business!" he murmured. "I wonder that there's a single county family in Scotland not in the bankruptcy court!" It was his mission to wake up Mr. James Loudon.

Arrived at Auchenlochan he went first to the Salutation Hotel, a pretentious place sacred to golfers. There he engaged a bedroom for the night and, having certain scruples, paid for it in advance. He also had some sandwiches prepared which he stowed in his pack, and filled his flask with whisky. "I'm going home to Glasgow by the first train to-morrow," he told the landlady, "and now I've got to see a friend. I may not be back till late." He was assured that there would be no difficulty about his admittance at any hour, and directed how to find Mr. Loudon's dwelling.

It was an old house fronting direct on the street, with a fanlight above the door and a neat brass plate bearing the legend, "Mr. James Loudon, Writer." A lane ran up one side leading apparently to a garden, for the moonlight showed the dusk of trees. In front was the main street of Auchenlochan, now deserted save for a single roysterer, and opposite stood the ancient town house, with arches where the country folk came at the spring and autumn hiring fairs.

Dickson rang the antiquated bell, and was presently admitted to a dark hall floored with oilcloth, where a single gas jet showed that on one side was the business office and

on the other the living rooms. Mr. Loudon was at supper, he was told, and he sent in his card. Almost at once the door at the end on the left side was flung open and a large figure appeared flourishing a napkin. "Come in, sir, come in," it cried. "I've just finished a bite of meat. Very glad to see you. Here, Maggie, what d'you mean by keeping the gentleman standing in that outer darkness?"

The room into which Dickson was ushered was small and bright, with a red paper on the walls, a fire burning, and a big oil lamp in the center of the table. Clearly Mr. Loudon had no wife, for it was a bachelor's den in every line of it. A cloth was laid on a corner of the table, on which stood the remnants of a meal. Mr. Loudon seemed to have been about to make a brew of punch, for a kettle simmered by the fire, and lemons and sugar flanked a pot-bellied whisky decanter of the type that used to be known as a "mason's well."

The sight of the lawyer was a surprise to Dickson and dissipated his notions of an aged and lethargic incompetent. Mr. Loudon was a strongly built man who could not be a year over fifty. He had a ruddy face, clean shaven except for a grizzled mustache; his grizzled hair was thinning around the temples, but his skin was unwrinkled and his eyes had all the vigor of youth. His tweed suit was well cut, and the buff waistcoat with flaps and pockets and the plain leather watch guard hinted at the sportsman, as did the half dozen old racing prints on the wall. A pleasant, high-colored figure he made; his voice had the frank ring due to much use out of doors; and his expression had the singular candor which comes from gray eyes with large pupils and a narrow iris.

"Sit down, Mr. McCunn. Take the arm-chair by the fire. I've had a wire from Glendonan & Speirs about you. I was just going to have a glass of toddy—a grand thing for these uncertain April nights. You'll join me? No? Well, you'll smoke anyway. There's cigars at your elbow. Certainly, a pipe if you like. This is Liberty Hall."

Dickson found some difficulty in the part for which he had cast himself. He had expected to condescend upon an elderly inept and give him sharp instructions; instead he found himself faced with a jovial, virile figure which certainly did not suggest incompetence. It has been mentioned already that

he had always great difficulty in looking any one in the face, and this difficulty was intensified when he found himself confronted with bold and candid eyes. He felt abashed and a little nervous.

"I've come to see you about Huntingtower House," he began.

"I know. So Glendonan informed me. Well, I'm very glad to hear it. The place has been standing empty for too long, and that is worse for a new house than an old house. There's not much money to spend on it, either, unless we can make sure of a good tenant. How did you hear about it?"

"I was taking a bit holiday and I spent a night at Dalquharter with an old auntie of mine. You should understand I've just retired from business, and I'm thinking of finding a country place. I used to have the big provision shop in Mearne Street—now the United Supply Stores, Limited. You've maybe heard of it?"

The other bowed and smiled. "Who hasn't? The name of Dickson McCunn is known far beyond the city of Glasgow."

Dickson was not insensible of the flattery, and he continued with more freedom. "I took a walk and got a glimpse of the house, and I liked the look of it. You see, I want a quiet bit, a good long way from a town, and at the same time a house with all modern conveniences. I suppose Huntingtower has that?"

"When it was built fifteen years ago it was considered a model—six bathrooms, its own electric light plant, steam heating, an independent boiler for hot water, the whole bag of tricks. I won't say but what some of these contrivances will want looking to, for the place has been some time empty, but there can be nothing very far wrong, and I can guarantee that the bones of the house are good."

"Well, that's all right," said Dickson. "I don't mind spending a little money myself, if the place suits me. But of that, of course, I'm not yet certain, for I've only had a glimpse of the outside. I wanted to get into the grounds, but a man at the lodge wouldn't let me. They're a mighty uncivil lot down there."

"I'm very sorry to hear that," said Mr. Loudon in a tone of concern.

"Yes, and if I take the place I'll stipulate that you get rid of the lodge keepers."

"There won't be the slightest difficulty about that, for they are only weekly tenants."

But I'm vexed to hear they were uncivil. I was glad to get any tenant that offered, and they were well recommended to me."

"They're foreigners."

"One of them is—a Belgian refugee that Lady Morewood took an interest in. But the other—Spittal, they call him—I thought he was Scotch."

"He's not that. And I don't like the inn-keeper either. I would want him shifted."

Mr. Loudon laughed. "I dare say Dobson is a rough diamond. There's worse folk in the world, all the same; but I don't think he will want to stay. He only went there to pass the time till he heard from his brother in Vancouver. He's a roving spirit, and will be off overseas again."

"That's all right!" said Dickson, who was beginning to have horrid suspicions that he might be on a wild-goose chase after all. "Well, the next thing is for me to see over the house."

"Certainly. I'd like to go with you myself. What day would suit you? Let me see. This is Friday. What about this day week?"

"I was thinking of to-morrow. Since I'm down in these parts I may as well get the job done."

Mr. Loudon looked puzzled. "I quite see that. But I don't think it's possible. You see I have to consult the owners and get their consent to a lease. Of course, they have the general purpose of letting, but—well, they're queer folk, the Kennedys." Mr. Loudon's face wore the half-embarrassed smile of an honest man preparing to make confidences. "When poor Mr. Quentin died, the place went to his two sisters in joint ownership. A very bad arrangement, as you can imagine. It isn't entailed, and I've always been pressing them to sell; but so far they won't hear of it. They both married Englishmen, so it will take a day or two to get in touch with them. One, Mrs. Stukely, lives in Devonshire. The other—Miss Katie that was—married Sir Francis Morewood, the general, and I heard that she's expected back in London next Monday from the Riviera. I'll wire and write first thing to-morrow morning. But you must give me a day or two."

Dickson felt himself waking up. His doubts about his own sanity were dissolving, for, as his mind reasoned, the factor was prepared to do anything he asked—but only after a week had gone. What he was concerned with was the next few days.

"All the same, I would like to have a look at the place to-morrow, even if nothing comes of it."

Mr. Loudon looked seriously perplexed. "You will think me absurdly fussy, Mr. McCunn, but I must really beg of you to give up the idea. The Kennedys, as I have said, are—well, not exactly like other people. I have the strictest orders not to let any one visit the house without their express leave. It sounds a ridiculous rule, but I assure you it's as much as my job is worth to disregard it."

"D'you mean to say not a soul is allowed inside the house?"

"Not a soul."

"Well, Mr. Loudon, I'm going to tell you a queer thing, which I think you ought to know. When I was taking a walk the other night—your Belgian wouldn't let me into the grounds, but I went down the glen—what's that they call it? the Garple Dean—I got round the back where the old ruin stands, and I had a good look at the house. I tell you there was somebody in it."

"It would be Spittal who acts as caretaker."

"It was not. It was a woman. I saw her on the veranda."

The candid gray eyes were looking straight at Dickson, who managed to bring his own shy orbs to meet them. He thought that he detected a shade of hesitation. Then Mr. Loudon got up from his chair and stood on the hearthrug looking down at his visitor. He laughed, with some embarrassment, but ever so pleasantly.

"I really don't know what you will think of me, Mr. McCunn. Here are you, coming to do us all a kindness and lease that infernal white elephant, and here have I been steadily hoaxing you for the last five minutes. I humbly ask your pardon. Set it down to the loyalty of an old family lawyer. Now, I am going to tell you the truth and take you into our confidence, for I know we are safe with you.

"The Kennedys are—always have been—just a wee bit queer. Old inbred stock, you know. They will produce somebody like poor Mr. Quentin who was as sane as you or me; but as a rule in every generation there is one member of the family—or more—who is just a little bit——" And he tapped his forehead. "Nothing violent, you understand, but just not quite wise and worldlike, as the old folks say. Well, there's a certain

old lady, an aunt of Mr. Quentin and his sisters, who has always been about tenpence in the shilling. Usually she lives at Bournemouth, but one of her crazes is a passion for Huntingtower, and the Kennedys have always humored her and had her to stay every spring.

"When the house was shut up that became impossible; but this year she took such a craving to come back, that Lady Morewood asked me to arrange it. It had to be kept very quiet, but the poor old thing is perfectly harmless, and just sits and knits with her old maid and looks out of the seaward windows. Now you see why I can't take you there to-morrow. I have to get rid of the old lady, who in any case was traveling south early next week. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly," said Dickson with some fervor. He had learned exactly what he wanted. The factor was telling him lies. Now he knew where to place Mr. Loudon. He always looked back upon what followed as a very creditable piece of play acting for a man who had had small experience in that line.

"Is the old lady a wee wizen body, with a black cap and something like a white cashmere shawl round her shoulders?"

"You describe her exactly," Mr. Loudon replied eagerly.

"That would explain the foreigners."

"Of course. We couldn't have natives who would make the thing the gossip of the countryside."

"Of course not. But it must be a difficult job to keep a business like that quiet. Any wandering policeman might start inquiries. And supposing the lady became violent?"

"Oh, there's no fear of that. Besides, I've a position in this county—deputy fiscal and so forth—and I'm a friend of the chief constable. I think I may be trusted to do a little private explaining if the need arose."

"I see," said Dickson. He saw indeed a great deal which would give him food for furious thought. "Well, I must just possess my soul in patience. Here's my Glasgow address, and I look to you to send me a telegram whenever you're ready for me. I'm at the Salutation to-night, and go home to-morrow with the first train. Wait a minute." He pulled out his watch. "There's a train stops at Auchenlochan at ten-seventeen. I think I'll catch that. Well, Mr. Loudon, I'm

very much obliged to you, and I'm glad to think that it'll not be long till we renew our acquaintance."

The factor accompanied him to the door, diffusing geniality. "Very pleased indeed to have met you. A pleasant journey and a quick return."

The street was still very empty. Into a corner of the arches opposite the moon was shining, and Dickson retired thither to consult his map of the neighborhood. He found what he wanted and, as he lifted his eyes, caught sight of a man coming down the causeway. Promptly he retired into the shadow and watched the newcomer. There could be no mistake about the figure; the bulk, the walk, the carriage of the head marked it for Dobson. The innkeeper went slowly past the factor's house; then halted and retraced his steps; then, making sure that the street was empty, turned into the side lane which led to the garden.

It was what sailors call a cross-bearing, and strengthened Dickson's conviction. He delayed no longer, but hurried down the side street by which the north road leaves the town.

He had crossed the bridge of Lochan and was climbing the steep ascent which led to the heathy plateau separating that stream from the Garple before he had got his mind quite clear on the case. *First*: Loudon was in the plot, whatever it was; responsible for the details of the girl's imprisonment, but not the main author. That must be the unknown who was still to come, from whom Spidal took his orders. Dobson was probably Loudon's special henchman, working directly under him. *Second*: the immediate object had been the jewels, and they were happily safe in the vaults of the incorruptible Mackintosh. But, *third*:—and this only on Saskia's evidence—the worst danger to her began with the arrival of the Unknown.

What could that be? Probably, kidnaping. He was prepared to believe anything of people like bolsheviks. And *fourth*: this danger was due within the next day or two. Loudon had been quite willing to let him into the house and to sack all the watchers within a week from that date.

The natural and right thing was to summon the aid of the law. But, *fifth*: that would be a slow business, with Loudon able to put spokes in the wheels and begot the authorities, and the mischief would be done

before a single policeman showed his face in Dalquharter. Therefore, *sixth*: he and Heritage must hold the fort in the meantime, and he would send a wire to his lawyer, Mr. Caw, to get to work with the constabulary. *Seventh*: as for himself he was probably free from suspicion in both Loudon's and Dobson's minds as a harmless fool. But that freedom would not survive his reappearance in Dalquharter. He could say, to be sure, that he had come back to see his auntie, but that would not satisfy the watchers, since, so far as they knew, he was the only man outside the gang who was aware that people were dwelling in the house. They would not tolerate his presence in the neighborhood.

He formulated his conclusion as if it were an ordinary business deal and, rather to his surprise, was not conscious of any fear. As he pulled together the belt of his waterproof he felt the reassuring bulges in its pockets which were his pistol and cartridges. He reflected that it must be very difficult to miss with a pistol if you fired it at, say, three yards; and if there was to be shooting that would be his range. Mr. McCunn had stumbled on the precious truth that the best way to be rid of quaking knees is to keep a busy mind.

He crossed the ridge of plateau and looked down on the Garple glen. There were the lights of Dalquharter—or, rather, a single light, for the inhabitants went early to bed. His intention was to seek quarters with Mrs. Morran, when his eye caught a gleam in a hollow of the moor a little to the east. He knew it for the camp fire around which Dougal's warriors bivouacked. The notion came to him to go there instead, and hear the news of the day before entering the cottage. So he crossed the bridge and scrambled through broom and heather in what he took to be the right direction.

The moon had gone down, and the quest was not easy. Dickson had come to the conclusion that he was on the wrong road, when he was summoned by a voice which seemed to arise out of the ground.

"Who goes there?"

"What's that you say?"

"Who goes there?" The point of a pole was held firmly against his chest.

"I'm Mr. McCunn, a friend of Dougal's."

"Stand, friend." The shadow before him whistled and another shadow appeared. "Re-

port to the chief that there's a man here, name of McCunn, seeking for him."

Presently the messenger returned with Dougal and a cheap lantern which he flashed in Dickson's face.

"Oh, it's you," said that leader, who had his jaw bound up as if he had the toothache. "What are ye doing back here?"

"To tell the truth, Dougal," was the answer, "I couldn't stay away. I was fair miserable when I thought of Mr. Heritage and you laddies left to yourselves. My conscience simply wouldn't let me stay at home, so here I am."

Dougal grunted, but clearly he approved, for from that moment he treated Dickson with a new respect. Formerly when he had referred to him at all it had been as "auld McCunn." Now it was "Mister McCunn." He was given rank as a worthy civilian ally.

The bivouac was a cheerful place in the wet night. A great fire of pine roots and old paling posts hissed in the fine rain, and around it crouched several urchins busy making oatmeal cakes in the embers. On one side a respectable lean-to had been constructed by nailing a plank to two fir trees, running sloping poles thence to the ground, and thatching the whole with spruce branches and heather. On the other side two small, dilapidated, homemade tents were pitched. Dougal motioned his companion into the lean-to where they had some privacy from the rest of the band.

"Well, what's your news?" Dickson asked. He noticed that the chieftain seemed to have been comprehensively in the wars, for apart from the bandage on his jaw, he had numerous small cuts on his brow, and a great rent in one of his shirt sleeves. Also he appeared to be going lame, and when he spoke a new gap was revealed in his large teeth.

"Things," said Dougal solemnly, "has come to a bonny pitch. This very night we've been in a battle."

He spat fiercely, and the light of war burned in his eyes.

"It was the tinkers from the Garple Dean. They got on us about seven o'clock, just at the darkenin'. First they tried to bounce us. We weren't wanted here, they said, so we'd better clear. I telled them that it was them that wasn't wanted. 'Awa to Finnick,' says I. 'D'ye think we take our orders from dirty ne'er-do-weels like you?' 'By God,'



says they, 'we'll cut your lights out,' and then the battle started."

"What happened?" Dickson asked excitedly.

"They were four big men against six laddies, and they thought they had an easy job. Little they knowed the Gorbals Die-Hards! I had been expectin' something of the kind, and had made my plans. They tried to pull down our tents and burn them. I let them get within five yards before we opened fire. The first volley—stones from our hands—halted them, and before they could recover three of us had got hold o' burnin' sticks from the fire and were lammin' into them. We set fire to their clothes, and they fell back swearin' and stampin' to get the fire out. Then I gave the word and we were on them wi' our poles, usin' the points accordin' to instructions. My orders was to keep a good distance, for if they had gripped one o' us he'd ha' been done for.

"They were roarin' mad by now, and had out their knives, but they couldn't do much, for it was gettin' dark, and they didn't know the ground like us, and were trippin' and tumblin'. But they pressed us hard, and one o' them landed me an awful clip on the jaw. They were still aiming at our tents, and I saw that if they got near the fire again it would be the end o' us. So I blew my whistle for Thomas Yownie, who was in command o' the other half of us, with instructions to fall upon their rear. That brought Thomas up, and the tinkers had to face round about and fight a battle on two fronts. We charged them and they broke, and the last seen o' them they were coolin' their burns in the Garple."

"Well done, man. Had you many casualties?"

"We're a' a wee thing battered, but nothing to hurt. I'm the worst, for one o' them had a grip o' me for about two seconds, and god! he was fierce."

"They're beaten off for the night, anyway?"

"Yes, for the night. But they'll come back, never fear."

"What's the news from the house?"

"A quiet day, and no word o' Lean or Dobson."

Dickson nodded. "They were hunting me."

"Mr. Heritage has gone to bide in the house. They were watchin' the Garple Dean, so I took him round by the Laver foot and

up the rocks. He's a grand climber. We found a road up the rocks and got in by the verandy. Did ye know that the lassie had a pistol? Well, she has, and it seems that Mr. Heritage is a good shot wi' pistols, so there's some hope thereaways. Are the jools safe?"

"Safe in the bank. But they were not the main thing."

Dougal nodded. "So I was thinkin'. The lassie wasn't much the easier for gettin' rid o' them. I didn't just quite understand what she said to Mr. Heritage, for they were always wanderin' into foreign langwidges, but it seems she's terrible feared o' somebody that may turn up any moment. What's the reason I can't say. She's maybe got a secret, or maybe it's just that she's too bonny."

"That's the trouble," said Dickson, and proceeded to recount his interview with the factor to which Dougal gave close attention. "Now the way I read the thing is this: There's a plot to kidnap that lady, for some infernal purpose, and it depends on the arrival of some person or persons, and it's due to happen in the next day or two. If we try to work it through the police alone, they'll beat us, for Loudon will manage to hang the business up till it's too late. So we must take up the job ourselves.

"We must stand a siege, Mr. Heritage and me and you laddies, and for that purpose we'd better all keep together. It won't be extra easy to carry her off from all of us, and if they do manage it, we'll stick to their heels. Man, Dougal, isn't it a queer thing that sometimes law-abiding folk have to make their own laws? Anyway my plan is that the lot of us get into the house and form a garrison. If you don't, the tinkers will come back and you'll no beat them in the daylight."

"I doubt not," said Dougal. "But what about our meat?"

"We must lay in provisions. We'll get what we can from Mrs. Morran, and I've left a big box of fancy things at Dalquharter Station. Can you laddies manage to get it down here?"

Dougal reflected. "Yes, we can hire Mrs. Sempill's pony, the same that fetched our kit."

"Well, that's your job to-morrow. See—I'll write you a line to the station master. And will you undertake to get it some way into the house?"

"There's just the one road open—by the rocks. It'll have to be done."

"And I've another job. I'm writing this telegram to a friend in Glasgow who will put a spoke in Mr. Loudon's wheel. I want one of you to go to Kirkmichael to send it from the telegraph office there."

Dougal placed the wire to Mr. Caw in his bosom. "What about yourself? We want somebody outside to keep his eyes open. It's bad strawtegy to cut off your communications."

Dickson thought for a moment. "I believe you're right. I believe the best plan for me is to go back to Mrs. Morran's as soon as the old body's like to be awake. You can always get at me there, for it's easy to slip into her back kitchen without anybody in the village seeing you. Yes, I'll do that—and you'll come and report developments to me. And now I'm for a bite and a pipe. It's hungry work traveling the country in the small hours."

"I'm going to introjuice ye to the rest o' us," said Dougal. "Here, men," he called, and four figures rose from the side of the fire. As Dickson munched a sandwich he passed in review the whole company of the Gorbals Die-Hards, for the pickets were also brought in, two others taking their places. There was Thomas Yownie, the chief of staff, with a wrist wound up in the handkerchief which he had borrowed from his neck. There was a burly lad who wore trousers much too large for him, and who was known as Peer Pairson, a contraction presumably for Peter Paterson. After him came a lean, tall boy who answered to the name of Napoleon. There was a midget of a child, desperately sooty in the face either from battle or from fire tending, who was presented as Wee Jaikie. Last came the picket who had held his pole at Dickson's chest, a sandy-haired warrior with a snub nose and the mouth and jaw of a pug dog. He was Old Bill, or in Dougal's parlance, "Auld Bull."

The chieftain viewed his scarred following with a grim content. "That's a tough lot for ye, Mr. McCunn. Used a' their days wi' sleepin' in coal-rees and dodgin' the polis. Ye'll no beat the Gorbals Die-Hards."

"You're right, Dougal," said Dickson. "There's just the six of you. If there were a dozen, I think this country would be needing some new kind of a government."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HOW A MIDDLE-AGED CRUSADER ACCEPTED A CHALLENGE.

The first cocks had just begun to crow and the clocks had not yet struck five when Dickson presented himself at Mrs. Morran's back door. That active woman had already been half an hour out of bed, and was drinking her morning cup of tea in the kitchen. She received him with cordiality, nay, with relief.

"Eh, sirs, but I'm glad to see ye back. Lord knows what's goin' on at the House, these days. Mr. Heritage left yest'reen, creepin' round by dyke sides and berry bushes like a wheasel. It's a mercy to get a responsible man in the place. I had an notion ye would come back, for, thinks I, nevoy Dickson is no the one to desert folks in trouble. Where's my wee chest? Lost, ye say! That's a peety, for it's been my cheese box these thirty year."

Dickson ascended to the loft, having announced his need of at least three hours' sleep. As he rolled into bed his mind was curiously at ease. He felt equipped for any call that might be made on him. That Mrs. Morran should welcome him back as a resource in need gave him a new assurance of manhood.

He woke between nine and ten to the sound of rain lashing against the garret window. As he picked his way out of the mazes of sleep and recovered the skein of his immediate past, he found to his disgust that he had lost his composure. All the flock of fears, that had left him when on the top of the Glasgow tram car he had made the great decision, had flown back again, and settled like black crows on his spirit. He was running a horrible risk and all for a daft whim. What business had he to be mixing himself up in things he did not understand? It might be a huge mistake, and then he would be a laughingstock; for a moment he repented his telegram to Mr. Caw. Then he recanted that suspicion; there could be no mistake, except the fatal one that he had taken on a job too big for him. He sat on the edge of his bed and shivered, with his eyes on the gray drift of rain. He would have felt more stout-hearted had the sun been shining.

He shuffled to the window and looked out. There in the village street was Dobson and Dobson saw him. That was a bad blunder,

for his reason told him that he should have kept his presence in Dalquharter hid as long as possible.

There was a knock at the cottage door, and presently Mrs. Morran appeared.

"It's the man from the inn," she announced. "He's wantin' a word wi' ye. Speakin' verra ceevil, too."

"Tell him to come up," said Dickson. He might as well get the interview over. Dobson had seen Loudon and must know of their conversation. The sight of himself back again, when he had pretended to be off to Glasgow, would remove him effectually from the class of the unsuspected. He wondered just what line Dobson would take.

The innkeeper obtruded his bulk through the low door. His face was wrinkled into a smile, which, nevertheless, left the small eyes ungenial. His voice had a loud, vulgar cordiality. Suddenly Dickson was conscious of a resemblance—a resemblance to somebody whom he had recently seen. It was Loudon. There was the same thrusting of the chin forward, the same odd cheek bones, the same unctuous heartiness of speech. The innkeeper, well washed and polished and dressed, would be no bad copy of the factor. They must be near kin, perhaps brothers.

"Good morning to you, Mr. McCunn. Man, it's pitifu' weather and just when the farmers are wanting a dry seed bed. What brings you back here? Ye travel the country like a drover."

"Oh, I'm a free man now, and I took a fancy to this place. An idle body has nothing to do but please himself."

"I hear ye're taking a lease of Huntingtower?"

"Now who told you that?"

"Just the gossip of the place. Is it true?"

Dickson looked sly and a little annoyed.

"I maybe had half a thought of it, but I'll thank you not to repeat the story. It's a big house for a plain man like me, and I haven't properly inspected it."

"Oh, I'll keep mum, never fear. But if ye've that sort of notion, I can understand you not being able to keep away from the place."

"That's maybe the fact," Dickson admitted.

"Well! It's just on that point I want a word with you." The innkeeper seated himself unbidden on the chair which held Dickson's modest raiment. He leaned forward

and with a coarse forefinger tapped Dickson's pajama-clad knees. "I can't have you wandering about the place. I'm very sorry, but I've got my orders from Mr. Loudon. So if you think that by stayin' here ye can see more of the house and the estate, ye're wrong, Mr. McCunn. It can't be allowed, for we're not ready for ye yet. D'ye understand? That's Mr. Loudon's orders. Now, would it not be a far better plan if ye went back to Glasgow and came back in a week's time? I'm thinking of your own comfort, Mr. McCunn."

Dickson was cogitating hard. This man was clearly instructed to get rid of him at all costs for the next few days. The neighborhood had to be cleared for some black business. The tinkers had been deputed to drive out the Gorbals Die-Hards, and as for Heritage they seemed to have lost track of him. He, Dickson, was now the chief object of their care. But what could Dobson do if he refused? He dared not show his true hand. Yet he might, if sufficiently irritated. It became Dickson's immediate object to get the innkeeper to reveal himself by rousing his temper. He did not stop to consider the policy of this course; he imperatively wanted things cleared up and the issue made plain.

"I'm sure I'm much obliged to you for thinking so much about my comfort," he said in a voice into which he hoped he had insinuated a sneer. "But I'm bound to say you're awful suspicious folk about here. Ye needn't be feared for your old estate. There's plenty of nice walks about the roads, and I want to explore the seacoast."

The last words seemed to annoy the innkeeper. "That's no allowed, either," he said. "The shore's as private as the grounds. Well, I wish ye joy, tramping the roads in the wet."

"It's a queer thing," said Dickson meditatively, "that you should keep a hotel and yet be set on discouraging people from visiting this neighborhood. I tell you what, I believe that hotel of yours is all sham. You've some other business, you and these lodge keepers, and in my opinion it's not a very creditable one."

"What d'ye mean?" asked Dobson sharply.

"Just what I say. You must expect a body to be suspicious, if you treat him as you're treating me." Loudon must have told this man the story with which he had been

fobbed off about the half-witted Kennedy relative. Would Dobson refer to that?

The innkeeper had an ugly look on his face, but he controlled his temper with an effort.

"There's no cause for suspicion," he said. "As far as I'm concerned it's all honest and aboveboard."

"It doesn't look like it. It looks as if you were hiding something up in the house."

Dobson jumped from his chair, his face pale with anger. A man in pajamas on a raw morning does not feel at his bravest, and Dickson quailed under the expectation of assault. But even in his fright he realized that Loudon could not have told Dobson the tale of the half-witted lady. The last remark had cut clean through all camouflage and reached the quick.

"What the hell d'ye mean?" he cried. "Ye're a spy, are ye? You fat little fool, for two cents I'd wring your neck."

Now it is an odd trait of certain mild people that a suspicion of threat, a hint of bullying, will rouse some unsuspected obstinacy deep down in their souls. The insolence of the man's speech woke a quiet but efficient little devil in Dickson.

"That's a bonny tone to adopt in addressing a gentleman. If you've nothing to hide, what way are you so touchy? I can't be a spy unless there's something to spy on."

The innkeeper pulled himself together. He was apparently acting on instructions, and had not yet come to the end of them. He made an attempt at a smile.

"I'm sure I beg your pardon if I spoke too hot. But it nettled me to hear ye say that. I'll be quite frank with ye, Mr. McCunn, and, believe me, I'm speaking in your best interests. I give ye my word there's nothing wrong up at the house. I'm on the side of the law, and when I tell ye the whole story ye'll admit it. But I can't tell it ye yet. This is a wild, lonely bit and very few folk live in it. And these are wild times, when a lot of queer things happen that never get into the papers. I tell ye it's for your own good to leave Dalquharter for the present. More I can't say, but I ask ye to look at it as a sensible man. Ye're one that's accustomed to a quiet life and not meant for rough work. Ye'll do no good if you stay, and maybe, ye'll land yourself in bad trouble."

"Mercy on us!" Dickson exclaimed. "What is it you're expecting? Sinn Fein?"

The innkeeper nodded. "Something like that."

"Did you ever hear the like?"

"Then ye'll take my advice and go home? Tell ye what—I'll drive ye to the station."

Dickson got up from the bed, found his new safety razor and began to strop it. "No, I think I'll stay. If you're right there'll be more to see than muddy roads."

"I'm warning ye, fair and honest. Ye—can't—be—allowed—to—stay—here!"

"Well, I never!" said Dickson. "Is there any law in Scotland, think you, that forbids a man to stop a day or two with his auntie?"

"Ye'll stay?"

"I'll stay."

"By God, we'll see about that!"

For a moment Dickson thought that he would be attacked, and he measured the distance that separated him from the peg whence hung his waterproof with the pistol in its pocket. But the man restrained himself and moved to the door. There he stood and cursed him with a violence and a venom which Dickson had not believed possible. The full hand was on the table now.

"Ye wee pot-bellied, pig-headed Glasgow grocer—would *you* set up to defy me? I tell ye, I'll make ye rue the day ye were born." His parting words were a brilliant sketch of the maltreatment in store for the body of the defiant one.

"Impudent dog," said Dickson without heat. He noted with pleasure that the innkeeper hit his head violently against the low lintel, and, missing a step, fell down the loft stairs into the kitchen, where Mrs. Morran's tongue could be heard speeding him trenchantly from the premises.

Left to himself, Dickson dressed leisurely, and by and by went down to the kitchen and watched his hostess making broth. The fracas with Dobson had done him all the good in the world, for it had cleared the problem of dubieties and had put an edge to his temper. But he realized that it made his continued stay in the cottage undesirable. He was now the cynosure of all suspicion, and the innkeeper would be as good as his word and try to drive him out of the place by force. Kidnaping, most likely, and that would be highly unpleasant, besides putting an end to his usefulness. Clearly he must join the others. The soul of Dickson hungered at the moment for human companionship. He felt that his cour-

age would be sufficient for any teamwork, but might waver again if he were left to play a lone hand.

He lunched nobly off three plates of Mrs. Morran's cabbage—an early lunch, for that lady, having breakfasted at five, partook of the midday meal about eleven. Then he explored her library, and settled himself by the fire with a volume of Covenanting tales, entitled "Gleanings Among the Mountains." It was a most practical work for one in his position, for it told how various eminent saints of that era escaped the attention of Claverhouse's dragoons. Dickson stored up in his memory several of the incidents in case they should come in handy. He wondered if any of his forbears had been Covenanters. It comforted him to think that some old progenitor might have crouched behind turf walls and been chased for his life in the heather. "Just like me," he reflected. "But the dragoons weren't foreigners, and there was a kind of decency about Claverhouse, too."

About four o'clock Dougal presented himself in the back kitchen. He was an even wilder figure than usual, for his bare legs were mud to the knees, his kilt and shirt clung sopping to his body, and, having lost his hat, his wet hair was plastered over his eyes. Mrs. Morran said, not unkindly, that he looked "like a wild cat glowerin' through a whin bush."

"How are you, Dougal?" Dickson asked genially. "Is the peace of nature smoothing out the creases in your poor little soul?"

"What's that ye say?"

"Oh, just what I heard a man say in Glasgow. How have you got on?"

"No so bad. Your telegram was sent this mornin'. Auld Bull took it in to Kirk-michael. That's the first thing. Second, Thomas Yownie has took a party to get down the box from the station. He got Mrs. Sempill's pony and he took the box across the Laver by the ford and the shepherd's house and got it on to the shore maybe a mile beyond Laver foot. He managed to get the cart up as far as the water, but he could get no farther, for you'll not get a cart over the wee waterfa' just before the Laver ends in the sea. So he sent one o' the men back with it to Mrs Sempill, and, since the box was too heavy to carry, he opened it and took the stuff across in bits. It's a' safe in the cache at the foot o' the Huntingtower rocks, and he reports that the rain has done

no harm. Thomas he made a good job of it. Ye'll no fool Thomas Yownie."

"And what about your camp on the moor?"

"It was broke up afore daylight. Some of our things we've got with us, and most is cached near at hand. The tents are in the auld wife's henhouse," and he jerked his disreputable head in the direction of the back door.

"Have the tinkers been back?"

"They turned up about ten o'clock, no doubt intendin' murder. I left Wee Jaikie to watch developments. They found him sittin' on a stone, greetin' sore. When he saw them, he up and started to run, and they cried on him to stop, but he wouldn't listen. Then they cried out where were the rest, and he telled them they were feared for their lives and had run away. After that they offered to catch him, but ye'll no catch Jaikie in a hurry. When he had run round about them till they were weary, he out wi' his slingshot and got one o' them on the lug. Then he made for the Laver foot and reported."

"Man, Dougal, you've managed fine. Now I've something to tell you," and Dickson recounted his interview with the innkeeper. "I don't think it's safe for me to bide here, and if I did, I wouldn't be any use, hiding in cellars and such like, and not daring to stir a foot. I'm coming with you to the house. Now tell me how to get there."

Dougal agreed to this view. "There's been nothing doing at the house to-day, but they're keepin' a close watch on the grounds. The trouble may come any moment. There's no doubt, Mr. McCunn, that ye're in danger, for they'll serve you as the tinkers tried to serve us. Listen to me. Ye'll walk up the station road, and take the second turn on your left, a wee grass road that'll bring ye to the ford at the herd's house. Cross the Laver—there's a plank bridge—and take straight across the moor in the direction of the peaked hill they call Gray Carrick. Ye'll come to a big brook, which ye must follow till ye get to the shore. Then turn south, keepin' the water's edge till ye reach the Laver, where ye'll find one o' us to show ye the rest of the road. I must be off now, and I advise you not to be slow of startin', for wi' this rain the water's risin' quick. It's a mercy it's such coarse weather for it spoils the veesibility."

"Auntie Phemie," said Dickson a few min-

utes later, "will you oblige me by coming for a short walk?"

"The man's daft," was the answer.

"I'm not. I'll explain if you'll listen. You see," he concluded, "the dangerous bit for me is just the miie out of the village. They'll no be so likely to try violence, if there's somebody with me that could be a witness. Besides, they'll maybe suspect less, if they just see a decent body out for a breath of air with his auntie."

Mrs. Morran said nothing, but retired, and returned presently, equipped for the road. She had indued her feet with goloshes and pinned up her skirts till they looked like some demented Paris mode. An ancient bonnet was tied under her chin with strings, and her equipment was completed by an exceedingly smart tortoise-shell-handled umbrella, which, she explained, had been a Christmas present from her son.

"I'll convoy ye as far as the Laver foot shepherd's," she announced. "The wife's a friend o' mine and will get me a bit on the road back. Ye needna worry about me. I'm used to a' weathers."

The rain had declined to a fine drizzle, but a tearing wind from the southwest scoured the land. Beyond the shelter of the trees the moor was a battle ground of gusts which swept the puddles into spindrift and gave to the stagnant bog pools the appearance of running water. The wind was behind the travelers, and Mrs. Morran, who had linked arms with Dickson, was sometimes compelled to trot.

"However will you get home, mistress?" murmured Mr. McCunn anxiously.

"Fine. The wind will fall at the dark-enin'. This'll be a bad time for shhps at sea."

Not a soul was about, as they breasted the ascent of the station road and turned down the grassy bypath to the Laver foot shepherd's. The shepherd's wife saw them from afar and was at the door to receive them.

"Mighty! Phemie Morran," she shrilled. "Who would think to see ye on a day like this? John's awa' at Dumfries, buyin' tups. Come in. The kettle's on the boil."

"This is my nevoy, Dickson," said Mrs. Morran. "He's goin' to stretch his legs beyond the brook, and come back by the Ayr road. But I'll be blithe to tak' my tea wi' ye, Elspeth. Now, Dickson, I'll expect ye back on the knock o' seven."

He crossed the rising stream on a swaying plank and struck into the moor land, as Dougal had ordered, keeping the bald top of Gray Carrick before him. In that wild place with the tempest battling overhead he had no fear of human enemies. Steadily he covered the ground, till he reached the west-flowing brook that was to lead him to the shore. He found it an entertaining companion, swirling into black pools, foaming over little falls, and lying in dark canallike stretches in the flats.

Presently it began to descend steeply in a narrow, green gully, where the going was bad and Dickson, weighted with pack and waterproof, had much ado to keep his feet on the sodden slopes. Then, as he rounded a bit of hill, the ground fell away from his feet, the brook swept in a water slide to the boulders of the shore and the storm-tossed sea lay before him.

It was now that he began to feel nervous. Being on the coast again seemed to bring him inside his enemies' territory, and had not Dobson specifically forbidden the shore? It was here that they might be looking for him.

He felt himself out of condition, very wet and very warm, but he attained a creditable pace, for he struck a road which had been used by manure carts collecting seaweed. There were faint marks on it, which he took to be the wheels of Dougal's cart carrying the provision box. Yes. On a patch of gravel there was a double set of tracks, which showed how it had returned to Mrs. Sempill. He was exposed to the full force of the wind, and the strenuousness of his bodily exertions kept his fears quiescent, till the cliffs on his left sunk suddenly and the valley of the Laver lay before him.

A small figure rose from the shelter of a boulder, the warrior who bore the name of Old Bill. He saluted gravely.

"Ye're just in time. The water has risen three inches since I've been here. Ye'd better strip."

Dickson removed his boots and socks. "Breeches, too," commanded the boy. "There's deep holes beyond those stones."

Dickson obeyed, feeling very chilly, and rather improper. "Now, follow me," said the guide. The next moment he was stepping delicately on very sharp pebbles, holding on to the end of the scout's pole while an icy stream ran to his knees.

The Laver as it reaches the sea broadens

out to the width of fifty or sixty yards and tumbles over little shelves of rock to meet the waves. Usually it is shallow, but now it was swollen to an average depth of a foot or more, and there were deeper pockets. Dickson made the passage slowly and miserably, sometimes crying out with pain as his toes struck a sharper flint, once or twice sitting down on a boulder to blow like a whale, once slipping on his knees and wetting the strange excrescence about his middle, which was his tucked-up waterproof. But the crossing was at length achieved, and on a patch of sea pinks he dried himself perfunctorily and hastily put on his garments. Old Bill, who seemed to be regardless of wind or water, squatted beside him and whistled through his teeth.

Above him hung the sheer cliffs of the Huntingtower cape, so sheer that a man below was completely hidden from any watcher on the top. Dickson's heart fell, for he did not profess to be a cragsman and had, indeed, a horror of precipitous places. But as the two scrambled along the foot, they passed deep-cut gullies and fissures, most of them unclimbable, but offering something more hopeful than the face. At one of these Old Bill halted and led the way up and over a chaos of fallen rock and loose sand. The gray weather had brought on the dark prematurely, and in the half light it seemed that this ravine was blocked by an unscalable nose of rock. Here Old Bill whistled, and there was a reply from above. Round the corner of the nose came Dougal.

"Up here," he commanded. "It was Mr. Heritage that found this road."

Dickson and his guide squeezed themselves between the mass and the cliff up a spout of stones, and found themselves in an upper story of the gully, very steep but practicable even for one who was no cragsman. This in turn ran out against a wall up which there

led only a narrow chimney. At the foot of this were two of the Die-Hards, and there were others above, for a rope hung down by the aid of which a package was even now ascending.

"That's the top," said Dougal, pointing to the rim of sky, "and that's the last o' the supplies." Dickson noticed that he spoke in a whisper, and that all the movements of the Die-Hards were judicious and stealthy. "Now, it's your turn. Take a good grip o' the rope, and ye'll find plenty holes for your feet. It's no more than ten yards, and ye're well held above."

Dickson made the attempt and found it easier than he expected. The only trouble was his pack and waterproof which had a tendency to catch on jags of rock. A hand was reached out to him, he was pulled over the edge and then pushed down on his face.

When he lifted his head Dougal and the others had joined him and the whole company of the Die-Hards was assembled on a patch of grass which was concealed from the landward view by a thicket of hazels. Another, whom he recognized as Heritage, was coiling up the rope.

"We'd better get all the stuff into the old tower for the present," Heritage was saying. "It's too risky to move it into the house now. We'll need the thickest darkness for that, after the moon is down. Quick, for the beastly thing will be rising soon and before that we must all be indoors."

Then he turned to Dickson, and gripped his hand. "You're the best class of sportsman, Dogson. And I think you're just in time."

"Are they due to-night?" Dickson asked in an excited whisper, faint against the wind.

"I don't know about 'they.' But I've got a notion that some devilish queer things will happen before to-morrow morning."

TO BE CONCLUDED.



## TROLLEY CARS ONLY THIRTY-THREE YEARS OLD

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# The Cyclone and the Rope

By J. H. Greene

*Author of "A Soldier of the Stables," "A Baptist of the Bush," Etc.*

Being caught in an aeroplane in the vortex of a cyclone doesn't sound inviting, but Pilot Gryce didn't mind it

PILOT GRyce of the Air Mail Service, was flying in his E4 about a thousand feet up and was rather worried. The weather reports he had carefully read, before taking off at Denver, had threatened a depression from the southwest. There was now an ugly cloud bank gathering to his right, the air was like a choppy sea full of holes and eddies, and besides his engine was running irregularly.

Of course it had been thoroughly overhauled by the mechanics while waiting for the Western mail bags, but not a nut had been tightened without Gryce giving the final wrench. He had seen to his ignition, his valves, his oiling himself, and finally had taken one long critical walk round his ship in the hangar to reassure himself by his eye that her lines were plumb, to call for truing up if a strut distorted the angle of his wings or if his engine bearers wrongly delivered his power. Gryce was army trained and knew what a "minute" of an arc could mean to an airman.

Despite all this care his cylinders were pulsing irregularly, he could hear the misfire, and he looked below at the prairies, rectangles of ripe corn, stubble land almost pink in the sun, crossed by roads and marked by hedges of trees here and there clustering about a roof.

The misfire became more frequent, he was losing power, his engine might stop at any moment. He decided it was better to land in the open prairie than to wait and be compelled to descend near some town, despite the delay to the mails.

He picked out a purple field ahead and glided toward it, allowing himself plenty of height. Two roads crossed, one had dust from some traffic, giving him the direction of the wind; this he judged to be the main road—to be avoided, for main roads have telegraph wires. He swung round head to

the wind and made a good landing, in a stubble field with a few dry wigwams of corn stacks, easily clearable for his get-away.

He hopped out of his cockpit and a little twisting scurry of dust and dry cornstalks blew up in his face. That cloud bank was rising and edging up east. Proceeding systematically he tried his compression, his carburetor, before he located the trouble in the needle valve that supplied the gasoline on whose explosion he traveled and was kept aloft. The valve was stopped by a bit of dirt which made the needle stick to its seat. He cleaned out the passage and the obstructing speck came into his hand. It was a flake of Bull Durham.

"Hell!" said Gryce, looking up in the sky, for that little bit of leaf had brought him down and held up the United States mail.

Making a mental note that the service could be improved by having the gasoline filtered, he screwed up and was preparing to start, when the cloud of dust he had seen when landing came nearer in off the main road on to the field, and out of it appeared a troop of men, some with shotguns at the saddle, others with belts and holsters.

"Say, have you seen that negro?" hailed the leader, a severe-looking, elderly man, a pioneer patriarch.

"What negro?" asked Gryce, judging him to be a sheriff and the dusty, dour-looking riders, his posse.

"Broke jail last night after killing the keeper. Maybe you could see him from up there," said the patriarch, pointing to the sky.

"No, I did not," grinned Gryce. "I couldn't see you. I had troubles of my own."

"He's the mail," said a younger man pointing to the mail bag painted on the side of the plane.

"Yes," said Gryce, tightening his last bolt.



"And I'm losing time, and the wind's rising."

"Looks like twisters," said the patriarch, "and we're losing time, too. Come along. We've got to get that negro before we take to our cellars. Do you need any help?"

"One of you might stay and start my propeller," answered Gryce.

The patriarch and his men galloped off into the swirling dust of the main road, while Gryce climbed into his cockpit and strapped himself down.

"Hold the paddle near the axle, give it a sharp pull and step back," he said to a man who had lingered. "Do you think he will get that negro?"

"He will be swinging on a cottonwood before night," was the answer. "And you—you ain't seen us, Mr. Mailman."

"Cottonwood," said Gryce, glancing at a tall row of these trees ahead in his line of flight. "It's a lynching bee then."

"Never you mind what it is," said the man.

Gryce looked after the disappearing riders trailing their dust over the golden cornfields and shuddered a little. How could such calm beauty shelter such blood lust?

"Why do you have to lynch him. Isn't the law——"

"Law don't scare enough," interrupted the man. "Six feet of rope and a strong tree will. Shall I pull?"

Gryce put his engine to full speed, pushed forward his control and gave the word. The brown wood of the propellers turned till they were mist, and the plane rolled down the field, the tail lifting. Gryce kept his eyes on that hedge of cottonwoods and poplars that he had to clear, but out of the side of his eye he saw the little wigwam of a corn stack open and fall apart and out leaped a negro who climbed up on his fuselage.

"I can't lift with you," shouted Gryce uselessly above the roar of his engine, but the negro clambered over him to the mail pit, opened the hatch and threw out the hundred and fifty pounds of mail. The plane that had sagged for a moment as its center of gravity was disturbed, till Gryce feared a nose dive at a low and deadly height, now rose and cleared the trees, the top leaves trembling and blown back by the currents from the propeller.

The negro said something, spat into the branches and squatting in the mail pit

turned to Gryce with a grin and a Colt leveled at his face.

Gryce could do nothing but climb, he could not even speak to the man till he was high enough to shut off his power and glide. He looked down and saw the lyncher was galloping off. He must have seen the negro's escape. He would tell the gang, the country would be aroused.

Gryce was brought to eyes front by cold steel on his temple and the hot breath of the negro who was shouting at him. Gryce nodded sharply and turned to his controls. He telegraphed with his left hand that he was going up, and the negro nodded back.

Gryce had to think of the oncoming storm, to keep to his course, to listen in, on all the multitudinous voices of his machine and to plan some fight against this big brute and recover his mail.

The engine was now running with even pulse. Gryce decided he would climb high enough to reverse swiftly and shake the negro out of the pit. A loop would do it, but the loop would have to be a forward one, with himself and the negro on the outside of the turn. An inside turn might hold the negro in his place by centrifugal force as water keeps in a revolving bucket. A forward turn into a nose dive were best, and it would have to be quick and surprise the negro, who might clutch at the struts, at Gryce himself. The negro had his Colt, Gryce had gravitation, and the negro was not strapped in, had not an aviator's nerves, and would get giddy and fall easily.

A gust of the advancing storm caught the plane and sent it careening down the wind. To the right was a wall of cloud that seemed to be toppling over with its upper edge flying fragments. The sunlit prairie below was fading in shadow. Gryce noted the dust, blown in many different directions, rising into little twisters, and bits of cloud on the horizon lengthening into pear shapes like pictures of waterspouts.

It would have been dangerous to land anyway, so he climbed at full speed to reach that quieter air he could see above, a tranquil stretch of blue with calm, white streaks of cirrus. But the storm caught him full, the air darkened as he ran into rain that lashed his plane, deadening his lift, trying to drown him. As he bowed to the whiplash splashes that struck his face and dimmed his goggles, he came nearer to the negro who leaned over watching his hands on the

joy stick and his feet on the rudder treadles. The man was trying to speak, he was grinning, he had put his gun inside his shirt.

Then the rain changed to hail, pelting on his wings and drumming on his fuselage with irregular little lumps of ice, each with a misty white ball of frozen rain in the center like pieces of shrapnel with embedded bullets. But this did not worry Gryce, for hail bounced off. What he dreaded to meet was the snow that clings and loads a plane beyond its lift.

His aneroid was jumping and useless, for the cyclone, which is nature's fight between a vacuum and a compression, between a spout and a suction, had suspended all laws between air pressure and altitude. He did not know how high he was or in what direction he was flying, and he could not trust his speed indicator, for the Pitot was choked with ice splinters. His compass was crazy. He remembered arguments with his fellow flyers about such craziness in eddies. Some held that electric action upset the magnetism, others that the magnetism was all right, but that it was the plane that was crazy. He might be spinning round on his axis and not know, while the compass was pointing true. An aviator is trained to lose his giddiness, and he did not have that to guide him. He could not tell if he was flying upside down and heading straight for destruction. All he knew was that he was flying, that his engines were not missing, and that his controls answered.

He bent forward, the hot breath of the negro meeting his. But as he saw him swaying, clinging to the strut, his round, bare head matted with wet rotating on his neck with every change of inclination, Gryce gave a shout. That negro was an instrument, a level, a guide, an indicator of some sort. His swaying at least told Gryce where was gravitation. So long as that negro was in the pit the plane was not upside down. The red-rimmed eyes of the murderer made some sort of a horizon. Gryce had some direction to navigate by.

His shout reached the negro, who yelled back at him with a grin that was friendly. Presently the hail slackened, the gray murk lightened and the plane climbed into a golden haze of drizzle lit by a low sun. Gryce left the clouds below boiling like the waters of a geyser before it spouts. The drizzle began to thin, and he shot into a blue sky, with level, unmoving streaks of

cirrus above him. He shut off his power to glide and the plane ran silent between the cyclone and the zenith.

"Say, boss, that was great," said the negro. "Wish I could do that. Gor-a-mighty, look at that cotton!"

The wide sea of white tumuli below was indeed like cotton, an infinite field of fleecy masses, but the masses were alive, rolling and contorting as if in pain with their imprisoned forces that were loosening destruction and death over the prairie below. Gryce turned on his power to climb farther out of that hell pit.

A little while back he was ready to shake the negro into it, to let gravity lynch him with a three-mile drop; but the negro had saved him from gravity—had been his inclinometer. His passenger was a human being whose moral mechanism was out of gear through some trifle as small as a flake of Bull Durham. A man who could admire the running of a plane was something of a brother. The cyclone had nearly lynched both of them, and here in this upper ether of calm Gryce felt the man ought to have a fair trial, no matter how red with murder he was.

Suddenly a rainbow arched before them, vivid and perfect.

"Gor-a-mighty!" said the negro, and his jaw sagged with wonder.

Gryce ran slow, trying to read the clouds below that kept bursting like enormous bubbles. He figured he was over the center of the cyclone and made mental maps and drew imaginary diagrams from his knowledge of the laws of storms, so as to try and reach the farthest edge.

A gust caught him, a little rain fell, and the rainbow jumped nearer, the prismatic color almost springing from his left wing. The negro raised his hand as if something was about to hit him and turned to Gryce holding out the Colt. Gryce clipped his joy stick between his knees to leave his hands free, and shut off his power while the voice of the negro, sobbing and hysterical, rose above the dying down of the propeller.

"Take it white man—take it—I was wrong! Put me down where I has a chance to grow white. Gor-a-mighty I'll work. I'll quit stealing and booze. I want to learn a white man's job, to be like you, white man, to fly over dem yar cotton fields. Hell, I'se got religion! No more shooting. Good-by to gun stuff.—I repent. 'Allelujah!"

He stood up in the mail pit with lifted arms and flung the gun over the side and then, throwing himself on the fuselage, cried: "Teach me your job white man—teach me your job!"

His hands reached out for the joy stick and to quiet him Gryce let his black paw share the control of the plane.

Gryce had now figured out a chance to reach the vanishing edge of the storm below and began to glide southeast, seeking for a rift of clearance below. He ran away from the calmer center as conflicting currents met him, but he had the sun for his direction; he was not flying blindly, but was like a gull lifting and dropping over waves of air, seeking where he could dive. As he fingered his controls, played with his feet on the rudder and felt his way up and down with the joy stick, the negro followed and imitated every movement, his face alive with interest, shouting his glee and breaking into long-forgotten revivalist hymns.

Gryce thought he saw a streak of yellow where the sun broke through the cloud curtain and hit a distant cornfield. He dropped the nose of the plane and the negro felt the slip of his body on the fuselage.

"Whar we going?" he asked.

"Down," said Gryce, throwing on his power as he judged that gold spot was too far for a glide.

"No!" yelled the negro in a voice of terror, above the beat of the engine, as he reached for the joy stick, tumbling into the pit on top of Gryce, who fought him off, throwing him back on the fuselage. But in the struggle the joy stick was kicked forward and the plane took a nose dive.

The screaming negro clung to a strut and hooked his legs into the mail pit as he felt himself falling. The plane was dropping at an accelerating velocity of thirty-two feet a second—sixty-four feet at the end of the second, one hundred and twenty-eight at the end of the third, and in fractions of seconds, in watch ticks, Gryce had to pull himself together from his fight with the maniacal negro and try to save his plane. The clouds came up and enveloped him, and the uprush of air was complicated by the upper eddies of the cyclone, as it fell into its turbulent and most rapidly moving outer edge.

He pulled up on the turn a little too suddenly. His sixth sense of instinctive sympathy with every strut, longeron, and wire of his plane told him he had strained some-

thing as a high diver sometimes wricks his back. He stopped his fall for a moment, but the jar had lifted his right wing, and the aileron tore away. Under the lopsided pressure on the other wing he side-slipped hopelessly, without a chance of recovery.

His thought left him as he realized instantaneously that controls, pedals and the joy stick were useless, and an almost blissful sensation, like what he remembered of dentists' laughing gas, came over him, as once more the rapidly rising air rose round him as he fell again.

In a second or two, or an age—he could not tell which—he awoke to the full activity of his senses to find he had stopped falling. He looked at his compass. The needle was rotating round and round regularly as a clock. His aneroid, if he could trust it, showed a constant height. He was in a dense cloud, but no wind was blowing in his face. His Pitot, which the upper sun had cleared of its icicles, registered no pressure; according to that he was not moving. Yet he was not falling!

For one bewildering instant Gryce wondered if this was death. Had he really fallen—was this flight a mere visionary aftermath? He reached out his hand and touched the head of the negro, who was lying prone, face down on the fuselage and howling miserably. The negro looked up at him, his eyes wide with terror.

Gryce looked over the side, and the uprush of air was like a gale. Something in the gray moved below him, almost like the wings of another plane. Then he was overwhelmed with fragments of corn stalks and hay blown up at him. Grass, dry leaves, and lumps of soil bombarded the inner sides of his wings and fell back on him in the pit.

He understood he was afloat in the funnel of a twister. The vortex would not let him fall, he was upheld by gyrating currents strong enough to destroy towns and uproot trees. He suddenly recognized that object rotating below him as the red roof of a barn.

There was no air blowing into his Pitot so it registered no motion, but he felt a difficulty in breathing, as if in a very high altitude. He looked at his aneroid again; it said he was not falling, but it also announced he was five miles high. He was not, the instrument was responding to the rarified air in the vortex. Gryce wondered if he would suffocate if he was drawn nearer to the vacuum of its center.

His plane rode steadily despite the damaged wing, and at a constant angle like a top. He kept his engine at half speed, vaguely hoping that the twister might let him down lightly enough to make a landing. A rush of green leaves hit his wings; they were cottonwood leaves; then came a spatter of muddy water sucked up from some pool.

He smelled the smoke of burning wood drawn up through the immense chimney of the cyclone, which his knowledge and the evidence of the flying barn and the corn and grass told him was devastating the prairie and its towns. Nothing but these would tell him, for his motion was steady. He shut off his power, certain he did not need it, and he rotated on the wide circumference in absolute silence. The cyclone did not roar in his ears, for he moved with it and no faster. Only when he put out his hand could he feel any motion and that was of the upward current supporting him.

The vortex would have to die out sometime, and he wanted to reserve his power for a fighting chance. The calm gave him time to think. He wondered if he could repair his broken aileron, and he climbed out on the lower wing gingerly, acting on a theory. The plane did not keel; gravity was suspended or at least partially annulled, and he respliced his torn wire so as to secure a little control when he needed it.

The light air pressure and the incessant but imperceptible rotation was making him a little giddy, and he began to play with his theory. He wondered if he could step off his plane into space, whether he would not be allowed to subside slowly to the ground, he remembered how slowly leaves and sticks come to rest in little whirlwinds. It might give him a bigger chance—he would avoid being entangled with the plane. If he was sure there was a lake below he would risk it.

He threw out his cap to try, it disappeared upward. He would keep to his plane as yet, for fear he too might be blown upward for a greater fall after. He crawled back into his pit to meet the ashen face of the negro. He touched him and a spark snapped between them, and the negro screamed. There was static in the cyclone,

a difference of potential in the pit and at the wing tip—and he had become charged with electricity.

Gryce had some knowledge of current physics and while thus swerving on the brink of sudden death he was able to feel some scientific rapture, for he was in a new world ruled by new forces. He was in the curved space of the relativists moving on the inside of the funnel of a cyclone where attraction for a while ran upward, where a change of a few feet meant electrification, where rapidity was rest, where straight lines were curves.

Something moved past him and struck him. It was a piece of new manila rope caught up from below, with a loop at one end. The other end caught in his wheels under the fuselage and the free end blowing out its loop shook over the negro's head as if it were alive. The negro gave one wild yell, rose to his feet, covered his head as if he would duck from that hovering loop and leaped from the plane.

The plane lifted with the loss of his weight, and Gryce shoved on his power for control. As he banked he saw the cloud thin below him to a small circle of visibility, with flying corn patches lit with the low sun. More leaves swirled round him and he could see the branches of a row of cottonwood trees twisted on their stems, and he dived down with full speed to land on the top of those trees, the upper branches taking him like a cushion.

He was shaken, but safe, for the sharp branches pierced his plane and held.

He saw the tail of the twister leave him in a corkscrew filament of flying cloud, sucking up leaves and lifting haystacks as it passed.

He climbed out of his car and started to descend the big tree. Halfway to the ground he nearly fell as his reaching foot trod on something soft. It was a man quite dead, transfixed on the sharp branches and stuck full of straws that also pierced him from chest to back. Gryce recognized the patriarch, the leader of the lynchers, and shaking with terror and awe he descended to the rapidly darkening prairie to find out where he was and to find his mail.



# "First Down, Kentucky!"

By Ralph D. Paine

*Author of "Eyes in the Boat, Number Six," "The Orphan and the Battle Wagon," Etc.*

Once in a while there crops out a football story told by some one who knows what he is talking about and who knows how to tell it. This is one of them, as you might have guessed from the author's name. It's about that famous little old Southern college, Centre, which, with only a hundred or so men to draw from, has made gridiron history. More especially, it's about those redoubtable three musketeers of the moleskin, "Bo" McMurray, Len Garretson, and "Red" Mercer. Meet them!

(A Five-Part Story—Part 1.)

## CHAPTER I.

"THREE COPS ARE MORE'N USUAL."

**H**IS pugnacious young features were aflame with excitement, and his shrill voice rose above the clamor in a series of agonized yelps.

"Hold 'em, Fort Hawley! Atta boy! Eat 'em alive! They're all yellow, the big lemons! Give 'em the rough stuff!"

In this chaste but impassioned manner did Bowman McMurray, aged fifteen, exhort to more desperate endeavor the embattled heroes of the Texas town. You may perhaps infer that the occasion was either riot or murder, but this was merely the annual football game between the high-school elevens of Fort Hawley and Waco. To the crowd that cheered and waved the rival colors it was a climax with a championship at stake, but to the black-haired boy in the blue denim shirt and patched breeches, it was one of life's supreme and splendid hours.

Presently he beheld the ensanguined youths of Fort Hawley take the ball and surge ahead for a thrilling gain. His emotions had quite worn him out, and he could only murmur, with a grin of rapture:

"Just like a bullet through a chunk o' cheese! Gee mighty, but I sho'ly do love a game of football."

He had not aspired to a seat upon the tiers of planks where thronged the beauty and chivalry of Fort Hawley, but hovered

near the high, board fence, not far from the entrance gate. It was a strategic choice of position. Misfortune had threatened to blight this great day when he discovered that the twenty-five-cent piece required to buy an admission ticket had vanished through a hole in his pocket. Having delayed to await the finish of an uncommonly good dog fight, his friends had all flocked in when he reached the field and there was nothing to do but skin over the fence and hope to dodge the policemen. Utterly absorbed in the shifting tide of the contest, he soon forgot to keep a wary eye lifted in the direction of the gate where lurked the plump and peevish Officer Gilson Givins.

The Fort Hawley eleven had just scored the first touchdown, and the husky voice of Bowman McMurray was barking frenzied acclaim when a cruel hand gripped the back of his neck and he caught a frightened glimpse of a blue coat, bright buttons, and a scowling red face.

"I saw you beatin' it over the fence, you wicked little devil," rumbled Officer Gilson Givins, "but I was too busy to leave the gate. Come along now, or I'll shake all your teeth loose."

There were memories of other encounters to prompt the policeman's remarks, particularly the episode of the ripe tomato which had exploded against his left ear as he strolled in the dusk through the street where dwelt the militant young McMurray.

In this instance if he expected that his captive would meekly suffer ejection from the football grounds, the error was grievous. The majesty of the law overlooked the spiritual equation. As the boy regarded it, to be dragged away from this football game was an outrage unthinkable. His soul was in revolt, heedless of consequences.

"Ouch, you hurt! Let go a minute," he pleaded. "I'll run over to the stand and borrow two bits to pay for your darn old ticket."

"I'd trust you as far as I could sling a cat. Pick up your feet and don't give me no more o' your lip," was the heated reply of Officer Gilson Givins as he jerked the culprit toward the gate. To say that Bowman McMurray resisted an officer would be wholly inadequate. He simply erupted. It was foolish, but so is any forlorn hope. This was no mother's pampered darling, but a tough and agile chunk of a lad who weighed a hundred and thirty pounds. And it was to the policeman's disadvantage that he had too little wind and too much beef.

"I *told* you to quit chokin' me," blubbered Bowman, and with this he twisted free and rammed his head into the stomach of Officer Givins who grunted and clapped both hands to that expansive region. While he was thus engaged, a hard fist smote him in the eye, and his shins were kicked with the most zealous energy. He was both pained and amazed. The boy had gone clean crazy. It would not do to use a club on him, and the policeman, who was in a fair way of becoming a complete ruin, lunged clumsily and grabbed the blue denim shirt in both hands. It tore away in his grip and then the boy swarmed all over him. When next they broke apart, a diving tackle knocked the props from under Officer Gilson Givins, and he smote the turf with a mighty thud.

The sole aspiration of Bowman McMurray was to see the football game and even as he scrambled to his feet he turned to gaze at the entangled mass of players who were piled up in mid-field. Just then two other policemen left the side line and loped toward this scene of private carnage. They were more amused than otherwise as they descried the wreckage of Officer Gilson Givins, who was by no means the most popular of the force. It seemed a trifling matter to lay hold of this rampageous boy and chuck him through the gate, but Bowman

McMurray had ceased to reckon with the odds. No more had Davy Crockett and Colonel Bowie! It was the spirit of the Alamo. True Texans fought until they dropped if you crowded them too far. Tearful, but undismayed, Bowman panted:

"Gee mighty, have I got to lick *three* cops and watch a football game at the same time?"

He stood entranced as the Fort Hawley full back caught the ball on the kick-off and flashed like a meteor through the broken field. Then the blue-coated reinforcements closed in. They were lanky men and fast on their feet. The groggy Officer Givins was right side up by this time, and he maneuvered to cut off the line of retreat. It was now his baleful intention to throw this young outlaw into the patrol wagon and put him in the pen, charged with assault and battery, mayhem, attempted murder, and a few other things.

Poor Bowman dodged, but one of the enemy deftly hurled a club at his legs and he tripped headlong, turning a somersault and rebounding like a rubber ball. This instant of delay enabled them to surround him and one caught him by the slack of the trousers while another got his fingers into the shock of black hair. Their quarry was a whirlwind of flying arms and feet. He wriggled and squirmed like a basket of eels. When they tried to pin him down and flatten him out by sheer weight, he was not there. A boot heel smote a policeman on the jaw, and something told him that the recent job of expensive dentistry would have to be done all over again. He lost his temper entirely and jerked the club from his belt.

Meanwhile the football game subsided for a few minutes' interlude at the end of the first quarter. A slender, alert young man was one of the first to espy the cyclone which raged in the corner near the gate, and he arrived in time to shout:

"Drop that club, Jackson! What do you mean? If you hit that boy, I'll have you tried for it."

The angry officer stood abashed and ashamed of himself as he sulkily replied:

"I didn't reckon to hit him hard, Mr. Caldwell—jes' to scare him. We ain't able to do nothin' with him a-tall."

"Three of you, eh? Why don't you call out the reserves?" retorted Fayette Caldwell, attorney-at-law, and the humor of it

got the better of his indignation. "Come here, boy, and tell me what it's all about."

The three policemen resented this interference and the crumpled Gilson Givins was for retaining his clutch on Bowman McMurray, but the young lawyer spoke sharply.

"Turn him loose, you big lunkhead. I'll be responsible for him. Now, son, you certainly did put up a wonderful scrap for your tender years, but what started it?"

Bowman McMurray stepped clear of the foemen, but kept a vigilant eye on them as he tried to hitch his tattered garments together. He mopped his dusty, tear-stained face with what remained of a sleeve and smiled at his unexpected friend as he explained in unsteady accents:

"I was shy two bits, please, suh, to pay my way in, and this fat cop jumped on me. I told him to let me be while I found somebody to loan me the price, but he started to run me out. He was mean—took hold of my neck, and it hurt. I just naturally couldn't stand for that, so I went to it."

"Why didn't you give him the slip? He couldn't catch you."

"And miss the biggest game of the year? You're jokin'," earnestly affirmed the youngster. "Anyhow, this ornery old cop had no business usin' me like that."

"Is this true, Givins?" demanded Fayette Caldwell. "Did he offer to buy a ticket?"

"Mebbe he did," grunted the accused, "but this ain't the first time I ever met 'Bo' McMurray, dern him!"

"McMurray?" queried the lawyer. "Here, boy, who-all do you belong to? Is your dad Tom McMurray, foreman at the car shops?"

"Yes, suh. My name is Bowman, and I'm a freshman in high school. I ought to be in the next class, but I got set back. The principal won't let me play football this season—says I'm a born scrapper an' need to be disciplined a whole lot."

"You were set back? Nonsense, Bowman! You are too bright a kid for that. You had better come over to the field and see the rest of the game with me. Here's a ticket for him, Givins."

"This yere infernal boy is under arrest, Mr. Caldwell," protested the vengeful policeman. "If you want to see him you can go look in the calaboose this evenin'."

The two other officers were sauntering back to their posts of duty in front of the

crowded grand stand. They were sensible enough to perceive that no credit was to be gained from this affair. It was an excellent idea to let it alone. Fayette Caldwell was a very young lawyer, but he had many friends in Fort Hawley and was known to be as smart as a whip. His eyes snapped as he said to the stupid Givins:

"Do you want to be laughed out of town? This young terrapin licked the stuffing out of you, and two more cops had to come to the rescue. What do you say to my dropping into the *Daily Messenger* office and giving Dick Folsom the story? He sure does sling a mean pen, and he'd yell for joy at a funny one like this."

"It ain't right to let law and order get busted all to hell this way, Mr. Caldwell," grumbled the other; "but I don't like the notion of bein' joshed by Dick Folsom for doin' my duty and—"

"All right, Bowman. Come along. You are on probation," briskly exclaimed the protector. "It's a private bargain, between you and me."

"Not with my clothes all tore up, Mr. Caldwell. Give me the ticket, if you please, and I'll stay right here. I fought to hold this piece of ground."

"Right you are, then. Supposing you wait for me at the gate after the game, and we'll walk downtown together."

"You bet I will," cried the boy in a tingling glow of gratitude. "You can't lose me."

There was another spectator, a very timid one, who now advanced a few steps, hesitated, and displayed symptoms of profound agitation. Her hair hung down her back in two braids, thick and yellow, and the blue eyes were suffused with a pitying tenderness. It was perfectly horrid, of course, for Bowman McMurray to be fighting with a policeman, but the maternal instinct of this schoolmate of his conquered the obligation to scold him. She waited for some encouragement, but he merely nodded and glowered at her, as though intimating that he desired to have her mind her own business.

"I can spare several pins as well as not, Bo, and one of 'em is a safety pin," she ventured. "Goodness, your elbow is all skinned, and your nose is scratched something awful. Want my handkerchief?"

"Much obliged, Nan," was the gruff response, for the hero had become taciturn,

ill at ease, indifferent. "I'm all right. You needn't bother."

"It's no trouble, I assure you," primly answered Nancy Overton. "I'd much rather help fix you up than see any more football. It is a very brutal sport, in my opinion."

"Silly! Just like a girl! Well, if you've got to, you might hitch the back of my shirt together. And don't jab any pins into me."

With fluttering fingers Nancy pinned the worst rents, convinced that Bowman would box her ears if she accidentally pricked him. She was a tall girl, rangy and long-legged, with dawning hints of beauty in the childish immaturity of her fourteen years. When she stood erect her fair head was level with the tousled thatch of the McMurray offspring. Alas, he was paying no heed to her whatever, but kept his vision focused on the trampled field where the chosen youths of Waco had returned to the fray like giants refreshed and were engaged in smashing holes through the straining defense of Fort Hawley.

"You gotta hold 'em," snarled Bowman, his fists clenched, every muscle taut. "Wow, Nan, you sunk that pin into me plumb up to the hilt."

"I couldn't help it, Bo," said the sweet, troubled voice. "You won't stand still. What ever possessed you to fight all those policemen? Why can't you keep out of trouble? It's just the same at school."

"I don't start it, do I? For Heaven's sake, Nan, I s'posed you were a friend of mine."

"I am, Bo. That's why I worry about you. It's a pity you dislike girls so. What you need is refining influences. We women admire courage, but you seem to have 'most too much of it."

"Guess I'm a born woman hater," was the gloomy admission. "For instance, the idea of your dislikin' football! How can a man understand that?"

"The feminine nature is complex and you are just plain thick, anyhow," retorted Nancy, "or you'd be a sophomore in high school by this time."

"I bet you'll see me playin' quarter back a year from now," he boasted.

"Without the slightest interest in culture and education," she sighed. "There, Bo, I've tied up your elbow and sort of patched you together, and I guess I'll go back with the other girls. A lot of your friends are over there."

He ignored the hint, but was sufficiently gracious to mumble: "Thank you, Nan, for takin' an interest in me. I reckon I'll stay here. Somebody else is liable to pick on me if I mix up with the crowd, and I've got enough for to-day."

"Three policemen, think of that," she said in farewell, and the worship of masculine prowess could no longer be suppressed.

"Three is more'n usual," was the lofty comment. "So long, Nan."

Bowman McMurray stared after her for a long moment, as she moved slowly in the direction of the crowd, and this was singularly eloquent, for nothing else could have diverted his attention. Once she was bold enough to turn and wave her hand. He returned the greeting and smiled in a furtive manner as though afraid he might be caught in the act. Recalling the fourth reel of the latest motion picture he had seen, he muttered with unconscious plagiarism:

"That girl will make a fine wife, for some worthy young fellow, believe me!"

And then soft-hearted Nancy Overton passed from his mind like an image on the screen as he lost himself in the issues of the struggle for the high-school championship. It was nip and tuck almost to the very end, when Fort Hawley scored the winning touchdown in the last five minutes. Then the weary, but ecstatic, Bowman McMurray rushed to the field to join the snake dance and cheer until his voice was a whisper and his eyes popped out. Squirring through the mass of celebrants he managed to shake the captain's hand and wheeze his congratulations. They met as man to man, for Bowman felt that he had done a fair afternoon's work himself.

"Great work, old boy," said he, "and I saw you do it, though I had to lick a bunch of cops between times."

Limping to the gate in the wake of the crowd, he found Mr. Fayette Caldwell waiting just outside. To be taken notice of in this manner was tremendously flattering, and as they turned into a side street the boy expressed his feeling in the query:

"Say, did you see th' picture, 'At the End of the Lonesome Trail?' When 'Two-gun' Bill Stebbins rescued th' guy from the bandits it was just like your savin' me from the cops. You quelled 'em all right, Mr. Caldwell. I reckon you must have nerves of steel."

"The cops were ridiculous," replied the



lawyer. "You may be a great football player some day, Bowman. That is what occurred to me when I saw you in action."

"Honest? Did I really show any class? Of course I did gain ground through Gilson Givins an' his pardners, but it wasn't like a regular scrimmage."

"You would have been hard to stop on a college field this afternoon," laughed Caldwell. "I never saw anything like it. You are sound in wind and limb, all right."

"An' I'm always going to stay that way," was the serious declaration. "No cigarettes or booze or late hours! An athalete has to cut 'em out. Get me?"

"I think I get you, Bowman," just as seriously replied young Mr. Caldwell as he studied the boy with an increasing interest. Here were aspirations of a sort, clean and manly, which were worthy to be fostered. There was fearless candor in the gray eyes which regarded this grown-up friend with a touch of wistfulness, as though life were a battle and such respites as this were few and far between. A square, hard face, but not a tough one, the blood of the Irish race was manifest, and it also revealed itself in a temperament emotional and responsive. Fayette Caldwell's own boyhood was not far enough distant to be blurred, and he went on to say:

"You are the leader of the bunch in school, I suppose. And how about the gang in your street? Folks call you a holy terror, do they?"

"Some of 'em do. Sufferin' catfish, I don't want to fight *all* the time, but I got a reputation an' you'd be s'prised to see how many boys, bigger'n me, seem to have a kind of ambition to knock my block off. Usually they start it by pesterin' one of the little boys in my crowd, an' I can't allow that, can I? You *gotta* do your duty in this world, Mr. Caldwell."

To the lawyer was vouchsafed the sympathy to perceive that although the neighborhood might condemn this turbulent youngster as a nuisance, he was at heart a knight-errant. And old-fashioned ideas of chivalry are apt to find a rocky road in the modern social order. They chatted about life in general for some time and then Caldwell asked:

"Why were you set back in high school? What's the matter?"

"The loose foot, suh," grinned Bowman. "You know what I mean. It ketches me

once in a while. Then I jes' naturally drift. All last year I was a tourist. Workin' at what? Oh, on a beef ranch for a while, an' drivin' tent pegs for a Chautauqua show, an' stable hand for a stage route—a little of 'most everything. I reckon I was a plain hobo. I'll bet you couldn't beat your way home from Montana on the blind baggage an' the brake beams. I learned that from the blanket stiffs that follow the wheat harvestin'."

"Now listen to me, Bowman," sternly spoke the astonished Caldwell. "You must hobble that loose foot except in summer-time. Unless you promise, I won't waste my time on you. You think more of football than anything else, you tell me."

"You bet I do. I was captain of the grammar-school team, but the material was something fierce."

"I'll come around to see you play next season. I was the full back for three years on my college eleven."

"Gee mighty, Mr. Caldwell! Where was that at? A real college player? An' I thought you were nothing but a lawyer."

"In Kentucky, where I came from. I married a Fort Hawley girl."

"I know," said Bowman. "Your wife was Miss Sallie Barbee. Her kid brother played left guard on my team an' he was perfectly rotten."

"Well, we can't all be great men," chuckled Caldwell. "Why don't you go to college, boy? Never thought of it, I presume."

"Not me!" scoffed Bowman.

"Your folks ever mention it? Would they help you?"

"Nothing doing, suh. Th' best they hope for is that I'll keep out of jail an' cinch a steady job in the car shops. It's an awful big family, Mr. Caldwell. It's up to me to rustle for myself."

"That doesn't prevent you from going to college. You think I am talking through my hat?"

"Sounds like your skylight *is* open," agreed Bowman. "Me play football on a regular college team? Doesn't look like it."

They parted in front of Caldwell's house and for several minutes after the door closed, Bowman McMurray stood lost in thought. Then he limped homeward and might have been heard to mutter, with an expressive gesture:

"Some afternoon! I stood off three cops

an' met a perfect gentleman. When ma sees my clothes an' dad sees my nose—never mind, I'll tell 'em I was preparin' for college."

## CHAPTER II.

### NANCY OVERTON HAS A BIRTHDAY.

As long as two young people can be as happy together as were Fayette and Sallie Caldwell, marriage cannot be counted a total failure. In other respects also they were rather out of date. They were the infatuated parents of an infant prodigy which had been christened in its father's name, but was inscrutably known as "Scooch," and they hoped for several more, twins preferred. They had a small income and a wee cottage, for even the most brilliant of lawyers, as Sallie knew him to be, has to get a toe hold; but they steered clear of debt and envied nobody.

At supper he told her of his adventure with that armored cruiser, Bowman McMurray, who was always cleared for action. Sallie was still a brown, vivacious slip of a girl not long out of her teens, and she knew all about boys. Heaven knows how many of their gallant young Texan hearts she had broken when she was so light of foot, so fancy free. Fayette was interested and therefore she felt eager to assist.

"I am so glad you have taken a liking to that boy," exclaimed Sallie. "The women cackle about him like a lot of frightened hens. But you ought to hear my small brother Rufus rave about Bo McMurray! 'The niftiest football cap'n that ever wore a cleat,' says Rufe, 'and a dead game sport.' That means a good deal—a sense of honor and the right kind of courage."

"That was my impression of him, honey. I can't believe he is a bad influence. He has been allowed to run wild, but, at that, his morals and manners are a heap sight better than you'll find among the well-dressed young loafers in the pool room of the Plaza Hotel. I took a shine to this boy, Sallie. What is his home like?"

"He has a splendid mother, and Rufe says Bo just swears by her; but they are really poor, with five little McMurrays besides this boy. He simply has had to shift for himself, though they never meant to neglect him, I'm sure."

"I know Tom McMurray," said Caldwell. "Big-hearted and husky and a first-

class mechanic. They are not educated people, of course."

"They might not qualify for the Fort Hawley smart set. Rufe is a sincere little gossip, and he vows that Nan Overton is sweet on Bo."

"John Overton's daughter—the pretty blond one? One of our first families, even if John did make his money in the stockyards! There is a society scandal for you."

"I was madly in love with a barber when I was sixteen," sweetly observed Sallie, "and I mighty near eloped with him. He had dreamy eyes and serenaded me with his guitar at boarding school."

"The only reason he escaped killing was because I didn't come along sooner," hotly declared the Kentucky lover. "Do you mind if I step around to the McMurrays' for a few minutes? I am sort of playin' a hunch."

"And you pine for quick action," drawled Sallie. "That's how you stole me. You never could wait. Football got you going this time."

"That's part of it," said Fayette as he kissed her good-by. "If you could have seen this bunch of dynamite mix it up with the three cops—maybe I've found a star. I used to pick 'em pretty well when I was captain of my college team. And this may be the only way to get a hold on the boy."

Caldwell sauntered into a sandy, rambling street at the edge of Fort Hawley. The frame houses were close together, set behind picket fences. It was not a mean street, but the fact was obvious that the attractive residential quarter of the town had spread over a different area. Fort Hawley was, in fact, a city of ten thousand people and of quite recent growth. Its reason for being was the junction of two important railroad systems, and the prosperity was largely industrial, while it was also the marketing and mercantile center for the rich black farming lands that surrounded it. There was a chamber of commerce which boosted vociferously. This goes without saying. Money was easily earned and carelessly spent. Fort Hawley mourned not the lack of history and traditions. It was too busy making them.

No expert social workers had yet analyzed, charted, and organized the town according to its needs and "groups." Perhaps this was why Bowman McMurray had been overlooked. He disturbed the existing order of things, but nobody had tried to find out

why. This occurred to Fayette Caldwell as he knocked at the McMurray portal. A buxom woman invited him in, but her cheery smile vanished and the rosy cheek paled as she exclaimed:

"'Tis Mr. Caldwell, the lawyer. What trouble is it now, I wonder? Sit down, if you please, and I will call Tom. You will be wanting him, I suppose. He is swapping a bit of talk with a neighbor across the back fence yonder."

Her beautiful serenity, which had withstood so much toil and anxiety, was seriously distraught. Caldwell hastened to say:

"It is after office hours, Mrs. McMurray, so I am a neighbor, not a lawyer. Tom will be coming in directly. Don't bother to call him."

The door into the kitchen was ajar, and he caught a glimpse of Bowman which was more eloquent than anything the mother could have said in his favor. Perched upon a stool at the sink was the boy terror, an apron tied around him, while he washed the supper dishes. On the table beside him sat a younger McMurray and another stood propped against the sink. They were perfectly quiet, in a kind of trance, for Bowman had jammed an open book behind the faucets of the water taps and his voice could be heard above the careless clatter of the crockery in the suds:

"When midnight came and the Gi-ant thought the Tailor would be in a deep sleep, he got up, and taking a great iron bar, beat the bed right through at one stroke, and supposed he had thereby given the Tailor his deathblow. At the earliest dawn of morning the Gi-ants went forth into the for-est, quite for-getting the Tailor, when pre-sently up he came, quite merry, and showed himself before them. The Gi-ants were terrified and, fearing he would kill them all, they ran away in great haste."

The reader broke off his epic to look for a dish towel and one of the audience piped up:

"Gorry, Bo, I betcher them Gi-unts 'ud beat it if *you* got after 'em. Wouldn't they, Jennie?"

Mrs. McMurray closed the kitchen door upon the fascinated group who had not heard the visitor enter. Easily moved, the mother wiped her eyes as she said:

"'Tis that kind of a boy he is, Mr. Caldwell, though the town wouldn't believe it. He would sooner save me steps than be runnin' about at night. The sight of you upset me, and that's the truth, for Bowman is not

a liar, and when I asked what mussed him up to-day he said it was a fight with a policeman."

"I saw it, Mrs. McMurray, and I took the boy's end of it. There is nothing to worry about. In fact, I was so pleased with him that I came around to get better acquainted."

"Praise God for that, Mr. Caldwell," she exclaimed with a smile that was pure sunshine. "'Tis hard to believe that Bowman has made a friend like yourself. A mother has her own sorrows to bear, and one of them is that her children lose the hold of her two hands. Here comes Tom, now. He will be pleased to see you."

She slipped into the hall and whispered in her husband's ear a hurried explanation. With genial courtesy, the brawny, black-browed mechanic offered his hand to Fayette Caldwell and exclaimed:

"The wife tells me good news. A kind word for the boy is like gold to her. And how is the lovely little lady that you put the comether on?"

"I'm still wondering how I did it, Tom. And if you're the man I think you are, you feel the same way."

"You're a sensible young man, Mr. Caldwell. Now if Bowman had only taken after his blessed mother—but th' heredity took a wrong slant. I was a two-fisted, fightin' fool of a boy that felt lonesome without trouble for company."

"Tom, be still," chided his wife. "We will have none of your wild stories. A fine example of a father you are. 'Tis the weakness of some good men, Mr. Caldwell, to brag of what terrible lads they were once upon a time."

"And now a woman makes me tremble with a word," said Tom McMurray, with a laugh that rolled deep and hearty from his big chest. "Take Bowman, now. Give a young dog a bad name, eh? There is mischief in him now and again, but never a dirty streak. You know what I mean."

"There was the time that our neighbor Harry Hatch, the carpenter, busted his leg when he fell off a roof. The boys got up what they called a benefit—a circus, understand—and were sellin' tickets for a dime, as busy as grasshoppers. Bowman was th' instigator, of course. Old Jed Shreve that lives in the next block, and a tightwad he is, refused to loosen up for even one ticket and chased the kids out of his yard. Well,

when he came out one mornin', there was a big silver dollar shining on the sidewalk right in front of his gate. Old Jed dove for it, and dropped it. They heard him yell clean over in the Hollow, where the colored folks live. Bowman had heated the silver dollar in the kitchen stove and toted it over on the fire shovel. The old man always starts for the post office at nine o'clock precisely."

"Did the boy own up to it?" asked Caldwell.

"Yes, and I walloped him. He said he'd bet the other kids that he could make Jed Shreve let go of a dollar and be glad of the chance. 'Twas a safe bet that time."

"What about his wandering off last year, Tom? Is he liable to do it again?"

"Not if he stays this year in high school. The football will hold him after that. And perhaps you won't mind lending us a hand with him."

"That's why I'm here, Tom. You don't have to tell me anything more. I guessed right this afternoon."

The kitchen door opened and Bowman demurely stole into the room and found a seat in the corner. He was used to hearing himself discussed. This had long since ceased to embarrass him. The presence of Mr. Fayette Caldwell was tremendously exciting, but the boy had learned a self-repression which was curiously mature. When lost in his own thoughts he seemed almost stoical. And so he sat and beamed at Mr. Fayette Caldwell until his mother said:

"Did you put the two children to bed, Bowman?"

"Yes'm. Bud kicked on sayin' his prayers till I crawled under the cot to see if there was any Gi-ants there, but I tucked 'em both in."

"If your mother can spare you, Bowman," said Caldwell, "I'd like to have you come to my house for supper Friday. We can talk football and college, and I'll show you the pictures of my teams."

"Of course he'll be there," gratefully exclaimed Tom McMurray, "if I have to buy him a new suit of clothes. 'Twould save money if I could dress him in tin, and button him up with a solderin' iron."

Mrs. McMurray stammered her thanks. The good God had heard her petitions. It was like a shining miracle that such a dear man as this should step from his own pathway to intercede in the problem of her boy

whom other people had never tried to understand. Bowman followed into the hall and said confidentially:

"This will do 'em more good than a barrel of money, Mr. Caldwell. It takes an old athalete like you to size things up. Much obliged, for everything."

In this manner, quite by chance, was young Bowman McMurray given an opportunity to divert his abounding energy into channels less obstructed with shoals and driftwood. To claim that he instantly became a pattern of propriety and an exemplary student would be absurd. But he had discerned afar off a goal undreamed of. If the love of football was not the loftiest motive in the world, it was nevertheless a lever to pry with and an influence touched by nothing ignoble. Fayette Caldwell would have laughed at the notion that he had been drawn into it by a sense of duty. It was like the pleasure which the good artisan feels in shaping and finishing a bit of precious metal in accordance with a certain design.

Bowman fell into the habit of dropping in to talk things over, sometimes at the law office in the brick block, again at the house in the evening. He had the knack of making himself unobtrusive on such occasions, of waiting for the opportune moment. He was never underfoot. Sallie Caldwell made the important discovery that the infant prodigy, miscalled "Scooch," had found a buddy after his own heart. It was Bowman who volunteered to take charge in the nursery while Sallie went out now and then to a card party, a dance, or a concert.

"And I don't feel a mite of anxiety," she told Fayette. "I simply couldn't leave Scooch with a triflin' yellow girl. He simply yells for 'Bo, Bo,' and that's all there is to it."

Bowman gravely explained it to Caldwell.

"I'm used to 'em. And he can't help likin' a football player. It's born in him. If he wakes up and gets fretty, I sing to him, and he holds my thumb an' pops off to sleep. Say, he's got a grip on him."

If the boy had been stupid or slow to learn, Caldwell might have tired of the task; but now that there was something definite to strive for, Bowman attacked his schoolbooks with a vigor which puzzled and amazed the teachers. He proposed to waste no more time. The big stunt was to get

into college as soon as possible. The football season had ended with the autumn term, and the rest of the year was a long, drudging road, but the new tenacity of purpose carried him along.

His visions of college life were fed by motion pictures and story books obtained at the public library. The fortunate youths always wore snappy clothes and spent their time in singing close harmonies, "rushing" each other for fraternities, or playing hob with the professors. This appealed to the sensible Bowman as frivolous stuff. As he knew it, life was a serious affair. However, Fayette Caldwell noticed that he was more careful about his appearance and less inclined to fight at the drop of the hat. It was discovered, and this was immensely vital, that with some extra study and tutoring which Caldwell was delighted to promise, Bowman could probably save a year of the high-school course. Nothing more was needed to spur him to fiery and unflagging industry.

It was late in the spring when a sentimental episode provoked the last of the memorable battles he fought in Fort Hawley. The woman in the case was that angel of mercy with the golden braids, Nancy Overton, whose first aid to the injured had been so thanklessly bestowed when her hero engaged three policemen, which was more'n usual. Since that great moment, Bowman had been polite, even kind, in a condescending way, but it could not be said that he displayed the slightest symptoms of devotion.

The parents of Nancy elected to honor her birthday by means of an evening dancing party in what was known as the Overton mansion on the Parkway. It was the intention to limit the invitations to the nicest boys and girls, whose families were numbered among the socially elect of Fort Hawley; but Nancy mutinied at the exclusion of several of her very best school friends, and among these she haughtily submitted the name of "Cap'n" Bowman McMurray. Alas, he had not yet lived down his reputation as an enemy of all society, and there was a tempest in the Overton household until Nancy delivered her ultimatum. It was no Bowman, no party.

Happily ignorant that he had been a bone of contention, Bowman heated an iron and pressed his black suit with his own competent hands while the younger McMurrays

struggled for the honor of shining his shoes. To the mother it was a reward of merit, a distinguished event, but she warned her sturdy son, as he faced the mirror with his black hair brushed as smooth as a seal's.

"I am not ashamed of your manners, Bowman, but you must mind that temper of yours."

"When have I punched anybody, ma? Only once since Christmas an' it simply had to be done. I'm so peaceful that it hurts."

Sallie Caldwell had taught him to dance and was proud of her pupil. He swayed to the witchery of music like a leaf in the wind, and he had the natural athlete's control of muscle and nerve, the coördination which is occasionally found even during the puppy years of youth. It was a solid, wholesome-looking boy who trudged up to the Overton mansion and halted to stare at the lighted windows. His heart was thumping, but he was outwardly composed. His brief years had compassed many varied scenes and places.

Courteously he remembered to pay his respects to the chaperons, as Sallie Caldwell had coached him to do, and these formidable ladies greeted him with more formality than graciousness. Unsmiling, the observant Bowman remarked to Mrs. Overton:

"A chilly evenin' for May, ma'am. I didn't notice it till I got over into this corner. Can I get you a shawl or something?"

Perhaps she saw the twinkle in his eye. At any rate, she was disarmed and displayed more cordiality as she answered:

"That serves me right! So this is the great Captain Bo McMurray! Nan tells me you are a very loyal champion. Now run along and enjoy yourself."

"Fair and warmer, thank you, Mrs. Overton," said the guest. "Are you engaged for the first dance?"

"Bless your heart, Bowman, that would be cruel and unusual punishment. I do believe I have found a courtier. Do they still exist?"

"I just can't realize you are old enough to be Nan's mother, Mrs. Overton," was the parting tribute with which the courtier bowed and sauntered across the floor.

Many of the boys and girls were of the high-school crowd, slightly older than Bowman and his friends, and several lordly youths wore dinner coats. Even these eyed the stocky figure of the notorious McMurray

ray with a certain respect. His prowess and his exploits were not unknown, and he was a seasoned man of the world who had been a roving hobo just for the fun of it and could boast of such fascinating chums as "Kansas Slim" and "San Antone Blackie."

Dutifully Bowman danced with this girl and that, bored, but dissembling it, until lovely Nancy Overton was kind enough to find time for him. It was ruffling to observe that she preferred a long, lithe lad in blue serge, who was a total stranger, to the scowling Bowman. Jealousy was a novel emotion. This captivating outsider had the high cheek bones, the sallow complexion, the steadfast, somber gaze of the native Texan raised among the wide spaces. His limber legs were already bowed a trifle as though accustomed to the stock saddle. One missed the jingle of spurs as he danced. Fort Hawley was a mixture of people from many States, regions, and climes. You might call it cosmopolitan, but this soft-spoken, resolute boy was stamped as a son of the Lone Star State.

When, at length, Bowman deftly swung Nancy to the lilt of the fiddles and the horn, he tried to make the impatient question sound quite casual.

"Who is the fresh guy—'scuse me, Nan—the dashin' young gentleman that has corralled most of your attention? I don't remember him anywheres. Old friend of yours?"

Nancy flashed an upward glance, swift, appraising. There was that in Bowman's face which led her to surmise that the implacable woman hater had begun to weaken. Thus he had glowered at the retreating policemen.

"Len Garretson?" she lightly answered. "Oh, yes, indeed! I met him quite a while ago, several times. It seems like years. The rest of his name is Leonard. Awfully nice boy, isn't he? So quiet and refined."

"I hadn't noticed it," was the petulant comment. "Where's he live? How come he to bust into this party?"

"Why, Bo, you s'prise me. I have been hearing such excellent reports of you," chided Nancy. "Len's father runs a beef herd on the old B-Y Ranch, fifty miles from here. And Len drove all that way in a flivver just to come to my party. My father is a director of the Stockmen's National Bank, I s'pose you know, and that's how our families got acquainted. I'll introduce

you directly. You're sure to like Len. He's so manly for his age."

"Much obliged, Nan," stiffly answered Bowman, desperately holding fast to his good manners, although he felt himself slipping. At this crucial moment the playful gods decreed that the objectionable Len Garretson should sidle up in his easy, loose-jointed way and drawl:

"May I cut in, Miss Overton?"

The request should have been aimed at her partner, as Nancy was quick to note, and she suspected that Len knew better. Bowman's social training had not included this punctilio, but he disliked the interruption and sensed a challenge in the manner of it. His demeanor was dignified and icy as he exclaimed:

"It's my dance, *Mister* Garretson. Seems though you ought to be rode with a curb."

Nancy's smile was a little tremulous as she gazed at her two suitors. It was like a scene from a novel she had recently read. Alas, her beauty had aroused the angry passions of these two elemental men! Her position was enviable, but excessively disturbing. She wished she had not trifled with the feelings of Cap'n Bo McMurray. With a faint smile and an air wholly self-possessed, young Garretson remarked to his rival:

"Better not start something you can't finish. They're used to breakin' outlaws where I come from. If you please, Miss Overton!"

He was about to waft her away in his arms, but the golden girl evaded him. The dilemma frightened her. Bowman was openly truculent, and he was liable to ruin a perfectly wonderful party. No boy had ever dared to defy him like this. After a moment's hesitation she cut the Gordian knot by announcing:

"I don't believe I really care for the rest of this dance. I think I feel a little faint. Please escort me to a chair by a window, both of you. I never saw anything so silly!"

Her word was law. Grimly Bowman stalked on the one side while Leonard Garretson lounged along on the other. Nancy thanked them sweetly and the McMurray faithfully copied the suave and courtly manner of Fayette Caldwell as he assured her:

"You needn't be a mite scared of my be-ginnin' anything in the presence of a lady. If I don't happen to see you again, Miss

Overton, I've had a delightful time an' thank you so much."

"Why, what do you mean, Bo?" she cried. "You're going to dance some more, and, of course, you wouldn't miss the refreshments."

"I've got an engagement, a temp'rary one. I may be back," he replied, with a black glance at the hated Garretson boy.

"I reckon you'll be detained," calmly observed Len. "If you'll please save me a couple more dances, Miss Overton, I can sho'ly promise to be on deck."

They left her bereft of speech, staring distressfully after them as they moved out of the parlor together and passed into the soft and starry night. As by a mutual impulse they strolled toward the lawn behind the garage. It was a secluded spot. Young Garretson was rolling a cigarette as he gently suggested:

"If you want to apologize, it'll save you a heap of trouble, McMurray."

"What for? That's up to you," was the bitter retort. "You delib'ately set out to see how far you could crowd me. A gen'leman would have some respect for a lady's feelin's."

"No town mucker can show me anything, just because he's got a fightin' reputation," exclaimed the lad from the cow country. The insult was passed. There could be no drawing back. Stubbornly but sadly the McMurray rejoined, as he peeled off his best coat:

"Seems like they won't leave me alone. I can't take talk like that from this bench-legged, four-flushin' kid of a cow-puncher."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE GARRETSON KID MAKES IT A SURPRISE.

As Bowman regarded it, here was a disagreeable task which had been forced upon him, and he would get it out of the way as soon as possible. He had lost his love of fistic battle for its own sake, thanks to the influence of Fayette Caldwell, who had convinced him that great football players were notable for self-restraint under provocation. And more than this, the habit clashed with certain ideals of conduct which more and more dominated the boy. There were times, however, when one had to teach somebody to mind his own business, and this was quite evidently such an instance. Len Garretson

was troubled by no such moral conflict. His intentions were sincere and single-minded.

The veteran McMurray stood poised upon those strong, springy legs of his and warily feinted for the first blow. His was the rough-and-tumble school of encounter which was designed to smother the opponent in the fashion of a landslide. It had been brilliantly exemplified in the disaster which had befallen Policeman Gilson Givins. In accordance with the tactics which had triumphed on many a hard-fought field, Bowman intended to close in for a clinch after the first wild flurry of fists.

The plan had a flaw unlooked for. The limber Garretson lad was not where Bowman's fists expected to find him. He trod the turf lightly, stepping back a little or turning aside to dodge the attack. This was a defense so novel to Bowman's experience that he began to let his temper get the better of his seasoned judgment. Both arms swinging, he rushed in and stopped so suddenly that his feet seemed to fly out from under him. His jaw had collided with some obstruction. It jarred him painfully and his amazement was beyond words. He found himself sitting down and blinking dizzily.

Taller by inches and with a longer reach, Len Garretson seemed reluctant to let himself be all mused up. He was finicky about it, absolutely unreasonable. Bowman, of course, flew up from the grass almost as soon as he hit it and sailed in again. One punch might knock him off his stout pins, but it was not apt to discourage him. This time the bench-legged young cow-puncher stepped forward. He was no longer coy and elusive. Bowman lowered his chin and threw up a left guard, trying to make use of what little science he could recall to mind. Len laughed and let drive with his right. It shot home with a thud.

In his trusting childhood years, a little colored boy had once told Bowman that every mule had a piece of gold in the bottom of its hind hoof. He had promptly tried to retrieve a bit of this buried treasure and was kicked clean over the corral fence. Curious, but this unhappy memory popped into his thoughts as he sat down again and rubbed a bruise on his cheek. Humiliation was mixed with a kind of awed respect for the amazing Len Garretson boy whose appearance was so dreadfully deceptive. The style of fighting which had swept a swath

through Fort Hawley was of no avail. Bowman McMurray knew that unless his foe-man tripped over his own feet or got a cramp in his stomach, somebody would surely be licked to a frazzle, and his name began with Bo.

This one-sided combat had been waged without words. It was a swift and violent pantomime. Playing his trump card, the football warrior now dived head foremost with the intention of wrapping his arms about Len's slim waist and spilling him upside down. It was almost successful. The Garretson kid was taken unawares. Having knocked his man down twice, he naturally expected him to stay put for a moment or so. The error was excusable. He had never before taken on a McMurray.

There was a terrific impact, a grunt, a tussle, and the limber Len was lifted off the ground to slide across Bowman's shoulder and land all sprawled out. There was feline grace and quickness in the rawboned young frame, and before Bowman could pin him, he was upon his hands and knees. In the dusky starlight they bumped head-on like two rams. The effect was stunning, as one might say, and it slowed down the performance. Bowman's agility was much below par and Garretson delayed to feel the top of his head and find the cracks.

Thus they happened to keep clear of each other and slowly, uncertainly to regain their feet. Bowman's wits were muddled. He was at a loss how to renew the conflict. The Garretson boy was in no better plight. His head spun like a top. But his skill as a boxer had become intuitive. With knees that wobbled he advanced and hit straight and clean with both hands, biff, bang! The McMurray dropped before he could set himself to meet it. The victor spoke in accents weary, but menacing.

"How many more times have I got to do it? Show some sense and quit."

"I never did quit, but I can't seem to get up," admitted Bowman as though sorely perplexed. "My old legs are all numbed up."

"Then you're whipped, are you?"

"I reckon I am. Guess I'd better rest a spell. How's the bean? Mine aches somewhat' fierce."

"Same here. She was some collision. I figure that I'd better walk around to the kitchen and wash up. A little thing like this can't interfere with my next dance with Miss Nancy Overton."

Bowman winced, but took his medicine. The Garretson boy had a perfect right to make him swallow the dose. The only comment was:

"Of course you'll tell her. That's all right. Listen, where did you learn to pack a punch like that? You're a regular darn pug'list."

"There was a broken-down, lightweight fighter stayed at the ranch all last summer. He had a bum lung an' dad let him putter round at chores. He showed me a lot an' when he quit he said I was quite promisin' for a kid."

"Those weren't promises you walloped me with," sighed the fallen McMurray.

Young Garretson was leisurely wiping his face with a handkerchief and with no more remarks he strolled toward the rear of the house. Still prone on the grass, Bowman clasped his hands behind his head and gazed up at the serene, mysterious stars. It was unbelievable that a boy could be as unhappy as he was. The deepest source of his woe was not that he had been, for the first time, whipped in a fair fight. This was almost inconsequential now that his anger had cooled. His heart had not been in it or else he would have tried to endure more punishment, hung to it like a bulldog until he was knocked insensible.

The catastrophe was ever so much greater than this. Nancy Overton's party was to have been his test and his vindication, a milestone on the steep highway which he aspired to climb day by day. And how had he behaved? Like a rowdy and a mucker, like the old Bo McMurray of the grammar-school bunch and the street gang, as public opinion had regarded him. He, a boy that hoped to go to college, who was ambitious to be a scholar, an athlete, and a gentleman! His soul was bruised far worse than his swollen eye and his throbbing jaw.

He pulled himself together and walked slowly in the direction of the street light at the corner. There were grass stains on his best black suit, but no serious damage. He did not wish to go home until all the family were in bed. For some time he moped in the shadows not far from the Overton mansion and listened to the music that was borne to him through the open windows. Finally he shook his head with a hopeless air and rambled off to stop at a drug store and buy a small bottle of ar-



nica. Then as he reluctantly turned homeward he might have been heard to mutter:

"Gee mighty, but women do make a heap of trouble in this world. I'm off 'em for keeps."

Out of bed early next morning, as was his habit, he lugged in enough wood to fill the box by the kitchen stove and helped two or three younger McMurrays into their clothes. Luckily his father had been sent for at daylight to boss an emergency repair job in the car shops. It was not until all hands were rounded up at the breakfast table that the busy mother found leisure for a chat with the downcast Bowman. The marks on his face instantly caught her attention, and she dreaded to ask him a question. The boy was in one of his taciturn moods, in the black shadow of poignant self-reproach. He read his mother's troubled heart and briefly informed her:

"Yes'm, I was in a scrap last night. I'm sorry. I was lookin' for trouble. And I got it, plenty."

"Did you disgrace yourself at the party, Bowman?" she faltered.

"No, ma. It happened outside. My best clothes are all right. I didn't tear 'em at all. I reckon I was all right in th' house, 'cause Nan Overton's mother paid me a mighty nice compliment on my manners."

"'Twas after the party, Bowman, that you yielded to your besetting sin?"

"Well, I quit early, after dancin' with Nan. Please don't scold. I'm in a terrible state of mind, believe me."

"I won't scold," she mourned, "but, oh, I am bitter disappointed. And who was the lad you mixed it with?"

"A bad kid from the grass roots, ma. He was honin' for it, an' I might have ducked th' argument, but I didn't. He licked the tar out of me."

"That's one blessing, anyhow," said Mrs. McMurray, not quite so tragically. "'Tis a pity it didn't happen long ago. No, I will not scold, Bowman. I know you too well for that. You're a lad that will always suffer cruel torment when you think you have done wrong. But, oh, the shame of it! And folks talkin' about it by now!"

"Prob'ly. That Len Garretson couldn't help braggin' that he trimmed Bo McMurray."

"And what will Mr. Fayette Caldwell say to you?"

"That's the worst of it, ma. You simply

can't 'preciate how worse it is. I shouldn't be s'prised if it busts up our friendship. I'm going round to see him an' Miss' Sallie this evenin' after school, but I'd ruther let Len Garretson pound me again."

The mother wept a little, dried her eyes, and betook herself to her manifold tasks. Bowman doggedly marched off to school as though he were about to face a firing squad. To his astonishment, neither friend nor foe had heard of the affair on the lawn behind the Overton garage. This was quite obvious because otherwise he would have been both an object of sympathy and a target for derision. Nancy Overton was a grade ahead of him, and attended different classes in high school, and was sequestered in an adjacent building with a high, board fence between. For this Bowman was profoundly grateful. He expected never to meet her again. Their lives had been sundered. It seemed plausible to infer that Len Garretson had kept his mouth shut, instead of bragging about his great deed. This was so admirable that Bowman could not feel revengeful.

His melancholy lifted a little during the day, but the clouds rolled down again when he dragged his feet through the gate of the Caldwell cottage. It was late in the afternoon and Sallie had not returned from giving Scooch a joy ride in the baby carriage. Fayette opened the door, and Bowman very meekly followed him into the little library with its littered desk and crowded bookshelves. Nervously clapping a hand to his discolored eye, the boy edged into a chair and coughed several times before he managed to blurt:

"Looks like it's all off, Mr. Caldwell. I'm not fit to go to college. Much obliged for all the interest an' kindness you have showed in me, but——"

"Stop it, Bo! Why the farewell address?" shouted the guardian of manners and morals. "Now start it right end to and don't talk so fast."

"Yes, suh, Mr. Caldwell," was the obedient reply. Fumbling with his cap, the culprit began to tell the story, very painstakingly and gulping now and then. The father confessor listened like a judge on the bench, but he had never been quite so fond of the boy. As the narrative neared its halting, heartbroken finish, the verdict was shaping itself, and it was not in the least what Bowman expected. The protégé's un-

swerving honesty was what appealed most strongly to Caldwell. His hands in his pockets, he lounged back in the desk chair and gazed at the huddled, disconsolate figure as he said, with a frown and a smile:

"Pretty rotten, Bo, I must say. You were a bad actor. Pranced into that swell party with a chip on your shoulder and got your face pushed. Served you right. Ever hear about the pitcher that went once too often to the well?"

"Was he in the Texas League, Mr. Caldwell? I 'spose he got bumped. I'd kind of like to get through with this interview before Miss' Sallie an' Scooch come in. Sayin' good-by to that baby will come mighty hard, but, of course, I can't ride herd on him any more. He's been my little old side pardner."

"Nonsense, Bo. Why punish Scooch for your sins? That blessed infant hasn't been putting over any rough stuff. You'll stay to supper and then sing him to sleep with that fool tune of yours, 'Nigger, Your Heels Is Burnin'.'"

Bowman brightened, but had nothing more to say until Caldwell observed:

"Apparently I wouldn't have heard of this ruction if you hadn't come here and spilled it. It hasn't leaked out at school, you tell me."

"I had to tell *you*," insisted Bowman.

"A point of honor, son? Playing the game? I get you. Well, I feel sure you won't cut loose at the next party. So much for that. What do you expect to do with yourself this summer? Vacation is almost here, and you haven't told me yet."

"I won't stay in Fort Hawley, Mr. Caldwell. I had pretty near made up my mind, and this—this unfort'nate affair cinches it. There's one or two people I'd ruther not meet, if I see 'em first, an'—say, have I *gotta* make a party call at the Overtons'?"

"You might postpone it until September without queering your social status. Will that make it easier?"

"Maybe. Anyhow, I want to break away from my regular bunch. I reckon I'll go to work for an old snoozer named Tom Jaycox over Pecan River way. He's a cattle man I rode fence for, a little while, that time I hoboed it. He asked me to come back an' said I was a right-smart kid."

"I know who Jaycox is," said Caldwell. "I searched a title for him. You will be in good hands, Bo. Aim to take some books along with you?"

"I sure do, if you'll kind of map it out for me. I want to save my money, Mr. Caldwell, to buy my own clothes an' things."

"Fine business. And you will be as hard as nails when the football season opens."

"I'm not what you call soft, right now. Please, if you don't mind, I'll see Miss' Sallie s'm'other evenin'. Will you explain it to her an' Scooch? Your letting me down so easy has made me liable to cry. You know how it is."

"I do, Bo. Make it to-morrow night, then. And put a piece of raw steak on that funny eye of yours."

"Then we're still friends, Mr. Caldwell?" was the anxious query.

"Absolutely, Bo. But don't do it again."

June came swiftly, and just before Bowman McMurray was ready to depart for the Pecan River region, he strolled under cover of night past the Overton mansion which was, in fact, a comfortable, square, brick house with tall, white pillars upholding the portico. Moonlight silvered the roof, and the air was heavy with the scent of roses. Through a window was disclosed the fair image of Nancy Overton at the piano, her braided hair thick and lustrous. Bowman looked and listened, but not for long. He could endure only so much. Wrenching himself away, he resumed his errant course and said to himself:

"An' so that lovely young creature will marry Len Garretson! A manly lad! I wish them well. Gee, it might have been different if——"

Such introspections as these could not linger to stab the temperamental soul of the McMurray. He was, above all else, a man of action and life was too interesting to play the rôle of a blighted hero. Presently he was rattling across the landscape of Texas in an accommodation train which dropped him off at a hamlet consisting of a dog hut of a station, a water tank, and one store. With a blanket roll on his shoulder he footed it four miles to the Dry Creek Ranch and was cordially greeted by old man Jaycox, gnarled, wind-bitten, leathery, with a voice that shook the bunk-house windows.

"Th' little ol' Fort Hawley kid," he boomed. "I can afford to pay you wages, but when it comes to feedin' you—why, boy, the cook shuddered when I told him you was headin' this way. His recollections of them holler legs of yours is some acute. Want to work steady this time, you wrote me."

"Yes, suh, till school opens. I've decided to go to college."

"College?" roared the old-timer. "Ruin the makin's of a good cowman? Bo, you had more hoss sense than most men. Now you talk flighty."

"I'll explain it to you some time soon," was the dignified response. "Where do I hang up my hat?"

"Same ol' place. The men'll be glad to see you. You can chop wood an' make yourself handy for a week or so. Then I'll put you in a saddle an' let you perambulate the barb wire for a spell. College? Huh! Wear turned-up pants an' too lazy to roll your own cigaroots. How old be you, Bo?"

"Goin' on sixteen, Mr. Jaycox, and stout for my age."

"But symptoms of weakness in th' head. Maybe you can outgrow it, like wabby hocks. Hop along, now. Let the cook know the worst."

A fortnight after this, Bowman was skirting the southerly boundary of a rolling pasture of several thousand acres, with a good pony under him and a cool breeze fanning his tanned cheek. He sang as he rode, and all his cares and troubles seemed a world away. Again he heard the call of the open road, and felt the lure of the loose foot. Working toward a corner of the pasture, he discovered broken wire and several rotten posts flat on the ground. The boggy soil revealed the tracks of a few steers which had escaped through the gap, and after mending the fence he set out to follow them.

Soon the trail became fainter until it vanished, but he let the pony jog toward a distant hill which swelled like an undulation of the sea. Reaching this vantage point he halted to sweep the country with a pair of glasses, but there was never a glimpse of strayed cattle. To the southward of where he was ran the Rio Grande, no more than ten miles away, and the spirit of the vagrant explorer led him to ride in that direction, just because it was a region new to him.

He idled along, intending soon to turn and drift back toward the ranch. And now he descried another rider who was approaching from the westward, also in a leisurely manner. Bowman changed his course to look him over, as he had been instructed to do when out on a fence patrol. If a stranger, he was to be checked up and accounted for, particularly when broken wire

had been found, and cattle were out of pasture.

The lone rider advanced without hesitation, now projected in graceful silhouette against the sky line, again dipping into a small swale or hollow. Bowman stood in his stirrups and shielded his eyes with his hand. Suddenly his set, alert expression relaxed, but it could not have been called friendly. The recognition appeared to disturb him. Scowling, he watched the wayfarer pull his horse to a walk and wave his broad hat. He was a long, limber lad with a lean face and an aspect of mild melancholy. Just now there was a trace of an amused smile as he rode up to Bowman and exclaimed:

"Howdy, McMurray! First time we've met since the party. What's your outfit?"

"Garretson, I b'lieve?" was the dignified response. "Where did you breeze from? I'm summerin' with old man Jaycox at Dry Creek."

"That so? I live a piece beyond there. I just rambled out this morning on the chance of finding a deer and kept shovin' along."

Bowman had noticed the rifle slung on his back and was gracious enough to inquire:

"Any luck? I'm sort of wanderin' after a few strays."

"Nary a deer. And I didn't see any of the Jaycox stuff, either. Headed home, are you?"

"I reckon so, tho' I sort of hanker to keep on to the river, just to see what she's like."

"Let's go," amiably suggested the Garretson lad. "There's more'n a dozen sandwiches rolled up in my slicker. We'll have a snack and water up and then roll home."

Bowman was not of a forgiving nature, and the bright vision of Nan Overton was disquieting. He had discovered that jealousy stingeth like an adder. But to display a surly enmity toward Len Garretson would be to confess himself a poor loser. There was something rather fine in the conqueror's easy assumption that bygones were bygones. And his refusal to publish the fact that he had whipped Bo McMurray had inspired a sense of gratitude. Therefore the only thing to say was:

"I'll have to go you, Len. It's the Rio Grande or bust. I—I never had a chance to thank you for not telling Miss Overton an' so forth. You understand."

"I wasn't raised to blow my own horn, Bo. My dad used to discourage it with a quirt."

Feeling awkward and tongue-tied, Bowman was glad to have the conversation made less personal and they confined it to cattle and feed and markets and the gossip of the ranches. Neither lad was in a garrulous mood and there were long intervals of silence while they gazed in front of them for a glimpse of the Rio Grande and the bare hills of the Mexican frontier. At length they descried a wide expanse of brown, turbid river swollen by recent rains and surging far out beyond its gullied, crumbling banks. They rode cautiously along the edge to a clump of cottonwood which offered a welcome shade from the midday sun. The cow ponies were left to graze while the young explorers munched sandwiches and discussed the Mexican problem.

Then they yawned and almost fell asleep until Bowman was seized by a most unlucky inspiration.

"I'll bet I could swim across and back," he exclaimed.

"You're crazy," scoffed Garretson, who was never impulsive. "Look at the driftwood and stuff. One of those logs bang you in the head and it's good night. Besides, you ought'n to swim after a hearty meal."

"Six sandwiches a hearty meal? You make me laugh. On the level, that would be an easy swim for me, Len. I've a good mind to do that little stunt."

"Bet you won't—bet you five dollars," was the fateful challenge.

It clinched the matter. The McMurray never took a dare. His escutcheon was free from that bar sinister. This was a foolish proceeding, as an inner voice whispered, but the motive will be apparent. The presence of Len Garretson spurred him to undertake the hazardous deed, to redeem himself and to mend his broken reputation. It was with this in mind that he exclaimed:

"I stump you to follow me. We'll make a race of it."

"Me? I never swum a stroke in my life," confessed the other, without a blush. "You're the web-footed wonder. Now go to it. What kind of a message shall I send to your folks? Died o' damfoolitis, I reckon."

This was so close to an insult that Bowman cast a black look at him and began to hurl himself out of his boots and cloth-

ing. Len scrambled down among the upheaved roots of the cottonwood trees and selected a seat in the front row. Tied to a stump by a bit of rope he discovered a dilapidated skiff half filled with water and one oar floating in it.

"Look here, Bo," he yelled. "If this boat was any good I could trail along behind you. But she's shy an oar and looks rotten as punk. I hate to let you go alone. The bet's off. Forget it."

"The bet goes," ripped out Bowman, inspecting the skiff. "You stay out of that old coffin, Len. It'll drown you as sure as guns."

Gingerly the rash swimmer stepped down into the sullen, dirty water. The opposite bank seemed appallingly distant, the current stronger than he had conjectured, the drifting debris more menacing. For the first time in his life, he was in the cold clutch of fear. It constricted his throat and his heart pounded against his ribs. There was no thought of surrender. A fool had to pay the price of his folly. There was also a strange forboding. It was something more than merely being frightened. If this had been in the Ireland of his ancestors, he would have listened to hear the cry of the banshee.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE TEXAS NAVY COMES A-SHOOTIN'!

The reckless McMurray was no tyro at this stunt of swimming Texas rivers. He had taken to the water almost as soon as he could toddle, as eager as a young otter. And now he had the muscle, wind, and endurance to make this tussle with the Rio Grande less perilous than it appeared to the dubious Len Garretson who, for once, was strung up to a pitch of nervous tension. He was shrewd enough to understand his companion's braggart impulse and made a last effort to divert him from it.

"Listen, Bo! You want to show me—I get that, all right. I'll admit that your gizzard is plumb full of sand, an' you've scared me stiff. Won't that hold you? Let's forget that mix-up we had. I had an ace in the hole that night, with the science the lightweight pug had showed me all summer. Here's the idea! I'll wrestle you for five dollars. There's where we go to it with an even break."

"Yes, you will," growled the naked Bowman as he waded out. "An' you'll let me

throw you, just to save my self-respect. That's the kind of a fightin' fool *you* are, Len. I've made up my mind to wrastle with this old river. She won't lay down to me."

The Garretson kid nodded gravely. He knew when to quit. Bowman could not be himself without a touch of emotional climax and he turned to say, in farewell:

"If anything goes wrong, understand, will you please let certain folks know I thought kindly of 'em?"

"I sure will, old scout. I'll tell Nan Overton you did it all for her."

Bowman splashed into the muddy flow and struck out with a long, easy side stroke. His black head bobbed to the rhythmic swing of the powerful shoulders, and a rippling furrow widened in his wake. For a little distance the eddy which swung under the bank held him from drifting rapidly downstream, but as he moved farther out, the send of the current caught him, and his course veered. He was too canny to fight the river and so contented himself with heading straight across. A wide bend of the Mexican shore held out the hope of another favoring eddy or a stretch of slack water as soon as he could conquer the sullen might of the deeper channel.

The floating logs and broken limbs bothered him, but most of the time he swam on his left side, so that he could gaze upstream and dodge or duck under. Occasionally a heavy fragment, water-soaked and almost submerged, came surging at him as though ambushed with deadly intent, but he managed to avoid striking his head, which was what he dreaded. Len Garretson followed down along the bank, swearing peevishly, hurling at the swimmer all sorts of insulting affectionate epithets.

"Look yonder at him—tearin' through it like an old steamboat! You're more'n half-way over, Bo, you punkin-headed lunatic. I wish I'd licked you again, knocked you cold. Holy blazes, you near got snagged that time. Steady, boy, watch 'em!"

After what seemed like several years of mental suffering, he saw the indomitable McMurray swim more athwart the current and it was apparent that he had advanced into easier water. The crisis was passed. He would soon be crawling out on the Mexican shore and resting himself for the return journey. There were no signs of exhaustion as the shiny, black head forged

steadily onward in the more sluggish area behind the river's bend. With a sigh of relief that was like a wordless prayer, Garretson saw him find the bottom, heave his back out, and flounder through the ooze to a bit of brown beach under the lee of a hill.

There he sat hunched up, a white blotch, and presently found strength to fling up his arms in salutation. Len sat down in the grass because he was also worn out, and made a cigarette. He was not so seriously worried about the homeward voyage of the McMurray. If you did a thing once, you could do it again. And the web-footed kid had surely bluffed the old Rio Grande.

Young Garretson stared across the river and jumped to his feet. His attention had shifted to the wide Mexican plateau which unrolled beyond the low hills. It was a treeless expanse of grazing land which had been swept bare of sheep and cattle by the raiding parties of federalists and revolutionists in one foray after another. This was in the days when Villa was rampant, before he quit raising Cain and turned to raising crops more pastoral.

Len Garretson's keen vision was held by a number of moving dots which appeared on the plateau. Their motion was too rapid for browsing live stock and they grew larger. He wished he had not left the glasses at the cottonwood clump. He thought of running to get them, but the scattered, bobbing dots held him fascinated. They could be nothing else than mounted men. This was a swift conclusion and the only plausible one. They were riding at a gallop, straight toward the bend of the Rio Grande. Soon the tiny figures were thrown against a hard, blue sky. The tall, huge sombreros conveyed a grotesque impression. It was like watching a dance of candlesticks. To the Garretson lad, raised on the Texas border, one did not have to explain in detail such a phenomenon as this. There was a hostile glint in those somber, steadfast eyes of his as he muttered:

"A rebel patrol, as sure as shootin'! There was some talk that they were circlin' back toward the river, but nobody paid much attention to it."

Whatever they were, the boy distrusted them on general principles. Mexicans were bad medicine, as soon as they found guns and horses. And there was poor Bowman McMurray, marooned on the wrong side of the Rio Grande, without a stitch of clothes!

The prudent thing for him to do was to stay where he was, hidden under the steep wall of the crumbling bank until the Mexican troopers rode past along the crest of the hill. He was safe against discovery.

Len yelled himself hoarse, but the wind blew against him, and the warning failed to carry over to Bowman, who was now on his feet and stretching himself and rubbing his legs. Frantically Len waved his arms and flourished his hat, trying to make the swimmer comprehend that he was to hug the shore a while longer. Bowman read the signals as encouraging him for the return voyage, and he danced a few steps to show that he was sound of wind and limb.

The Mexican patrol slowed its rapid gait to let the horses walk up the gradual incline to the river bank. Soon they swung to skirt the Rio Grande. Just at this most unlucky moment, Bowman McMurray plunged from his bit of shelving beach, floundered through the mud, and splashed out into the deeper water. He began to swim, but even then he was unobserved by the ragged, slouchy horsemen who had passed a little way below him. Len Garretson lay flat in the grass, as still as a graven image. It looked as though he had been borrowing a heap of trouble. Five minutes more and those Mexican outlaws would be well on their way. The chances were that they would not think of looking behind them to scan the river. If they did happen to spy the helpless swimmer and took him to be a gringo— Well, their sense of humor was most infernally peculiar.

Len had forgotten the two ponies which had been left to graze with trailing reins. The cottonwood clump had screened them from the sight of the Mexican troopers, but now the two animals moved out into the open. They were perceived by one of the mounted rebels who had dropped behind the others. He spurred his jaded horse and shouted to the leader. The squad halted and wheeled to reconnoiter. It was their business to observe and to report. Those two ponies on the Texas side were saddled. They might belong to American cavalry scouts or to a detail of Rangers. It was something to investigate.

While they jabbered and gesticulated, one of them happened to descry the swimmer in mid-stream. Ah, ha, here was something! This one in the water was returning to the American side! He had been

guilty of an invasion of Mexico. *Caramba*, they would teach him to defy the sovereign republic, to spit on the flag of a proud and jealous people! A Yankee soldier, no doubt, a cursed spy, caught in the act!

This was the pretext, as eloquently declaimed by the unwashed, pock-marked lieutenant with ten pounds of gold braid on his hat. The truth was that here was the chance for some fine sport, more enjoyable than a cockfight. To shoot at a swimming target like this was a novelty. They jerked up the carbines and rifles, a dozen of them, and laughed as they fingered the cartridge clips. The lieutenant was granted the courtesy of the first shot. He cuddled the butt against his shoulder, set the sights with the air of a dandy marksman, and aimed at the sleek, round head of the swimmer. The bullet flew so wild that Bowman failed to notice the splash, but he faintly heard the report and rubbed the water from his eyes to catch a glimpse of the Texas shore where he fancied Len might be signaling him.

But the unterrified Garretson kid was seen to be running for dear life, through the grass to the cottonwood trees to get his hands on his own rifle. Bowman observed that he was in a great hurry about something, and it looked like trouble. Just then the delighted Mexicans squibbed off a scattering volley. The bullets kicked up the water like a school of fish, and the reports sounded like Fourth of July firecrackers. Treading water, the puzzled swimmer shoved himself around to stare at the Mexican shore. The mounted men had raised their weapons for another round of target practice. Bowman dived like a flash. He stayed under, swimming desperately, until his tortured lungs forced him to the surface.

This gave an added zest to the sportsmen's pastime. They were so excited and mirthful that the guns wobbled. It was like baiting a bull in the ring. They would hold their fire until the target came up for breath. If they failed to hit him, he would drown after a while. There he was, up again, and not a bullet touched him, and now he had vanished, quick as lightning; Was the game ended so soon? He must have been hit that last time. It was the lieutenant's rifle, beyond doubt! There was a man who could shoot like the devil!

The merry marksmen had been so fascinated by the antics of their aquatic target

that they failed to notice the flight of the other lad along the Texas shore of the Rio Grande. Len Garretson's first impulse was to take cover with the rifle and open on the enemy at eight hundred yards. He had a notion that he could empty a saddle or two and scatter the rest of the dirty scoundrels. But as he dashed in among the cottonwoods and snatched up his gun, a swift glance over his shoulder told him that Bowman McMurray needed more help than this.

The pitiful fugitive of a swimmer was fast tiring from his tremendous efforts to escape the bullets that sprayed and splattered all about him. Len saw him come to the surface, plow along hand over hand, and reach out to grasp a log which floated past. It was a feeble, despairing effort. He had been under water so much that he was, no doubt, fairly gasping for air. A bit of sodden bark flew from the log as a whining bullet bit it, and Bowman let go and dived once more. It had become the instinctive, hopeless struggle for survival of a cornered animal.

"Here's where the navy gets action, and she comes a-shootin'," cried the Garretson kid as he scrambled down to the rotten skiff and slithered the mooring rope with his knife. In he plopped, an arm through the rifle sling, and shoved off with the one oar. The water in the leaky little tub was almost up to the gunwales, but it floated precariously while Len baled with his Stetson and let the current carry him downstream. It occurred to him to wish that he had learned to swim. Afraid to move lest he capsize the boat or push the bottom out of it, he perceived that he would have to use the oar in order to steer farther out. At his present rate, he would drift clean by Bowman without a chance to rescue him. Very carefully he paddled, poised with a native ease and dexterity, and the sluggish skiff responded.

The Mexican picnic party beheld him as a new diversion. This was a circus of two rings! Popping at the skiff was more certain of results. For the moment they forgot the exhausted swimmer and endeavored to bag his comrade. This respite enabled Bowman to remain on the surface and struggle toward the skiff. The spark of hope, which had been so nearly snuffed out, rekindled his courage. He felt strong enough to kick a little longer.

If there was any sympathy to spare, Len

Garretson was the lad who needed it, but he was entirely too busy to feel sorry for himself. At least three bullets had perforated the skiff, and this did not help its buoyancy. The Texas navy was in a bad way. Len had ceased baling, however, because of other pressing occupations. He plied the oar and grimly endured being shot until satisfied that he was drifting down to intercept Bowman. This was the vital factor of the equation.

Then the hardy navigator picked up his rifle and very deliberately calculated the distance and held up a wet finger to gauge the breeze. He was very angry at being bushwhacked by these murderous sharpshooters, and he hoped their souls would sizzle in hell for a million years, but it was foolish to let them get your goat. The Garretsons were noted for a certain placidity of temperament when in a tight pinch. Len chose the Mexican lieutenant for his, because of the glint of gold on his hat. He was about to pull trigger when a bullet thudded through the side of the skiff and grazed the calf of his leg. It was like the touch of a hot iron, and he almost lost his temper.

"Just for that, I'll make *you* kiss yourself good-by," said the Garretson kid as he lined his sights on the lieutenant, a few inches below the expensive sombrero. The shot was not wasted. It was odd to see the bulky lieutenant clap his hand to his breast with a theatrical gesture, sway in the saddle, and slide to the ground like a sack of meal. The sombrero bounced from his head and rolled like a hoop, over the edge of the cut bank and down to the river's edge, where it gleamed in memoriam.

The Mexican laughter ceased. They flew off their horses and burrowed in the grass. Young Garretson got one as he lit from the saddle and stumbled over his spurs. He staggered and fell, then crawled on hands and knees toward the shelter of a mesquite bush. The boy was shooting better than he knew, but now the dice were loaded against him. He was unable to see the enemy excepting as one of them raised his head or the sun winked on a gun barrel. They were balefully determined to kill him. It had ceased to be a jovial pastime.

"I can disturb 'em some, at that," murmured Len. "If I can only hook onto Bo before those bad hombres get my number!"

He fired a couple of snapshots which caused a slight lull in the fusillade and

caught up the paddle. Bowman was churning the water no more than a dozen feet away. His face was tragically pale and drawn, but he grinned and threw up a hand. Len drove the skiff with all his strength, oblivious of the embattled Mexicans. They had ceased to interest him. Bowman ducked under as a bullet combed his hair and reappeared to clutch the gunwale of the skiff. Len grasped his arm and was for trying to haul him inboard, but the fugitive gurgled:

"Quit that. Y-you'll upset the b-boat. Slide over the s-side an' hang on, Len, quick. G-get me?"

"I sure do, you old Siwash. I couldn't seem to figure what card to play next."

The skiff floated almost submerged, but had buoyancy enough to support the two lads with little exertion as they hung to it with only their faces out of water. Carefully Bowman edged himself around the stern until they were both on the same side. Then they kicked their feet until the derelict boat swung away from the Mexican side and was so turned that it concealed the castaways from the view of the snipers in the grass. Paddling in this fashion, it was found possible to guide the skiff very slowly out of the current and into the friendly eddy.

"Can you fetch it, Bo?" anxiously asked the Garretson boy. "You must be all in. If we hook our belts together it'll help hold you up."

"An' drown me if you let go," snorted Bowman. "Much obliged, Len, but I've got my second wind. This is easy. For Heaven's sake, don't you slip off and drown yourself."

"That's where a cat has good sense," complained Len. "She just naturally abominates water."

"Drop your long legs," commanded Bowman. "I shouldn't wonder if you could touch bottom."

"Hooray, that feels like good old Texas! Look here, when we prance up the bank, those greasers will be liable to fan us, Bo. Let me go first with the rifle and keep 'em kind of subdued till we can work around to your clothes."

The competent Garretson streaked out of the Rio Grande, darted for a stump and emptied the magazine at the republic of Mexico. This strategy enabled Bowman to totter to dry land and roll into the grass.

The disgruntled Mexican soldiery fired with a fretful infrequency. It was to be inferred that the game had lost its charm. Their desire was to lay hands on their horses and call it the end of a painfully imperfect day. One of them stood up and waved a dingy kerchief. It betokened a profound respect for the rifle of the Garretson kid, who commented, in even tones:

"They can go, Bo. The battle is over. What's the use? Maybe I could get another one on the jump-off, but we don't want to be pestered. It's a mystery to me why a Mex can't learn to hold a gun straight."

"Wave your hat and say adios," advised Bowman. "I want my clothes."

The squad of Mexican troopers stalked sadly to their patient horses and lashed across the saddles the bodies of the frolicsome lieutenant and the misguided private. Then they rode down the shore of the Rio Grande until the bobbing sombreros vanished. Len Garretson walked to the cottonwood clump and returned with the garments and the ponies. The hot sun dried him out, and he flung himself in the grass beside Bowman, who was too weary to talk. They were drugged with fatigue. Sleep was the blessed remedy. And so they sprawled and had troubled dreams and nervous twitches until the cool of the afternoon. Then they unkinked their aching muscles and pensively surveyed the turbid Rio Grande and the bare, peaceful landscape of Mexico. Close to the water's edge the hat of the lieutenant gleamed like a fallen nugget.

"I wouldn't go after it if it was worth a million dollars," fervently declared Bowman McMurray. "Well, I s'pose you know you saved my life."

"Don't talk moving-picture stuff," sternly answered the hero, embarrassed for once.

Bowman blushed. Len had prodded one of his failings. The tide of sentimental emotion was not to be so easily curbed, however, and the grateful McMurray went on to say:

"There can't be any more hard feelings between us, after this. It's all wiped out, as far as I'm concerned. Any time I can do you a favor, Len, old man, you just make the high sign."

"Pshaw, you don't have to tell me, Bo. Now if you want to please me, quit making any more fuss about my hoppin' out after



those Mexicans. And we'd better forget it, anyhow. I don't want to figure in any international relations and outrages."

"You and I will always be intimate friends," solemnly persisted Bowman, "probably till death do us part. It's a hunch."

He held up two fingers, close together, as a symbol and a ceremony.

"Just like this, Len."

The impassive Garretson kid disclosed his feelings by smiling with sincere affection as he held up two fingers, close together, and echoed:

"Just like this, Bo."

They caught their ponies and cinched the slackened girths. As they jogged homeward, Bowman's active imagination was picturing a future in which he and his intimate friend should continue this fast alliance. Even though there was a woman in the case she must not be allowed to come between them. Let the best man win! No, that did not sound right. It was his duty to make the great sacrifice and repay Len Garretson for saving his life. He would take his broken heart to their wedding and show 'em how a college football player could stand the gaff. Maybe they would name one of their blond-headed children after the famous quarter back, Bowman McMurray.

These were such sad and noble and beautiful thoughts that he had nothing to say during the first mile of the long ride home to the ranch. Then he burst out:

"Say, Len, how old are you. Where do you go to school?"

"Most seventeen. Parryville High—nearest town to our place. Finish in two more years."

"Is it any good? How about the football team? It must be poor. I never heard of it."

"It's a punk little school, Bo. There's only five boys in my class. Parryville don't make much of a dent, anyhow. She's a busted boom. Dad talks of packin' me off somewhere else for next year."

"Sure he does," cried the eager Bowman. "Fort Hawley High School. It's th' darnedest coincidence I ever heard of! We'll put the punch into that old football team an' then we'll go to college together. Hold on, I forgot a certain complication. Never mind, they're expectin' to send her off to boarding school in St. Louis next September."

"It listens all right to me," agreed Gar-

retson, ignoring the feminine factor. "But what's this college stuff? You spring it kind of sudden."

"Didn't I tell you? A real, gilt-edge education is a mighty valuable asset, Len. It knocks the rough corners off you. An' it learns you to take life to pieces an' see what makes it tick. Besides, there's the advantages of being on a regular Eastern college football team an' everything."

"What's the matter with Texas?" drawled young Garretson. "It's all cluttered up with colleges. You ought to get operated on for this football bug. Ticks? I reckon it is. You talk like a sheepman."

"Wait till Fayette Caldwell gets hold of you," declaimed Bowman. "You'll be ashamed of your fool ignorance. *He* is why I'm bound to Kentucky for my college career. Any place that can turn out a man like him has got the goods."

"What do you call this peerless institution, Bo?" queried Leonard, who was more interested than he betrayed.

"Little old Centre College in the blue-grass country," proudly answered the boy, as though he already held a diploma and two or three degrees. "Not so mighty big, but she's been at it a hundred years an' shows *class*. You know what that means in a horse, Len. It's the same with a college. Fayette Caldwell is a sample. That's all I've got to say."

"Orate some more," urged Len, in livelier tones. "Who was this Caldwell sired by and how many blue ribbons has he won?"

"Don't kid me," pleaded Bowman. "I know it all by heart. An' I bet you'll sit up. What did President Wilson say? You'll listen to him, won't you? *There is a small college in Kentucky that in its years of existence has turned out more men that have attained prominence than has Princeton in more than twice that length of time.* You know who Princeton is, Len? She licked Harvard an' tied Yale last season."

"Name some of these prominent products, Bo. I want to feel sure of my company."

"Ten governors, two vice presidents, eight senators, one supreme court guy, fifty-two judges, twenty-eight congressmen, twenty-six college presidents, sixty college professors, an' so forth an' so on. I reckon that ought to hold you."

"It sure do. Which one do you aim to be? I'll match you. I lean toward bein'

vice president. All you do is draw your breath an' your pay."

"On the level, Len, you're int'rested, aren't you?"

"I near fell off my pony, Bo, when you fired that last load. This college idea wouldn't make dad buck an' snort like old Tom Jaycox, but he feels that when he's shoved me through high school, that lets him out."

"What do you care? Nobody has to grubstake us. We'll rustle an education, Len."

"You'll have to show me, but I'll try anything once. If we round up at school in Fort Hawley next winter, we can figure this thing out on a war basis."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE LONG TRAIL TO OLD CENTRE COLLEGE.

It was at the urgent solicitation of Bowman McMurray, captain elect, that Fayette Caldwell consented to serve as advisory coach of the high-school eleven when the playing season opened in September. He was a zealous young attorney at law, but Sallie told him it would do him a heap of good to be dragged out of his office in the afternoon, even if he did miss a client, and, anyhow, money was the least of her worries. Her sweetheart was growing round-shouldered, she declared, and his color was poor, and she had actually seen him try to kick the cat, which was a sure sign of nerves. First thing you knew, he would be spanking the precious Scooch with a hairbrush and this would naturally be grounds for divorce.

No recreation could have been more congenial than to hammer into these ramping, eager lads not only the tactics, but also the spirit and the ethics of the game. Of course they should have been more ambitious to shine in the classroom than on the football field, but healthy youth is not built that way, and this was an opportunity for leadership. The school-teacher was an unavoidable affliction. The coach could compel obedience, instant and willing. His word was the law and the gospel. Caldwell understood this and felt the responsibility of it. After a fortnight of practice, he was at the field for a little while, almost every afternoon. The men of Fort Hawley who were so busy making money would have

laughed at the queer notion that his job was bigger than any of theirs.

He soon perceived that the eleven would be built around Bo McMurray and Len Garretson. The limber young cow-puncher was a kid in years only. Shrewd, cool, and wary, he possessed the fighting spirit, and football appealed to him as a man-sized proposition. He was a born full back, punting the ball as easily as he handled a rifle, learning to tackle with the ferocity of a steel trap, ready to hurl himself into the thick of a rush line and twist through an opening. The chunky McMurray had found his peculiar niche at quarter back. He was the strategist, gifted with the football sense, driving his team with fiery ardor and infusing his own determination to do or die in the last ditch.

As the season advanced and weeded out the unfit, Fayette Caldwell discovered one more rough diamond. It was extraordinary that three such youngsters should have come into his hands. This player was the center rush, John Mercer, who was much better known as "Red." He was a brindle-topped, freckled lad, who could be easier coaxed than driven. In the schoolroom he wore spectacles and took prizes in mathematics. His friends stated that algebra and geometry laid down and yelled for help when they saw him coming. By way of mental diversion he played chess. His father was a Presbyterian minister of the old-fashioned, scholarly type who read Greek and Hebrew. The son was permitted to play football only so long as he continued to lead his class on the basis of marks.

Red Mercer was not built like an athlete. In fact, he was scrawny. His growth had not caught up with the size of his feet, and he was liable to stumble over them. He walked with his chin down, his big hands clasped behind him, precisely as his father was wont to pace the study floor when preparing the next Sunday morning's sermon. When away from the football field, he was lamentably absent-minded. The girls called him a funny old highbrow and treated him cruelly. This was partly because of a slow and careful habit of speech which had a bookish flavor. Sometimes he used the English language instead of the slovenly jargon of slang which is the fashion in high schools and colleges.

Football attracted him as a series of rapidly shifting problems to be solved by ini-

tiative and intelligence. He studied the books written by the masters of the game and searched for flaws in their diagrams. He invented combinations and formations of his own, for attack and defense, and anxiously submitted them to Fayette Caldwell's scrutiny. To be consistent, he resolved to demonstrate that the brains of a center rush were more essential than his muscle and beef. There was much more to it, in his opinion, than passing the ball back and standing as an obstruction to be tipped over. Bowman McMurray's verdict was, as confided to Len Garretson:

"Red is a queer guy in some ways, understand—such as liking to study an' so forth. But as long as it don't interfere with his football, I can't call him down for that. A couple o' years from now, with twenty or thirty pounds more heft—oh, boy! He'll be there!"

"Red's folks are vegetarians, Bo. They live on squirrel food an' cabbages. He don't get enough to eat. That's what keeps him skinny."

"Yes, and don't I feed him a beefsteak twice a week at Pedro's short-order café? It keeps me poor, Len. But I like that boy, person'ly. There ain't a crooked freckle on him."

"He qualifies for advanced registry in my herd book," agreed the critical Garretson, whose standards of manhood were severe. "What about taking him along to Kentucky with us? Don't we need him to save us from flunkin' our exams?"

"I thought of that, Len. Besides, he is dead sure to be a regular college football player. Fayette Caldwell says he has the stuff."

"Did he, Bo? Then Red is due to hitch up with this combination. Have you sprung it on him?"

"In a ten'tive way. That's one of Red's fancy words. Let's see how he finishes the season."

"He won't crack," declared Len. "There's a red-headed foreman out at our place that looks just like him. They don't know how to quit. Dad says it's the rust from so much extra iron in their blood that turns their hair that color. Does Red Mercer want to go to college?"

"Can a duck swim? His father has him pointed for the ministry, but Red says science an' religion don't seem gaited quite

right for a double hitch, and he is firmly wedded to science."

"He's married young," said Len. "Where does he want to go to college?"

"Oh, he likes what he's heard of Centre College. Traditions of culture, scholarship, an' so forth mean more than athaletic not'riety, Red tells me. I told *him* to wait till we-all lit on th' little old Kentucky campus. We aim to make her notorious."

"Has he asked his father, Bo?"

"Ten'tively. The old man approves. Of course, the minister don't get enough pay to send Red through college, even if they are vegetarians. But Red can rustle, just like us."

"It would be great," exclaimed Garretson, and he held up *three* fingers, close together. "*Just like this.*"

Bowman held up three fingers, close together, and feelingly echoed:

"*Just like this*, Len. He's elected. What a coincidence, that we've found another one."

This football season was, after all, only an episode in the career of Bowman McMurray, and you may be as much inclined to get on with his story as I am. The Fort Hawley eleven was undefeated and wound up the schedule by administering a terrific drubbing to the visitors from Waco. Alas, Nan Overton was absent in boarding school and so was denied the pleasure of seeing the outcast Cap'n Bowman McMurray come into his own. Perhaps she still disliked football, but she would have shouted wildly and waved the school colors when the helmeted Bo sped untouched for eighty yards and a touchdown while the lithe Len Garretson galloped beside him for a brilliant interference. And to see Red Mercer surging into every play was like watching a red-headed comet.

After this climax there came an emotional slump which attracted the attention of Fayette Caldwell. His three young heroes played basket ball through the winter and baseball in the spring, but their interest was perceptibly listless. Caldwell soon diagnosed the situation. There was the rest of this year to be lived through and then another one before they could hope to shake the dust of Fort Hawley and reach the goal of college. Youth has not learned to wait with patience. Fayette Caldwell had begun with them too soon. The road stretched too far ahead. These were lads already more ma-

ture in some respects than the average college freshman and yet it seemed to them as though they must eternally wear the shackles of high-school kids. Caldwell gave it much thought before he submitted his startling scheme to Sallie.

"Honey, I started something, and I can't let go. I've a good mind to send the Big Three along to Kentucky next year."

"Where to? What's the answer?" was her astonished comment. "To exhibit them? You don't sound right in your head."

"Let them go to school in Somersworth and get ready for college," he began to explain. "They won't feel so sort of hopeless and far away. They are beginning to skid, Sallie, and I can't blame them. Somersworth is only thirty miles from Danville and Centre College. The school has prepared a good many boys. It is in touch with the campus, and I know all the folks. It will seem like really getting ahead."

"But what about money, Fayette? Len Garretson has an allowance, but poor Bowman and Red Mercer can't possibly afford it."

"They expect to go to college without any visible means of support. That seems to be the least of their worries. It's an independent, resourceful outfit if ever there was one. Why not let them get broken into it for a year? There's no harm in trying. It's not like going to an expensive prep school."

"Somersworth has the best high-school football team in the Blue Grass," demurely smiled Sallie. "You used to brag about it."

"That was when I played full back," he modestly acknowledged. "Well, what else can I do about these three boys I've gone and adopted?"

"Scooch will holler terribly if you take his Bowman away," sighed Sallie; "and I don't know what I shall do; but a woman always gets the worst of it. Is it your intention to personally conduct this expedition to your old Kentucky home?"

"Can't afford it. And it's much better to let them shift for themselves. I come trailing into Somersworth with them and every old family in town will consider it a sacred duty to take care of Fayette Caldwell's boys."

"You better mention it to their parents, seems to me, Fayette. A lawyer ought to know that it's unconstitutional, or something like that, to kidnap three trusting and innocent little lads."

"Aren't they, though? I can put it across with Tom McMurray, but when it comes to Rev. John Calvin Mercer and the destiny of Red, I foresee an argument."

Sallie foresaw a battle with Fayette badly routed, but she sensibly refrained from saying so. It was much wiser to let her impulsive young husband find things out for himself. He was not one to let the grass grow under his feet and on the very next day he called at the Presbyterian manse. The clergyman was a worn, fragile-looking man at best, and just now he was passing through a particularly trying ordeal of trying to make both ends meet. His prosperous parishioners believed that the church ought to be supported, that it would be a heathenish community otherwise. But they found it much easier to buy new automobiles than to increase their subscriptions. Ministers should be contented with higher rewards than money.

"I have felt grateful for your interest in my son, Mr. Caldwell," said Doctor Mercer, as they sat down together. "He was too absorbed in football, perhaps, but the physical improvement had been marked. Strangely enough, he stood better in his studies than since. I am quite perplexed."

"Restless, sir. I've noticed it, too."

"Ah, here he comes now," exclaimed the parent as John Calvin Mercer, junior, yanked open the front door and stumbled over the sill. Under his arm was a load of books, which he dropped with a racket that made his father wince. His sleeves were too short for his bony wrists, and one cuff was plentifully splattered with ink. Surmising that something was in the wind, he grinned at Fayette Caldwell and flopped upon the sofa. It was a significant grin, as between two men who understood each other perfectly. Alas, that the anxious, devoted father should have been unable to inspire such an intimacy as this!

Caldwell outlined his plan, as persuasively as possible, and the freckled, intelligent features of John Calvin, junior, beamed approval. He caught the salient points at once, kindly explaining to his father:

"It puts you in touch with the college you are going to. You feel you belong to it before you get there. Stimulus and atmosphere are bully good bets. And you won't have to feed and take care of me."

"Who will?" was the dazed interrogation of Doctor Mercer.

"Leave that to us. Of course I haven't had as much experience as Bo McMurray and Len Garretson, father, but if we stick together, there will absolutely be no such word as fail. As Bo says, we'll have the world by the tail."

The minister turned to Caldwell to say, in a troubled voice:

"Are these two young men, one can scarcely call them boys, fit companions for my son? Do you advise me to let him go with them on this quixotic adventure, away from the influences of a godly home?"

"I'd trust *my* boy with them, if Scooch was old enough to go away to school," was the quick assurance. "They have not had your son's advantages, Doctor Mercer, but they are very eager to improve themselves. And they are loyal and honest and brave. Those things score a hundred per cent with me."

"It's my great and only chance to go to college," almost tearfully implored Red. "And you know what President Wilson said about old Centre. *'There is a small college in Kentucky that in its years of existence has turned out more men that have attained—'*"

The minister threw up his hands and fairly shouted:

"Stop it! You will drive me distracted. You have chanted that quotation at meals. You have spouted it, with gestures, to imaginary audiences in the side yard, and you have mumbled it in your sleep."

"It's true, isn't it, father?" sulkily replied John Calvin, junior. Caldwell diplomatically interposed to say:

"If you will be so good as to talk it over with your wife, Doctor Mercer, and assure her that I have the boy's future very much at heart—that I am not thinking entirely in terms of a football coach——"

"You are considered to be one of Fort Hawley's finest young men," was the handsome compliment, "and your opinion will carry much weight with me. You have quite taken my breath away, I must confess. And I cannot imagine letting my son go wandering off in this hazardous manner——"

"It develops a boy's self-reliance, father, to get out and rustle early instead of growing up fossilized," proclaimed John Calvin, junior, to whom Bowman and Leonard Garretson had persistently preached the doctrine that life is a gamble. The minister nodded assent to this dictum. Perhaps he

felt a twinge of regret that his own pathway had been so sheltered and uneventful. He ventured to suggest a possible compromise.

"Why not let McMurray and Garretson go on ahead and spy out the land, Mr. Caldwell? If it is possible to earn enough money in Somersworth, outside of school hours, which seems extremely dubious, and if good reports are received of their progress and behavior——"

"And break up the combination?" mourned Red.

"Don't interrupt, my son. In short, let them prove the case, and I may feel inclined to let John join them later, for part of the year before entering college."

"I am glad to find you persuaded halfway, sir," said Caldwell.

Several days later Bowman McMurray and young Garretson were walking down the street arm in arm, both talking at once and each beseeching the other to have some sense, for Heaven's sake, and listen to a fellow. From the tangled dialogue it was possible to wrest such bits as this:

"Red's father has surrendered, ten'tively! If we make good he joins us. What was it your dad wrote, Len?"

"Oh, he said he had contracted to see me through school an' if I was hell-bent on Kentucky it wasn't worth raisin' a rumpus about. About college, he didn't know—better play one card at a time. How much money will you have, Bo?"

"What I earn before then. That's plenty. No, I won't let you loan me a darn cent. I'll get some kind of a business proposition started in little old Somersworth, all right, and be ready to take Red Mercer into partnership when he turns up. While he's terribly brainy, he is liable to be impracterble in spots. Ministers' sons are raised that way, anyhow. I b'lieve the Lord will provide, but you *gotta* give Him good interference."

"When do you reckon we can drift, Bo?"

"Fayette Caldwell says next September. He wrote the Somersworth school about us. Er—say, Len, come to think of it, there's one or two little matters I'd like to speak to you about. You don't happen to know when boarding schools in St. Louis, for instance, shut up for the spring vacation?"

"Miss Nancy Overton came home yesterday," coldly answered the Garretson lad. His sallow cheek flushed a little. He glanced

at his comrade with that vigilant look, which was so much older than his years. The amiable chatter slackened and died. Bowman sadly reflected that all his self-sacrifice had been in vain. He had decided to let 'em marry each other and now at the mere mention of the woman's name, Len Garretson seemed like he was ready to shoot to kill. However, you could forgive most anything in a man who had stood off a whole drove of Mexicans and saved your life.

After supper Bowman put on the black suit whose seams had been let out before he burst them, and told his mother that he was going to make a little call on a certain person. Mrs. McMurray was clinging to him these days, as though every time she saw him would be the last one. And little was required to make them both tearful whenever the parting was mentioned, although it was months away. As for the little McMurrays, they trooped at his heels or climbed over him, and it was like picking off burdock burs to get rid of them.

"Tis not your manners that worry me, but do remember your temper," warned his mother as she gave his necktie a deft twitch. Thus she had spoken on a previous occasion.

"I'll never come back from the Overtons' with another jaw poked out of plumb, believe me, ma. There's times when once is a heap."

With the maternal injunction in mind, Bowman hastened on his sentimental journey. He was quite prepared to find Len Garretson in the Overton parlor. It was, in fact, what he called playing a sure-fire hunch. He therefore registered polite surprise when he encountered the limber young cow-puncher alone at the piano, coaxing the keys for a little ragtime while waiting for Miss Overton to descend.

"Why, hullo, Len, old man! Isn't this nice?" cordially exclaimed the McMurray.

"It was nicer two minutes ago, when there weren't so many of us," frankly replied the other suitor. "If you're in a hurry, don't wait."

"Oh, I've got lots of time. Seems funny you didn't mention the idea of coming up here to-night. Th' agreement is not to hold out on each other about anything."

"I didn't hear you pourin' your intentions into my left ear," was the logical retort.

"Did you read in to-day's paper about the big fire in Dallas?" said Bowman, tactfully shifting his ground.

Garretson yawned and looked bored. The McMurray gazed at the nearest window, but it happened to open upon the dusky bit of lawn behind the garage. He absently caressed his jaw and picked up a book to stare at. Then Nancy swept in, indescribably impressive, her golden hair done up like a young lady's, her demeanor conveying just the slightest hauteur. But there was the same frank sweetness in her blue eyes as she surveyed these two manly friends of hers. And there was a ripple of mischief in her smile as she could not help recalling another meeting in this same room.

"I am glad you boys are so fond of each other," she told them, after the first formalities. "Len was telling me about it last night. It is perfectly romantic, like David and Goliath—no, I reckon I mean Jonathan, don't I, Bowman?"

"You mean to tell me Len was up here last night?" blurted the aggrieved McMurray, ignoring the historical blunder. "He didn't give you much time to get rested after your long journey, seems to me, Miss Overton. Sounds inconsiderate!"

"Oh, Len Garretson is always refreshing," cried Nancy, sternly resolved to be neutral, but already slipping a little in spite of herself. They did tease so easily. Bowman had begun to glower. His sad and noble and beautiful thoughts were dimming. With another effort, however, to rid the situation of any strain, he said:

"Len is a fine young fellow, and he can't have too much of a good woman's influence. Say, Nan, we're going to college. Did he tell you about that?"

"Why, no. He hinted at a secret. How in the world can you boys get into college so soon?"

"Well, we are going to stop on the way, just for next year, that's all. But that's a mere detail. It's good old Centre College in Kentucky. Maybe you never heard of it, but President Wilson said——"

"Shut up," very rudely interrupted the Garretson kid. "If I have to listen to that again, I'll yell for help. Red Mercer said it for you. It's my turn. 'Ten governors, two vice presidents, eight senators,' et cetera, and Bowman McMurray."

"I do expect to help the college some,"

admitted Bo. "What do you think of us, Nan?"

"I think a lot of you both," was the honest confession, "and I hate to realize we are all grown up and doomed to separation. But such is life, isn't it? So complex and unexpected. I feel so much older and more thoughtful since I went to St. Louis to complete my education. It will affect you in the same way. Do you play bridge?"

"Stud poker," drawled Garretson, "but Bo made me swear off. We can't afford to risk our capital."

Bowman had become lost in thought. He was his own true self again. How contemptible of him to feel annoyed at Len. Here was the first trial of their intimate friendship, the chance to show that gratitude and eternal obligation which he had sworn to live up to. Grandly the McMurray rose to his feet and said, with a bow:

"You two may have some things to talk over, Len, old man. I just dropped in to pay my respects, anyhow. Got a lot of work to do to-night."

"But I don't want you to go," protested Nancy, who appeared puzzled and hurt. "We were going to talk over old times."

"Much obliged, Nan. I wish you every happiness and congratulations. Years ago I said, at the football game where I had to lick three cops and you pinned me up—I said to myself, *'That girl will make a fine wife for some worthy young fellow.'* I remember th' exact words."

"For goodness sake, Bowman McMurray! What ails you to-night?" gasped the girl.

"Motion-picture stuff. He eats it up," cynically explained the Garretson kid. "Let him rave. We all have our failings."

Bowman overlooked this affront. He

proposed to finish in style. As he moved toward the hall, Nancy laid a hand on his sleeve and implored:

"Aren't you coming to say good-by before you go to Kentucky, Bo?"

"Much obliged, if it's perfectly convenient to all concerned. You look very beautiful to-night, Miss Overton."

Young Garretson lounged in the background, hands in his pockets, and it was too bad that Bowman could not perceive that his comrade was more touched than amused. Just as the splendid McMurray was about to pass out into the night, the doorbell rang. He concluded to wait a minute. It was another hunch. Presently a colored servant admitted a rather gawky youth of a freckled complexion, who removed his hat to reveal a curly, auburn thatch. Under his arm he carried a little box. At discovering Bowman he appeared to experience nervous surprise, for he slipped on a rug and dropped the box which flew open and scattered a number of small carved, wooden objects. He let them lie on the floor while he shook hands with Nan and exclaimed.

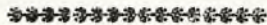
"I didn't know you expected company, Miss Overton. I can teach you how to play chess some other time."

"I'm perfectly delighted, Mr. Mercer. Bowman is just going, but Len Garretson will enjoy watching us, I'm sure."

The McMurray gazed at the infatuated Red, and then at the hovering Garretson kid who looked very much as though he regretted leaving his firearms at home. With a grin so wide that it hurt his face, Bowman held up three fingers, close together, and murmured in farewell:

"*Just like this!*"

TO BE CONTINUED.



## ONE OF THE OLD STAND-BYS

THE uneducated but highly pious brother, coming down out of the mountains, met a man who had frequently employed him as a farm hand.

"Well, Cy," said the former employer, "you've been in retirement for several weeks. Why?"

"It's this hyuh way, Mistuh Brownson," explained the pious man, "I been up in 'the Cove' conductin' of a big religious revival. I tell you I done got them mountain folks all stirred up. Mistuh Brownson, they is so stirred up now that I don't have to be there revivin' them no more. That revival is just runnin' itself."

"I see," observed Mr. Brownson; "it's an automatic revival."

"Naw, suh!" replied the other hotly. "It's Southern Methodist."

# Lost and Found

By Elmer Davis

How would you suddenly like to find yourself a highway robber—of the Broadway variety? Read this bright little, right little tale and find out. It is one which will keep you on the jump from first to last. You have to travel fast to keep up with the people in it.

(A Novelette)

## CHAPTER I.

**F**FIFTY feet short of the swirling corner where the cross street ran into Broadway, Thomas Jefferson Jackson McCall stopped suddenly before a show window. Three weeks ago that window would have attracted him not at all. It belonged to a cheaply ornate bakery restaurant, of the type that had popped up like toadstools all over the theatrical district since prohibition. He scorned those places and their food.

But in this particular window there was a strawberry shortcake. Brief but vivid experience with cheap restaurants warned him that it was probably a very poor shortcake. His Aunt Lizzie, back home in Kentucky, might not have admitted that this article of commerce had any right to regard itself as a shortcake at all. But it looked like a shortcake; looked more like a shortcake, perhaps, because the afternoon was wearing on, and Jeff McCall had had nothing to eat since the night before. A price card in the window announced that the cake was fifteen cents a slice; fifteen cents, and a cup of coffee was a dime. Jeff's hand slid down into his trousers pocket and reflectively caressed his last quarter.

Nobody would have known from his appearance that it was his last quarter. Outwardly he still seemed the prosperous and gilded youth that he had been, three weeks ago. His soft hat was freshly blocked; his suit was freshly pressed; his blue tie of watered silk, with the thin, red diagonal stripe, looked like the five dollars that it had cost. Nobody could tell that that tie had been knotted carefully to conceal a gap where the

silk had worn through to the white cotton stuffing. Nobody knew that since a recent visit from the old-clothes man this suit and hat were the only ones Jeff McCall possessed, nor that he had stayed in bed yesterday afternoon and spent for the pressing of the suit and the blocking of the hat the money that ought to have been saved for breakfast and lunch and dinner not only to-day, but to-morrow and the day after. It had been expensive, but a necessary expense; for Georgia and her father were coming to town to-night.

When Georgia had written him that she was coming back to take her first look at New York since she left school, Jeff had been, in fact, as prosperous as he still looked. So prosperous that he had felt sure of his ability to convince Georgia that she had better stay in New York, and stay with him. He did not know that he could convince her, but her latest letters had given him hope.

But that was three weeks ago—three ages ago! Before the Hamar Publicity Corporation had suddenly gone into well-deserved insolvency, and Jeff's job with it. He had not realized at the time what a catastrophe that was; industrial depressions and unemployment crises had meant to him only well-sounding phrases to give a literary turn to his copy. It was inconceivable that he, Jeff McCall, would some day be a part of them. He had been coming to realize that very slowly; it seemed to him now that he had not fully realized it when he spent almost the last money he had getting his wardrobe ready for Georgia's arrival. She had always insisted on seeing her suitors well dressed. Now that he thought it over, Georgia insisted on a good many things. She



was an insistent person; perhaps too insistent.

Certainly she was not a person to be approached by a gentleman with no more than a quarter in his pocket. When he had paid out that incredible sum of four dollars and a half to the cleaners yesterday afternoon he had still thought, as he had thought every day since he lost his job, that something would turn up; but Georgia's train was due in three hours and nothing had turned up yet. Jeff looked at the shortcake again and again began to wonder about the necessity of necessary expenses.

Georgia and her father expected him to dine with them at their hotel at seven. The invitation was a fortnight old; Jeff had accepted it, then, and had never revoked his acceptance. He'd never told Georgia that he had lost his job, for he had expected something to turn up. He would laugh with Georgia over the loss of his old job when he had a new and better one. But there didn't seem to be any jobs, better or worse.

He had besieged the doors of rival publicity corporations, which he had once affected to despise, and had been trampled on by a steady stream of discharged employees taking the air. Twice a week he called at the newspaper office where he had worked before the war; but there had been only one vacancy on the staff, and Howard Hamar, Jeff's boss, who knew that he was insolvent for some time before he passed the word along, had beaten him to it. Nothing had turned up, and he was beginning to suspect that nothing would turn up—except Georgia, expecting him to dine with her.

But he could not. It suddenly occurred to Jeff McCall that while it would be right and proper for him to dine with Georgia, if he had in his clothes money enough to buy a dinner elsewhere, he could not dine with her if she were a necessity and not a luxury. That was a curious moral law; you can take it if you do not need it.

Hitherto Jeff had taken the universe at its face value, but now he was beginning to examine it more carefully, and with an unemotional eye. And there was certainly something queer about it. Consider these people flocking past him; prosperous actors and actresses; actors and actresses pitifully pretending to be prosperous; prosperous persons pretending to be actors and actresses. Empty, painted faces; full, well-fed faces painted from within. To Jeff Mc-

Call they seemed terribly pathetic, and it annoyed him that none of them seemed to realize that they were pathetic.

And their prosperity was more annoying than their pathos. Men with heavy diamond rings; women with pearl necklaces, coats of fur and near fur. Another curious moral law—money seemed attracted to people who would misuse it. Jeff, now, had never misused his money. His only vice was benevolent enterprises; and the Hamar Publicity Corporation, unfortunately, had counted among its clients a great many benevolent enterprises. It specialized in drives for worthy causes, and Jeff McCall was a master of the starvation story. He had written about starvation and suffering all the way from the Adriatic to the China Sea—written brilliantly, appealingly, powerfully—so powerfully that he never failed to convert himself. Many a twenty-dollar bill Jeff had furtively contributed to the relief of starvation, when he ought to have been saving it to buy a ring for Georgia; and now that only a quarter was standing between starvation and Jeff McCall, nobody had started a drive for him.

## CHAPTER II.

"Well, 'Kentuck!' What ho?"

He turned from contemplation of the meretricious shortcake to an object quite as gay and sweet and juicy, and perhaps as deceptive—Kay Devine, the unemployed actress who was his neighbor in the Eighth Avenue rooming house where his falling fortunes had driven him. It was not cold, but Kay's slim form was muffled in a long, gray wrap, with a gray fur collar, which gave her a curious appearance of constantly repressing a shiver. Her slim, gray-stockinged legs looked cold beneath it, but there was a gallant, almost defiant contrast in the pert, pink face and the bright hat of red straw. Unemployment was no novelty to Kay.

"No ho," said Jeff gloomily.

"I've worn out a chair bottom in every agency on Broadway," she admitted. "These are hard days, Kentuck. I've got down to reading the female help wanted."

From under her long cloak she drew out her favorite daily paper—a publication which strove to put as little strain as possible on the fatigued brains of its readers by saying it with pictures.

"The first thing I see," she continued, "is a loud call for dancing instructors. God knows, Kentuck, that is an honorable business. If your feet had been stepped on by fat boobs as much as mine have, you'd think that is the crying need of the times. And I've given away so much instruction to portly gents from out of town that it seems like I ought to be able to sell it. But I get to this place just in time to see three hundred dames exit. The job has been filled. Whither away?"

"On the trail of a job," he confessed; "as usual."

"Then toddle on. Don't let me keep you."

Jeff hesitated. She was an agreeable little person, with a kind heart. He might take her into the restaurant and use his quarter to buy two cups of coffee. But his judgment voted this down. This lonesome quarter, the last of its family, had acquired somehow a sort of sanctity. It should be spent only for some worthy and essential purpose. It must not be squandered on a woman.

"I wish you luck," he said.

"Same to you. If I hear of anything, I'll let you know."

But as Jeff walked on he hoped that she would not hear of anything; for only last Friday she had heard of something and had let him know—something about the fifth race at Havana. That was about the time Jeff was beginning to realize that something would have to be done, if he was to entertain Georgia in the style to which she was accustomed; so his watch had accompanied Kay's sapphire lavalière to the pawnshop. That Kentucky blood would out. If the horse had finished first Jeff would almost have been able to buy a ring for Georgia; but the horse had stood on his head.

To buy a ring for Georgia! But how did he know that Georgia would take his ring? Back in Kentucky Georgia had delighted in trampling on bleeding hearts, and Jeff's heart had been only an inconsiderable brick in an extensive pavement. Her letters had been amazingly gracious, but that was because he was eight hundred miles away. From the perspective of his years in New York he had come to the conclusion that those Kentucky girls were a stony-hearted lot, and Georgia the most adamant of all. Adamantine and expensive.

But there was something about Georgia, Georgia who was coming to town to-night. That he should have to come before her,

cringing, in jobless poverty, was unthinkable. Something would turn up. Jeff had a hunch that this was his lucky day. Delano, the city editor of the *Record*, would do for Jeff what he could, and maybe to-day he had fired somebody and could lift Jeff into the vacant place. It was a good omen, Jeff thought, that he walked past the office boy without a challenge.

The *Record* city room, as usual, was steeped in an almost ostentatious indifference. The *Record* made a point of getting amazing results without visible effort; its offices were as quiet as a club. Crises at home and abroad—the fall of empires, the divorce suits of billionaires, or four-alarm fires around the corner—could not disturb the *Record* city room. Even a presidential election ruffled it only a little; and Delano, mountainous and impassive in his swivel chair, could have been disturbed by nothing less than the explosion of a fourteen-inch shell on his flat-topped desk.

Jeff looked around for his recent boss, Howard Hamar, and was relieved to find that he was not in sight. Hamar would ask how he was getting on, would patronize him, would even offer to lend him money. He would not take Hamar's money; he felt that it was undignified to admit that Thomas Jefferson Jackson McCall could ever be in actual need of a loan. Jeff nodded to Delano and sat down in the little chair beside the desk. Delano said nothing; he went on thinking. He was thinking about a declining stock market, and his margins that were slowly fading into nothingness.

"Well?" Jeff said at last.

"No," said Delano. "No job yet."

"You ought to give me a job," Jeff told him. "Your paper has never been the same since I left."

"Probably not," Delano admitted. "I hear they hung up a thirty-per-cent dividend last year; but that proves nothing."

"When I went away to the war," Jeff reminded him, "you said you'd take me back."

"And when you came back from the war," Delano continued tranquilly, "you said you were through with this rotten business. You were going to get rich out of publicity."

"I may be biased," Jeff admitted, "but if I'd been running that business instead of Hamar, we would have got rich."

"I don't doubt it. I've known Hamar ten years. I know exactly what he would do with a business. He'd get three or four good

accounts, and then he'd become haughty. He'd turn down business; he'd loaf; when a modest job came along he'd push it aside, registering scorn. And then some day the rent would be due and Hamar would be getting from under."

"That was what happened," said Jeff. "And he got from under."

"We can't hire reporters by the battalion," said Delano. "We had one vacancy, and Hamar beat you to it. Also, it's only fair to say that Hamar is a valuable man. He's had twice your experience. He was supporting three aunts and improving his reputation while you were off plugging Huns. Any paper in town would be able to use Hamar. That's why he still has money enough for his pet vices of silk shirts and stud poker, while you walk the streets. It may be outrageously unjust, but it's the way the universe is made."

"I was on the way to curing him of stud," said Jeff. "We used to play it around the office on dull days. I suppose that was why the corporation failed. Hamar may have a refined taste in shirts, but he doesn't know much about stud. However, he has a job and I haven't. I wish I could interest you."

"The only way you can interest me," said Delano, "is by telling me what's going to happen in Wall Street. And if you knew that you wouldn't need a job."

Jeff was beginning to lose heart. The man seemed inexorable; and as his hopes declined his stomach began to remind him of its emptiness.

"Give me a space job," he begged desperately.

"Go ahead," said Delano. "Nine dollars a column for any news you can find that the staff has missed. But it won't be much. And I can't give you assignments. I've got two dozen men on salary that I've got to keep busy."

"That's no bright prospect," said Jeff gloomily.

"Bright enough. Find out who murdered Bonnard. The police and the newspapers have been trying for six months, but it's too much for them. If you do it, I'll give you a job. Find out who set the bomb in Wall Street. There's a ten-thousand-dollar reward up for that. Find out who's behind the theft of five millions in Liberty Bonds. Looks as if somebody ought to trace the connection between bank messengers

knocked cold, and innocent brokers all over the country loaded up with stolen securities. The surety companies have hung up fifty thousand for the man that can do that. It looks easy."

"Have a heart," Jeff muttered.

"All right," said Delano, opening the morning's paper. "Here's something for you. Look over our 'Lost and Found' column. There ought to be three or four good human-interest stories there every day, but I can't waste the time of a good man on a good salary to hunt them up. Here—"

"Lost on Lackawanna ferry, Twenty-third Street, bag containing a sum of money, Montclair commutation ticket, copy of 'Paradise Lost,' and a set of teeth. Valued for sentimental association. Reward.

"Find out whether the sentimental association attaches to Paradise Lost or the teeth. Or this:

"Will the lady who sent the gas logs to the rummage sale for devastated France please communicate with the committee?"

"With a crime wave and a municipal investigation and three big-league divorce suits all running at the same time, I can't spare a seventy-five-dollar man to find out whether the committee wants to tell her that devastated France doesn't need gas logs, or whether somebody had salted away the family savings in one of them. But you might get a good story there."

"And I'd collect on it a week from Saturday," said Jeff. "I was hoping you'd annex me to a salary so I could get an advance on it this afternoon. I asked for bread and you gave me a stone."

"I'll lend you five," Delano offered. But Jeff's pride rose up suddenly and silenced his empty stomach.

"No, thanks. I don't need it just now. I'll look in on you next week."

On his way to the door he saw Hamar, just arrived, looking in his mail box at the far corner of the room. For a moment Jeff thought of speaking to him. He would undoubtedly have to admire Hamar's new shirt, but he might match quarters with him. He would acquire half a dollar, a dollar, two dollars; and then he could intrigue Hamar into a game of stud—

But it did not seem to be his day, after all; probably he would only lose his last quarter. And he did not want Hamar to know that he had just tried vainly to get a job. After all, he still had his pride, and his

quarter. He would go forth and see if something wouldn't turn up.

### CHAPTER III.

As he sauntered down the street there was no sign on his debonair countenance of his hatred for the unprofitable and well-fed human race. But he did hate it; hated the race and its occupations. This street, now. A theatrical costumer's shop, gay with spangled gowns; a small and somewhat dubious hotel; a pawnshop; a florist; a lingerie shop, its window flaunting confections of cerise and orange and pale-green and lavender; another hotel; a ticket-scalping agency, the merest hole in the wall, with a sign of bright-red letters on a yellow ground—"Choice seats for all successes. Liberty Bonds bought. Foreign exchange." A street of wasted money and useless occupations. He hated these people with money, and the way they made their money; he could not quite bring himself, yet, to hate the money itself.

Before the ticket agency he paused and thoughtfully lit his last cigarette. In the fitful wind the operation took all his attention, so he did not notice the fat, preoccupied person emerging from the ticket agency till the fat one had collided with him, jostled him halfway across the pavement, knocked his cigarette—his last cigarette—out of his mouth and into the gutter. Then Jeff looked up, and he hated the fat stranger at sight; hated him more than the rest of mankind. He would have hated him if he had not deprived Jeff of that cigarette—even if he had shown some compunction, instead of looking up angrily as if Jeff ought to apologize to him.

Jeff hated this man's appearance—the shiny red face, the red, close-cropped scalp visible under a velours hat pushed back from a sweating forehead, the striped scarf with a diamond stud, the spring overcoat of Nile green with salmon-pink pin stripes. But, above all, he hated the fat stranger because he was counting money—a roll of yellow bills, which the fat one was in the act of binding up with a rubber band and thrusting into his pocket.

What happened then was a pure muscular reflex. The Jeff McCall, who was a Kentuckian, a Methodist, and a gentleman, was temporarily in a state of coma. The Jeff McCall, who was an athlete with an empty stomach and empty pockets, smote the fat

one neatly under the chin with his left hand, and with his right gathered in the roll of bills as his victim dropped to the pavement.

It was still his muscles, and not his volition, that set him walking rapidly toward Broadway in a stream of pedestrians who seemed to be as much in a hurry as he was himself. Behind him rose a bleating cry of "Stop thief!" A dressing-table blonde on the threshold of the hotel stopped powdering her nose and joined in the cry. A taxi driver at the curb stopped cranking his car to yell "Stop thief!" and a fat saleslady came to the door of the lingerie shop and added her voice to the chorus. There was a sudden patter of running footsteps. So Jeff McCall yelled "Stop thief!" and broke into a run toward Broadway.

A policeman strolling toward him turned to follow Jeff's pointing finger and lumbered down the street ahead of him, yelling "Stop thief!" Jeff found himself in a crowd, but they were all going his way. Somewhere behind him, he knew, was the fat, red-faced one. Jeff would have to be out of the crowd before his victim caught up with him, and the man had looked as if he could be surprisingly agile in the pursuit of money. But before that catastrophe happened the crowd had turned the corner into Broadway, and mingled with a crowd gathered before a drug-store window watching the demonstration of an elastic abdominal belt, also with a crowd absorbed in the spectacle of a taxi driver changing a tire and another crowd watching a kite high up over Broadway—to say nothing of a crowd engrossed in an electrician testing lights on the lofty skeleton of a roof sign. In short, Jeff's private crowd was a brook that had reached the ocean and become absorbed in the multitudinous, multifarious, eternally curious and abysmally unobservant crowd of Times Square. Except for some accident, he was safe.

Safe! The conscience that had been asleep a moment ago sat up and howled. Safe! His common sense reinforced his conscience. He who had just now been an unemployment problem had joined the crime wave. He had committed about twenty years' worth of assault and robbery, and that fat roll of stoen money, thrust hastily down on top of his lonely but respectable quarter, distended his trousers pocket and made his hip ache. He was crazy.

And wicked, too, of course; but full realization of that would come later. At this mo-

ment Jeff was not prepared to admit that the offensive, red-faced person had a right to so much money. If his moral character could be judged from his appearance, he had probably gotten it by methods less honorable than outright robbery. Jeff could not keep the money, of course; the brain storm had passed and the gentleman from Kentucky was himself again. But he could not very well go back and hand it to its owner, for the owner did not look like a man of liberal mind and broad human sympathies, who would understand Jeff's friendly prank.

As Jeff's meditations reached this point he saw on the sidewalk, ten paces away, a can—a green rubbish can by the curb, the humble property of the department of street cleaning. That can had been put there by a friendly Fate to save Jeff McCall from the consequences, moral and legal, of his temporary insanity. He edged along the sidewalk toward the can, stood beside it nonchalantly, fixed an absent gaze on the kite above, and gently pried the roll out of his pocket. Then he walked away.

Three steps, and somebody was plucking at his coat tails. In the half second while he was turning around Jeff saw himself on his way to the police station, before the magistrate, locked up in Sing Sing. But that was not yet to be. A ragged little boy was pointing eagerly at the roll, neatly bound up in its rubber band, that had bounded off the edge of the rubbish can and lay in the gutter.

"Hey, mister! You dropped something."

Jeff's mind worked like lightning. It had to. He could not pretend he had not dropped the money; the boy had seen him. He could not stop to argue or explain; somewhere in this crowd people were still looking for the bold brigand of the cross street. He'd have to pick up his roll and try again.

"Thanks, son," he said graciously as he thrust the money into his pocket and straightened up with a huge sense of relief. Nobody else had seen him; he could go on his way. But the boy was beside him. Jeff paused. The boy seemed to expect something. Indeed, he deserved something for his honesty. If Jeff did not give him something the boy would make remarks about it, and that would attract attention. Jeff could not afford to attract attention now.

"Here, young fellow," said Jeff with a touch of the grand manner that had survived his misfortunes. "I guess you've earned

this." Awkwardly he slipped off the outermost bill, drew it out of his pocket, and handed it to his benefactor. It was a twenty.

"You must have a lot of it," the boy conjectured, grinning, "to drop it around careless like that. Bury it, mister, or somebody'll grab it off you, like they done wit' a guy on Forty-four', just now."

Jeff buried it as well as he could and sauntered away. This boy knew too much. Everybody hereabouts knew too much. He would leave this precocious neighborhood and go where he had time to think. He walked eastward slowly, his mind painfully going back over that incredible moment of moral blankness. He must have been crazy. But, luckily, he remembered the address of the ticket agency. He could put this money in a box and mail it, intact, to its owner.

And then he was stupefied by a sudden recollection. He could not send it back intact. His generosity to the boy had left him—him, the possessor of twenty-five cents in honest money—just nineteen dollars and seventy-five cents short. And the thief of nineteen dollars and seventy-five cents was still a thief.

#### CHAPTER IV.

When his reason recovered from the paralysis that followed this discovery he was well over toward Fifth Avenue, and burning with a sudden desire to count this money. If the bills were all twenties, he must have several hundred dollars. It was pleasant to think of the things that could be done with that, but he must not dwell on such matters. He must think up ways and means of restoring what he had taken, and what he had spent. And his stomach chose this inconvenient moment for reminding him that it was time to eat.

Jeff repressed this temptation, but he could not help mourning over the lost cigarette. Of course, he had money now—he could buy another package. It would not increase his deficit so very much—

"Certainly there is something demoralizing about money," Jeff soliloquized. "No wonder it upsets people. So much you can do with it."

The windows all about him were demoralizing. There was a raincoat—Jeff needed a raincoat; and a magnificent purple tie. Jeff felt so moral, after walking past the raincoat and tie, that he decided he could sur-

render to the lure of the cigar store next door. It gave him a pleasurable sense of self-restraint to carry this pocketful of money past the case of expensive Egyptians and buy a packet of his own cheap Turkish-and-domestic blend. His criminal insolvency now amounted to nineteen dollars and ninety-five cents, but the first whiff of his cigarette restored his courage. He'd have to count the money, if he could find a safe place.

And there was a safe place before his very eyes. In the back of the store was a row of telephone booths, without the glass doors that exposed the ordinary user of the coin-box phone to chance observers. High up in the solid doors of these booths were gratings for ventilation, but nobody could see inside. Jeff stepped into the nearest one, and the light switched on as he closed the door. He drew the roll from his pocket.

And then for one moment he experienced an unreasonable and immoral regret. Under the twenty that he had given the boy was a long succession of green one-dollar bills. Had he given the boy half his find? Since it was not his, and since it would all be returned, it made no particular difference; but it seemed a shameful waste. Honesty ought to be sufficiently rewarded with about two per cent.

He counted the dollar bills—seventeen, eighteen, nineteen. Then a five, another five; a twenty; two more singles; then a sumptuous, magnificent, yellow-backed hundred. Another—another—— He counted on, clear down to the last bill in the roll. Eleven thousand eight hundred and fifty-one dollars. The last ten bills had been thousands.

"I'd heard of those things," he mused, "but I was never right sure they were telling me the truth. I'm glad I know. It will be pleasant to remember when we've resumed our tête-à-tête, me and my quarter."

Jeff thoughtfully regarded the pile of money. It seemed a sin to drop so much in a rubbish can; better let it go back to its unworthy owner than be towed down the bay with the garbage, or left to enrich some observant street cleaner who deserved it no more than Jeff himself. He would have to think up some safer way of disposing of it; and in the meantime it could not be allowed to distend his pocket and attract attention. Jeff folded the ten thousand-dollar bills and laid them away in his inside vest pocket.

The eighteen hundred-dollar bills he put in an inner coat pocket.

"As for the chicken feed," he decided, "I'll carry it in my breeches." He thrust the fifty-one dollars into his trousers pocket and opened the door of the booth. A slip of white paper that had been folded inside the last bill slipped out and fell at his feet; Jeff picked it up and studied it, but could make nothing of it. A list of names and numbers—memoranda of some sort. He put it into a vest pocket and stepped out into the street—out into the street, and almost into the arms of Mrs. Marrowby.

Mrs. Marrowby was the secretary of a charity for crippled children which had occasionally given a modest commission to the Hamar Publicity Corporation—modest and infrequent, for it was a poor charity. Perhaps that was one reason why Jeff McCall had always had a weakness for it; another was Mrs. Marrowby's desperate and not too tactful sincerity. Poverty tended by Mrs. Marrowby must be a good deal worse than poverty neglected and unrelieved. But she was flutteringly glad to see him.

"Oh, Mr. McCall, we've missed you so much. I was saying to Mrs. Exbridge only to-day how much your wonderful articles did for us. Yes, I know we've transferred the account to another organization; the committee felt that Mr. Hamar didn't quite have a professional manner. But we have only gratitude for you, Mr. McCall."

So she thought he was still a prosperous and beneficent person, the possessor of a job. Jeff was grateful for that kindly misapprehension.

"How is the work going?" he asked.

"Oh, not too well. It seems so picayune to be asking for hundreds when everybody has been used to talking in millions for the last four or five years—and still, for that matter. My goodness! With all these people starving in Mesopotamia and Turkestan—— Why, when you tell people what a hundred dollars will do for a crippled child they figure on a piece of paper and tell you it would feed a dozen Chinamen all summer, and what can you do? And when you see the way people simply throw money away on——"

"Oh, Mr. McCall, I wish we were still associated with you; I'd love to have one of your real human articles about Johnny Platzek. Johnny's one of my pets, but I can't get our new publicity agent interested

in him. His father was killed in the war and his mother took in washing till she died of pneumonia; and Johnny was crippled by infantile paralysis. Yes, I know; isn't it terrible? We've found a family that would take him in just like one of their own, only they're poor, you know; people that do that sort of thing always are, somehow. Johnny needs braces and an operation before they can take him on—but he's so bright, Mr. McCall. A perfect wonder. I wish our new publicity agent would take an interest in Johnny, but he turns up his nose at a case that needs only a hundred and fifty dollars."

Jeff McCall's conscience suffered another eclipse.

"Here's fifty," he said, "and here"—extracting a packet of bills from his pocket—"here's the other hundred. Oh, you'll find a dollar extra in that handful. Buy him something he wants and doesn't need. A book or candy or cigarettes, if he's vicious enough to crave them."

He fled down the street before her gasping, incredulous gratitude. If he stayed she'd weep on his shoulder, and she would also wonder where he got the money.

"The owner of this roll," Jeff meditated gloomily when his senses had come back to him, "would have turned the chill, repellent shoulder on Johnny Platzek. If I handle the scoundrel's money much longer I'll lay up enough merit for him to save his soul. But I now owe him one hundred and seventy dollars and seventy-five cents. How the hell am I——"

Half an hour later he was drifting aimlessly in the neighborhood of Times Square, with no further inspiration as to ways and means of making up the deficit. It was beginning to be appalling. Appalling, too, that he was loitering about that neighborhood. Criminals, according to legend, liked to return to the scene of the crime. Whether the legend was well founded he did not know; but he did know that detectives were apt to linger about the scene of the crime, whether from insight or indolence. At any rate, he found himself walking with down-cast eyes, fearfully looking for flat feet and square toes. And so his vision encountered a pair of russet brogues that he remembered. He looked up into Hamar's face.

"Why, Jeff, old boy! How goes it? Still down on your luck?"

"More or less."

"I was speaking to Delano about you only to-day," said Hamar. "He hasn't anything just now, but he said he'd bear you in mind as a favor to me. If you'll walk up the street to a place I know, I'll buy you a drink."

"Varnish at eighty cents a throw," said Jeff. "I prefer to retain my treasured memories unsullied."

"As you please," said Hamar. "I merely thought you might have been economizing; and I've just drawn a week's pay. And I've a couple of hours to kill on an assignment."

"Waiting for the City News to do your work?" Jeff asked rudely.

"Waiting for our gallant police to admit they don't know anything. Just a little crime-wave stuff. Bold daylight hold-up on Forty-fourth Street. Some poor fish was flashing a roll in front of 'Chick' Bartz's place, and an enterprising citizen knocks him down, takes twelve thousand out of his hands, and beats it. Serves the boob right, if you ask me."

"Who's Chick Bartz?" Jeff asked. It was the most innocent remark that occurred to him.

"Oh, you remember Chick Bartz. One of the witnesses in the Becker case. Mixed up in two or three wire-tapping and boot-legging games since, but they've never been able to get him. Down at headquarters they think he knows something about the bond robberies, but they can't hang it on him. Now he's running a theater-ticket agency. Naturally, everybody supposes that the thugs were Chick's friends. The innocent stranger was one Absalom Kalbfuss, who used to be fairly well known hereabouts as a cheap gambler. Says he's a broker in Cincinnati now, and claims to be very pure. Stepped in to buy a couple of seats for the Winter Garden, he says, and carelessly steps out as he's putting away his roll. And biff! Somebody clouts him, frisks him, and leaves him flat."

"It ought to be easy to catch a man who did that on the open street," said Jeff between chattering teeth.

"So it seems. But it appears that everybody in sight began to call for the police and thus bewildered the local constabulary. The miscreant escaped in the confusion. I talked to Chick—also to this Kalbfuss. I gathered that he'd just about as soon lose his heart and lungs as twelve thousand, but when he caught his breath he tried to call off the

cops. Said it was no use—his money was gone, and the gang back in Cincinnati would kid him if anything got in the papers.

"But Inspector O'Keefe was on his ear by that time; he said nobody was going to make a fool of his dicks on the open streets, whatever they might do behind plate-glass doors. So the hue and cry has been started, and along about six o'clock I'll have to go up to the station and get them to confess they've been stung again. If you asks me, it looks like an inside job. Chick knew this bird was coming and tipped somebody off. But he'll get away with it—he was always slick. Meanwhile, I've got a couple of hours to kill and a week's pay in my pocket. But what can you do with money since the world went dry?"

"I'll help you spend your money," said Jeff. His soul was fighting against temptation, for it seemed wrong to return money to such a person as the red-skinned Kalbfuss. But he was discovering another queer moral law. If the money had belonged to a philanthropic millionaire it might have been possible to consider—just consider—holding out a little as a temporary loan. As it was, it would have to be paid back in full, and promptly. And a Fate that had been playing its own queer game with Jeff McCall that afternoon had suddenly opened before him a way of making up most of his deficit.

First he must have some change; he didn't want Hamar to see him flaunting hundred-dollar bills, if he could help it. But change was easy to get. Here was a florist's shop and—

"Wait here a minute," said Jeff. He went in and ordered two dozen American beauties, to be sent to Miss Georgia Somers at the Biltmore before seven o'clock. The florist took his hundred-dollar bill and gave him seventy in change; and Jeff added an item to a little account in his notebook. His indebtedness now came to two hundred dollars and ninety-five cents. But Hamar must have at least a hundred—

"All right," said Jeff, rejoining his late employer. "You say time and money hang heavy on your hands. Come up to my room and we'll play a little stud."

#### CHAPTER V.

At six o'clock Hamar said he had to go, and Jeff sorrowfully put the cards back in his bird's-eye maple bureau. The incredible had happened. His long experience, his in-

born card sense had gone for nothing against sheer, unlikely luck. Hamar had won a hundred and forty-five dollars.

"Seems to be my lucky day," said Hamar cheerfully, accepting one of Jeff's cigarettes. "But where did you get all this money? You with a hundred-dollar bill! Such a thing was never heard of."

"I have a friend," said Jeff truthfully, "who gave me a tip on a race at Havana the other day."

"Lucky devil! No wonder you don't care whether I get you a job or not. But why do you live in a dump like this, if you're in funds?" Hamar's gaze wandered over the white iron bed, the disreputable bureau, the shaky bird's-eye maple rocker. "I wouldn't live here if I were down to my last quarter."

"I'd thought of moving out," Jeff remarked. So he had; to-morrow the rent was due.

Hamar put on his hat.

"Well, any time you want to learn a little about stud, come to me. I shall now permit myself to be appalled by the ignorance of our police."

"A great reporter like you," said Jeff bitterly, "ought to be able to solve the mystery, even if the police can't."

"Well," Hamar admitted, "I might, if I worked like the devil. In which case the office would give me a kindly word, and maybe—just maybe—a five-dollar bonus. But it takes more than five dollars to make me work; I leave that sort of thing to five-dollar people."

Mention of this ignoble sum recalled to Jeff an imminent obligation; so he went downstairs with Hamar and paid the landlady a week's rent. Come what might, this gave him some security against the future; and his deficit was so big already that five dollars more or less made little difference.

"Unless I do something about it," Jeff reflected as he slowly climbed the stairs once more, "this thing will get away from me. For if I once admit that I'm in too deep to get out I'll be tempted to do something praiseworthy and commendable with the rest of this money—found a hospital, or something. And in this queer universe that would be a crime."

But doing something about it did not seem easy. His rural training had imbued him with a deep and unconquerable dread of the stock market, and his late experience with the races did not encourage him to put



much hope in making money that way. He could buy bonds, of course, and in three or four months the interest would make up his deficit; but there were objections to that plan.

Incidentally, it was curious that this Kalbfuss had not seemed eager to get his money back. He must have a lot of it, to be able to forget twelve thousand dollars rather than have his friends back home make sport of him. Jeff thought it reasonable to suppose that Kalbfuss did not want the police inquiring into his personal way of life; he was probably a scoundrel; he might have stolen the money. And the police, plausibly enough, suspected Chick Bartz—Bartz, who had escaped the penalty of so many crimes he had committed that it would be no more than fair to let him carry the burden of one that he had not.

But all these sophistries were of no use to Jeff McCall. He'd stolen the money and he'd have to give it back. But how? And then as he reached the top of the stairs his moral dilemma was crowded out of his mind by the sudden, imperious reminder that he had not eaten for twenty-four hours.

But now, of course, he could dine with Georgia. So long as he had in his pocket the price of a meal, there was no moral turpitude in accepting her hospitality. Jeff could not quite understand why this was so, since the money in his pocket was not his; but his honest, untutored moral sense told him that it was so, and he was in no mood to inject ethical subtleties between himself and that dinner with Georgia. He wished her father were not going to be there; this first evening he'd rather have her to himself.

The bathroom door opened beside him, and out into the corridor poured a cloud of steam fragrant with heliotrope talcum powder. From the cloud materialized the slim figure of Kay Devine, wrapped in a lavender silk kimono; and seeming to find nothing unconventional in the encounter.

"Hello, old topper! Any luck?"

"Not to-day," said Jeff, slightly embarrassed and feeling that he was an evil-minded scoundrel for reacting so rustically to this ordinary incident of lodging-house life.

"Same here," said Kay. "But cheer-o! Come in and have a cigarette."

Jeff would have felt it indelicate to refuse. He followed her into a room furnished exactly as his own, though decorated with an incredible number of signed photographs of

Apollos and Aphrodites of the chorus, and sat down cautiously in the rocker while Kay curled herself up on the unmade bed.

"Honest," she mourned, "I've walked a groove in every pavement in this part of town, but no luck at all." She blew a ring of smoke from a cheap cork-tipped cigarette, and began to turn over listlessly the pages of her illustrated newspaper.

"Lots of female help wanted here," she sighed, "but somehow they don't fit me. Listen to this, would you:

"Wanted, young lady measuring 36 bust. Previous experience unnecessary.

"I fought my way through a roomful of perfect forty-fours to get to that, and found somebody had just beat me to it. What? Oh, corset model, of course. But gee, I wish you could have seen the dame that got it. She was a thirty-six; I'll give her that. But if there was any kind of previous experience she hadn't had I never heard of it. What? Oh, yes, I've got over bein' proud. I'd go outside the profession in a minute if I could get a job with real money. But there's always something wrong. Here's a whole column from the garment trade:

"Wanted, Christian operators experienced on bathing suits.

"My experience in bathing suits would help me with Mack Sennett, but I can't run a sewing machine. You would of had to be raised on the East Side to qualify for these jobs."

"Did you come from the country, too?"

"Yes, Kentuck, I was raised in a pleasant little village. And I can't go back."

"You poor little girl! Did you——"

"It's too far to walk," she finished. "Gee, I wish you would listen to the chances there is to buy furs cheap.

"Actress going South will sacrifice genuine eastern mink dolman, never worn, \$85. Desborough, 188 West 46th."

"Desborough! Huh! I know her. I see her going south every day—as far south as the Automat. You and me aren't the only ones in distress, little brother."

"There must be jobs somewhere," Jeff conjectured.

"Of course there's jobs somewhere. If I'd only had any sense last fall—— I got a friend that's a director for the Climaxo Pictures out at Los Angeles. He'd give me a job any time; and there was a time once when I had the car fare. Now it's all I can

do to buy a ferry ticket to Fort Lee so they can tell me they don't need any extras today, thanks."

The devil seemed to be thinking up all sorts of trouble for Jeff McCall. Kay was a good little girl—a good little girl hard up. His deficit was so big already that the price of a ticket to Los Angeles would not make very much difference. And she'd do it in a minute if she were in his place——

But this was ruinous! If he gave way to every temptation to do good his eleven thousand would vanish in a day. He'd like to do it; perhaps he ought to do it; but he must not. And since he was afraid that Kay's plight would be too much for him if he talked to her longer, he rose rather abruptly and said that he must be going out.

Kay looked at him sharply.

"Time to eat," she observed.

"So it is," said Jeff. "I'd like to ask you to dine with me, but——"

"Now, don't try to think up any alibis. We're in the same boat, Kentuck, and we can't kid each other. Tell you what—I stopped at the delicatessen on my way home and got some cold ham and a loaf of bread. I've walked so much to-day I was too tired to go out, and I bet you feel just like I do. Stay here and help me kill a cold supper. I need company, and you cheer me up."

Her pretense was as thin as his own. She knew he was hungry, and he knew that she'd got only enough food for herself. She was a princess—a princess with a heart of gold, even though her grammar was homemade and her lavender kimono spattered with coffee stains. He honestly wished he could stay.

"But I can't," he explained regretfully. "I've been invited out to dinner."

"Gosh!" said Kay. "Your luck could be worse, then."

"With some old friends from my home town."

"Oh! There's all kinds of tough luck, ain't there? But maybe your town was different."

## CHAPTER VI.

All kinds of tough luck, Jeff reflected as he walked across town to the Biltmore. Tough luck to meet Georgia with only a deficit in his pocket; to have to sit across the table from her and look at her beautiful face and her dancing brown eyes, and say none of

the many things he had expected to say to her. She must be growing tired of playing with her suitors; she'd be marrying somebody before long. And this might be the last chance to persuade her to marry Jeff McCall. If he were only honestly penniless, he'd make a wild effort to persuade her anyway; surely something would turn up. But he was not honestly penniless; he was dishonestly plutocratic; and he found himself crossing the street whenever he saw a policeman. Not till he was entering the hotel was he able to put his criminal record out of mind and forget everything but Georgia.

At the desk he was told that there was a reservation for Judge Somers, but that he wouldn't arrive till later in the week. Miss Somers was here, however. Jeff called her on the telephone, and forgot unemployment and deficits and felonies when he heard her drawling:

"Well, Jeff McCall! It does seem like old times to have you hangin' round once again. Yes, I'm on my way downstairs. Watch the elevators and see if you remember what I look like."

See if he remembered! Her picture was printed over every page of his memory; not in three years, or in thirty years, would it fade. She sounded like the same old capricious Georgia, and it needed only the sound of her voice to set his heart sputtering like a machine gun. And in a moment she was here—stepping out of the elevator amid a cluster of women in evening dress whose plump flabbiness and bejeweled, middle-aged opulence provided the setting of perfect contrast for Georgia.

After all, there had been some reason in her wondering if he'd know her. The curly brown hair had been bobbed since he saw her last, and with the advance of fashion her skirts had receded to disclose a startling amount of black lace stocking; but she was the same Georgia—Georgia resplendent in an evening gown of henna satin, with a brown fur coat thrown carelessly over her creamy shoulders, who came to him with outstretched hands.

"You look like a million dollars," she burbled delightedly.

"Not quite that much," he protested, discovering that his voice, as of old when she was near, had a tendency to get lost in his throat and feebly croak its way out.

"Your roses are lovely, Jeff; I couldn't wear them with this gown, of course, but

to-morrow—I'm going to see you to-morrow, I suppose? That's glorious! Father isn't here yet; he had to stop in Louisville, on some business for the bank. But he'll be along in a couple of days, and he told me to come on and find my way around town before he got here. New York changes so fast that I suppose I'll hardly know it; but you're going to show me, aren't you?"

"Let's start," he suggested. Georgia looked rather disconsolate.

"I can't to-night. Oh, I forgot—you were going to have dinner with us, weren't you? I'm afraid we'll have to call that off. Yes, I know it's a shame, but I'm with some friends that I met on the train, and they've asked me to dine with them. And I couldn't very well refuse——"

Slowly Jeff realized that those plump and bejeweled persons were attached to Georgia, or she to them; and they were standing now at the doorway of the dining room, waiting with some impatience for her to send him on his way.

"Now, don't be sulky, Jeff," she warned him smoothly. "I do want to see you, and so will father. But it happened that to-night I'll have to go with these folks."

"Why did you ask me, then?"

"Oh," said Georgia lightly, "that was two weeks ago. Let me see; I have your telephone number. We can get together to-morrow. I must run along now; they're waiting. But you'll call me up, won't you?"

"I'll be damned if I will," Jeff muttered; but he could not produce his voice till she was out of hearing. Up to her old tricks! She was so sure of him—too sure of him. For he knew a little girl with a heart of gold, a girl who would have shared her last slice of ham with him. If this money was good for anything, it could give Kay a gorgeous, golden evening. The price would make no great difference in a deficit that was so big already; and now that Georgia had flouted him he did not care.

He telephoned to the rooming house, heard the landlady call up the stair well, and waited while Kay came down five flights to the telephone in the entry. Her voice was eager, but he thought there was a trace of disappointment in her little exclamation when she heard his name. But Jeff was in no critical mood for any girl but Georgia. Kay had a right to be disappointed. She probably hoped that this telephone call meant a dinner at least, and a job at best;

7B P

and she could not know that Jeff McCall was going to give her the one and might help her to the other.

"Would you like to spend an evening?" he asked.

"What's the matter? Has your party gone blah?"

"Precisely that. And I was wondering if you'd finished that ham."

"Hurrah! Hadn't even started. I've been fixing my hair. Come right back and we'll have an orgy."

"Orgy is the word," said Jeff. "But save the ham. I want you to come out and dine with me. At the Biltmore."

"Gosh!" said Kay simply.

"Quite so. Only don't stop to talk about it—I'm hungry. Put on the best clothes you can find and call a taxi. I'll be waiting on the doorstep. Will you hurry?"

"Will I!"

He lit a cigarette and strolled languidly out under the heavy glass awning to watch the doorman opening limousine doors for beautiful women and prosperous, self-satisfied men. He tried to bolster his own self-esteem by the reflection that probably none of these gentlemen in hard, white shirt fronts had eleven thousand dollars in his pocket; and he thought it quite possible that some of them were wanted by the police. But after a few minutes he was forced to admit that neither wealth nor crime sat easily on his mind. He wished Kay would hurry and relieve him from the need of thought.

And she did hurry. Georgia could not have responded to such a summons in less than three-quarters of an hour; but Kay had learned the art of quick changes in the chorus. Within ten minutes the taxi came up beside him, with Kay leaning halfway out of the open door, ready to make an escape if Jeff were not on hand to pay the driver. Her face registered profound relief when she saw him, and he began to understand that she must have thought he was drunk. It was good of her to dress up and take a chance. Jeff handed her out of the cab, gave the driver an outrageous tip, and escorted her into the hotel with a certain grandeur. She was his girl to-night, and he would see that she had the best.

And even in that roomful of handsome and well-dressed women she was a girl to be proud of. Her dinner gown of green and gold, revealed when she threw back the fur-collared dolman, was rather distinctly of the

West Forties, but it suited her blond prettiness. And if she had drooped in depression half an hour ago, she revived like a flower after rain in this atmosphere of prosperity. Jeff felt a bitter pleasure in her haughty disdain of the waiters and her scintillant gayety when she turned to him. For he had picked a table in plain sight of Georgia. Some time in the evening she must notice him, and if she noticed him, she would take pains to notice his companion.

"I'd forgotten there were places like this," said Kay. "You must have fallen into a piece of luck."

"You give me too much credit. A piece of luck fell into me."

"Real luck?" she asked doubtfully. "I mean, had I better just order a club sandwich and a demi-tasse?"

"Order everything in sight. I'm going to start with hors d'œuvres and go right on to — Yes, by George! Just what I wanted. A strawberry shortcake."

"You can get them at any hash house," Key objected. "As for me, I like to be turned loose among the coops and bombs. But we can get around to that later. Tell Andrew to hurry up with the hors d'œuvres."

An hour later, replete and comfortable, Jeff looked through the blue haze of his fifty-cent cigar and watched Georgia and her friends trailing out of the dining room. She did not look at him. He thought it was not too much to hope that she made a point of not looking at him. Altogether, it had been a satisfactory evening. The shortcake, to be sure, had not been quite like Aunt Lizzie's; but for a boughten shortcake it was good enough. And Kay, blowing smoke rings from a gold-tipped Russian cigarette, had apparently forgotten that unemployment was a problem at all.

They danced, then—danced till long after the dinner guests had gone; danced with a few other energetic couples till the after-theater crowd began to come in. Then Kay admitted that feet which had walked the asphalt all day long could dance no longer.

"But it was some evening, Kentuck," she sighed as she wrapped her cloak about her while Jeff called for the check. "If you've gone and blown your last dollar on this party, I'll say you're a fish. But a nice fish."

"I still have some money left."

"Then hang on to it. We can make our next meal out of the cold ham."

Evidently this was to be a partnership in prosperity and adversity. Well, Jeff was not prepared to reject the idea offhand. She had a heart of gold. And he was through with Georgia.

"How much would it cost to go to Los Angeles?" he asked.

"Oh, with Pullman and meals and everything it could not be done under two hundred. Thanks for the kindly thought, just the same."

"And you could get steady work there?"

"Steady work? Say, Harold would see that I was took care of all right. I'd be doin' leads in six months."

"All right. I'll send you to Los Angeles."

She stared at him incredulously.

"Say, are you crazy? Do you think I'd clean you out?"

"You wouldn't clean me out. I'd never miss two hundred."

"Well, this is certainly a queer world. Give me time to think."

"Think in a taxi," said Jeff, disdainfully flinging a twenty-dollar bill at the waiter.

## CHAPTER VII.

It saddened Jeff somewhat to find that his display of money had wrought a certain change in Kay's attitude toward him. While he was penniless she had behaved toward him very much in the manner of a stern though solicitous maiden aunt; but now she curled up against his shoulder in the taxi, and so obviously expected him to hold her hand that he was unwilling to disappoint her. Still, what did he care?

Fate evidently intended that he should keep this money. If not, why did Fate insist on throwing opportunities for benevolence in his way, since benevolence was notoriously his weak point? Why did Fate so promptly let him know that his victim did not seem to care whether he got his money back or not? Some day he would certainly get a job; then he might save up enough to cover his deficit, and pay it all back in secrecy. And Kay—Kay who would have shared her last ham sandwich with him—Kay deserved to share his eleven thousand dollars, and the moral responsibility it involved. He'd tell her; he'd ask her what to do—

They went up the steps of the dingy, brownstone stoop and tiptoed furtively up the five flights of stairs.

"You might come in and smoke another cigarette," she suggested.

"Would it look all right?" he asked dubiously. "It's rather late."

"Only a little past eleven. Of course it's all right."

When they had disposed of themselves as comfortably as possible, Jeff lit a cigarette, and then took two hundred-dollar bills from his pocket.

"Can you spare it?" she asked. "Honest and truly?"

"Honest and truly."

"Then it's ho, for sunny California! Kentucky, you're a prince. I'll miss you."

"I'll miss you," he admitted.

"Why don't you come along?" she asked with careful indifference. "They say anybody can get a job as press agent at the studios. Harold could fix it."

"No," he said, but not very firmly.

"Why not?"

"Because I'm going to beat this town. I came here to beat it, and I won't go away licked."

"The wise ones beat this town in Los Angeles," Kay told him. "Many a flivver on Broadway has been a show stopper on the Coast. Go pick a reputation off the orange trees, and you can come back and make this town roll over and play dead."

There was sense in that. She was a wise little girl—and a pretty little girl. And she had a heart of gold—not a stony heart, like some people whom Jeff could think of. Still he hesitated.

"Jeff McCall," she demanded, "is this two hundred the last you've got?"

"No," he said, filled with a sudden desire to share his worries. "In spite of an active afternoon and evening, I still have something over eleven thousand dollars."

"What? You haven't! There ain't that much money."

"Oh, yes, there is. If you'll wait while I rake through a few pockets, I'll show it to you. You're wondering where I got it."

"If you're sure you've counted right, it makes no difference where you got it."

"But it does. That's just the point. I'm not sure I ought to keep it."

"The strain has made him light-headed," she said. "If you don't want to keep it, give it to me. That'll take us both to California and leave something to buy post cards with to send back to the folks at home."

"You don't understand," he said doggedly. "I want to tell you how I got it."

"Well, if you must, you must. Go ahead and get it off your mind."

But it was a little hard to do that. He thought he'd skip the first chapter.

"I found it on the street," he said.

Kay laughed, and reached out a hand to cling to his.

"I always had a hunch you were lucky," she said. "How about it, Jeff? Do we go to California?"

There was a pause—only an instant; but long enough for him to hear a voice—the landlady's voice—calling up the stair well.

"Mr. McCall! Oh, Mr. McCall! Telephone!"

"Damn!" he muttered.

But he released his fingers from Kay's clasp, threw open the door, and leaned out over the banister. Whoever called him at this hour must have urgent business, and he was in no position to disregard urgent business.

"Who is it?" he asked.

The landlady muttered into the telephone. There was a pause, then:

"A party named Somers."

He drew a long breath. Georgia was up to her old tricks. She'd seen him with Kay and had decided she could not wait till tomorrow. It seemed to Jeff that Georgia badly needed to be told a few things. She could not get away with this sort of conduct forever.

"Wait," he called to Kay. "I'll be back in two minutes."

Down the stairs he clattered, filled with a growing fury; and was more furious still, on reaching the telephone, to find that his voice was betraying him once more and falling off into a squeaky whisper. His heart was ready for a declaration of independence, but his vocal cords were still loyal to Georgia.

"Well?" he growled at last.

"Jeff, will you come right over? I want to see you."

"No, I won't."

"Why not?"

"I—it's half past eleven," he temporized weakly.

"I see no signs that the house is closing for the night," said Georgia. "You'll find me in the lounge. Jeff, I suppose I was mean to you to-night; but I want to tell you why."

"Georgia, you don't need to tell me why."

I know you. You'd never have thought of explaining, if you hadn't seen me with another girl."

"With another— Why, I didn't. I haven't see you since I went in to dinner."

"Now, Georgia! You're losing your finesse. You didn't have to lie in the old days."

There was a pause; and when she spoke again she was extraordinarily meek, for Georgia.

"Jeff, I didn't—I wouldn't lie to you. I suppose it was abominable to turn you off at dinner, but I couldn't help it. If you'll come over, I'll tell you why. Please—I'll never ask you anything else, if you're still mad at me; but I do need you now. Need you badly."

Georgia needed him!

"I'll be there in five minutes," he promised.

And he was halfway across town before he remembered Kay. Really, he had treated her outrageously—but she had her two hundred, anyway. And apparently it was his fate to come whenever Georgia called. It was not a choice between hearts of gold and hearts of stone; it was the way he was made.

But Kay Devine, who had leaned over the fifth-floor banister and heard in the nocturnal stillness every word he had said into the telephone, could not be expected to know that.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Georgia was sitting by one of the little tables in the deserted, dimly lighted lounge, her fur coat thrown back over her chair and her hand bag lying on the table before her—sitting up rather proudly, almost defiantly, he would have said, but for the unexpected seriousness of her face. She was undeniably a masterpiece, made for the luxury trade. A beautiful woman—but Kay Devine had been a beautiful woman, to-night. The difference between Kay and Georgia was, in the ultimate analysis, five generations. Georgia had class. And as he approached her and hungrily watched her face for the rather wistful smile that greeted him, he knew that he would never go with Kay to Los Angeles, or anywhere else. It was Georgia or nobody!

She held out a hand to him, but his beaten and routed pride made a last stand; he would not take it. Georgia flung back her head, and then drooped suddenly forward on the

table and buried her face in folded arms. It might be a trick; it must be a trick; but he did not care. Ignoring the skirmish line of waiters that was stealthily coming up to see if he wanted to buy anything, he put his hand on hers.

"Georgia! I'm sorry—I'm a brute——"

She raised her head and smiled ruefully.

"No, you're not. I am. It's all my fault. No—take your hand away. I won't be carressed before a crowd. There—that's better. Now let me tell you one or two things, and then you can be angry and go away from me, if you want to."

"I won't," he promised.

"Oh, I deserve it, Jeff. But I didn't lie to you. I didn't see you after I went in to dinner. If you called up some other girl and brought her here I—I don't blame you; but I didn't know it. I was so busy talking to those women I was with that I didn't notice anybody much in the dining room, and we all went upstairs together right after dinner. I had to stay with them because I hope they'll give me a job."

"A job?" he repeated incredulously.

"Yes, I know you never thought I'd do any work——"

"I didn't mean that."

"You were right," said Georgia cheerfully. "I never would, if I didn't have to. But I'm going to have to. Perhaps I told you that father had stopped off in Louisville on bank business. I suppose you know that a few million dollars' worth of bonds have been stolen in your town in the last few months and spread around all over the country. Well, father's bank bought a lot of them—like a good many other country banks; bought them in good faith, of course, from brokers they've dealt with for ages, who also bought them in good faith.

"Nobody seems to be able to untangle the mix-up, but there's a good chance that father's bank will find that it paid out a good many thousand dollars for bonds that belong to somebody else. And if that happens—well, it will take about all he's got to make up the loss. Because he did it; and you know his awful sense of honor. He wouldn't let the other stockholders suffer for what he did.

"Well, we didn't know all this when we planned our trip to New York. It came up all of a sudden. Father's coming on anyway, later, to see what's being done about tracing the bond thieves, and he said as long as I'd

got all ready I might as well come on and have a last holiday before we went broke. If we're caught, we'll be caught so hard that a few hundred more or less won't matter. So here I am. And on the train I happened to meet the president of the alumnae association of my school. She was coming on to the meeting of the board of trustees—they're getting together here to-morrow—and we got to talking, and she told me the teacher of domestic science had just eloped and did I know anybody who could take the place?

"Well, Jeff, you know that if there's anything I know it's domestic science—theory, practice, and everything. So I talked to her, and I talked to some other women on the board who got here to-night; and I think to-morrow they'll elect me to the job. The salary isn't enormous, of course; but it will take me off father's hands."

"I wish I could take you off his hands," said Jeff.

Georgia looked at her fingers—her slim, strong fingers, spread out on the table. Because she would not look up at him, Jeff's eyes followed hers; and he saw that her hands were trembling, hard as she strove to hide it. He saw, too, that though she wore three or four heavily jeweled rings, her third finger was invitingly bare.

"Well?" she said, eyes still downcast. "Father would appreciate that, I know. But we couldn't think of imposing on you." She flashed a teasing little smile at him, saw that he was glowering sullenly, and dissolved in sudden contrition.

"Oh, Jeff, I'm mean. I know it, and I just can't help it. I promised myself before I came East this time that I'd never be horrid to you any more. I stood in front of my mirror every morning and held up my right hand and crossed my heart. And here I am just as bad as ever. But I don't mean it. You're a dear."

"You know," he said shakily, "that I've been crazy about you ever since we were kids. If you had a million, or if you were down to—to your last quarter, it would be just the same. Only this time I hoped I could get you to stay with me."

"Well," she said softly, "you can."

"But I can't! I lost my job three weeks ago. My firm blew up. I didn't write you about it because I thought I'd get another right away, but I didn't. I haven't got one yet. And I didn't take care of my

money while I had it, so now I haven't got it. And this afternoon I was down to my last quarter. Yes, literally and exactly that."

"Why, Jeff! How terrible!"

"Of course it's terrible. Especially since—oh, it's worse than you imagine. I can't explain it. But I can't ask you to stay with me; I can't support you, just now."

"I suppose you can't understand," said Georgia, "how a girl feels who's never had to make her own living, never tried to make her own living, when she suddenly discovers that she's going to have to—and that she can. When I first got ready to come East I'd almost made up my mind to marry you. Not quite—oh, you know me, Jeff; I'd always hesitate and wonder and try to hold you off till the last moment; it's the way I'm made. But still I expected to, in the end."

"Then when father broke the news I thought I ought to stand by and try to help him out, if I could. And when I heard about this job I thought maybe I could. I got all excited. I'd love that job—for a while; I'd feel that for the first time in my life I was paying my own way, giving back a little for all that I've cost. And if you're broke and out of a job, maybe I'd better do that—for the present. But you won't be out of a job forever. And if you get one to-morrow, and—and want me, I'll forget about my job and marry you as soon as you've saved up—how much does a marriage license cost?"

"Georgia, dear!"

Her eyes were dancing, but as he started from his chair he remembered that the skirmish line of waiters was still in sight. He sank back in his chair, and wrestled with a new idea.

"How much is your father's shortage?" he asked.

"I don't know exactly. Quite a good deal."

"Would eleven thousand dollars do him any good?"

"It wouldn't go all the way, but I suppose it would help. Why?"

"Because," said Jeff, conscious that there was something wrong about this, but feeling that it had become a matter of filial duty, "I can let him have it."

"What?"

"Don't ask me to explain; I can't explain. But if that much will help you——"

"Now, Jeff! None of this silence and secrecy. I want to know all about this. You've lost your job and you're down to your last quarter and you haven't money enough to marry me, but you can still let father have eleven thousand dollars. Of course you'll have to explain; I suppose you've been up to something. Where did you get it?"

"I stole it."

And then he told her everything; told her hastily, with a sort of religious satisfaction in clearing his soul, and a more worldly satisfaction in the reflection that Georgia's head was always better than his; maybe she could think up some way out. Toward the end he became rather precipitate, for he was beginning to realize that he was a major criminal. Even though Georgia's father was a judge only by courtesy, he could not very well expect her to promise to marry an uncaught highwayman.

#### CHAPTER IX.

Jeff told her everything, including the deficit—including even the money that he had given to Kay Devine. In his penitent mood this seemed the capstone of his pyramid of infamies, and the whole affair was beginning to seem pretty infamous. He deserved twenty years in Sing Sing, for even thinking of going to Los Angeles with Kay Devine, if for nothing else.

But when he had finished Georgia laughed; laughed silently and inextinguishably, bowing her head on folded arms, while Jeff looked on and reflected that you could not reason about women. At last she looked up, her eyes still shining through tears of laughter, and gasped:

"You're—you're such an honest robber!"

"I suppose so. I can't make a success even of thievery."

"Don't be silly. Of course you can't make a success of thievery. You weren't made for it. You were made for nice things—like being a husband. No, Jeff—keep calm. Where is this money?"

"In my pockets."

"Give it to me. If I leave it in your pockets, you'll go out and give it to a poor newsboy. You can't be trusted with money, Jeff. I'll attend to this. Hand it over."

"Here? But——"

"No better place," said Georgia. "The waiters aren't looking—they've seen you

aren't going to buy anything. All good citizens have gone to bed, and it's too early for the scrubwomen. Come, now—give it to Georgia."

From one pocket and another he assembled his ill-gotten gains—thousand-dollar bills, hundred-dollar bills, a whole handful of small bills and silver from his trousers pocket. He laid it out on the table, and Georgia counted each pile and thrust it into her bag.

"Eleven thousand two hundred and eighty-four," she said when it was all swept out of sight. "Does that tally with your book-keeping?"

Jeff consulted his notebook.

"Yes—the deficit is five hundred and eighty-seven. My God, Georgia! How can I ever? But hold on—twenty-five cents of that belongs to me."

She took a quarter from the bag and gave it back to him.

"That's our lucky piece," she said. "Now do you know the address of this ticket agency?"

"Yes."

"All right. Go ask the bell captain for a heavy envelope—a linen envelope, if he has it—and some stamps. Here—don't tip him with your last quarter. Take some money of mine."

"But, Georgia! What are you going to do?"

"Never mind. We'll get this out of the way and think about what to do next. Run along, now. I'm boss—to-night. Maybe you'll be later."

The smile that went with this would have sent him anywhere; and he was still walking on rosy clouds when he came back with the envelope. But the sight of the fountain pen in her hand moved him to a weak protest.

"You're not going to mail it back to him?"

"Why not?"

"But he—the police might trace the letter."

"Nonsense. If they can't find out who stole five million dollars' worth of bonds, they won't trace this letter. Besides, what if they did? We're not going to sign it."

"They might identify my handwriting."

"They won't do that," said Georgia, "because I'm going to address it. In printed capitals."



And in a neat, square little hand she printed carefully:

"TO THE GENTLEMAN WHO LOST  
HIS ROLL,  
c/o TICKET AGENCY,  
197 West 44th Street,  
NEW YORK CITY.

Then she took out the money, counting it carefully, and put it into the envelope.

"But I'm still short," said Jeff desperately. "Five hundred and eighty-seven dollars short. And that still makes it a felony."

"No," said Georgia. "Every cent of it's there. I counted."

"Georgia," he demanded, "where did you get it?"

"We ladies from the interior," she observed lightly, "wouldn't think of coming to New York without buying some new clothes. And father said I'd better stock up now, for it might be the last chance."

"Georgia Somers, I won't let you!"

"Jeff McCall, you will let me. Look here, boy—you're going to marry me. Have you forgotten?"

"I haven't forgotten that I'm going to heaven. But they both seem kind of remote."

"Remote nothing. Our luck will turn—just you watch it. And you don't think we're going to start on stolen money, do you? Oh, Jeff, you're a dear, but when you try to think you only get yourself in trouble. This is our business, my dear—mine as much as yours. Now let's go out and mail this."

There was, of course, a letter box in the lobby; but a lobby full of bell boys and assistant managers and late-returning guests seemed a trifle too public for such a secretive enterprise. So they went out into the raw spring night—night in New York under prohibition—night in which no one was abroad but policemen and street cleaners and taxicabs hastily taking people home. Mail boxes were surprisingly scarce; they had to walk three or four blocks before they found one. But they did not mind it; they would gladly have walked three or four miles, with Georgia's arm thrust through Jeff's and their hands clasping under cover of her deep fur cuff. And at last they came to a mail box, and Georgia dropped the envelope in.

"There, now. That's off our minds. I feel like dancing, I'm so glad. Really, Jeff, you had me scared. You didn't mean any

harm, but you're so helpless when you see somebody that needs help. And now we can start fresh."

"And flat," he added gloomily. "I feel like dancing, too; but I don't know any place that's open. And I haven't the price, anyway. But look—there's a lunch room across the street. Let's get a cup of coffee. I might as well spend my last quarter and get it off my mind; and I'd like to spend it on you. I don't need a lucky piece with you around."

In the dingy restaurant they sat down at a table covered with ragged and stained white oilcloth, and drank their cups of rather surprisingly good coffee. A dime a cup, and the last nickel for the waiter. And Jeff McCall felt a surprising certainty that his luck had turned. For, at any rate, he was sure of Georgia. Everything else was incidental to that; and, though the incidentals were of some importance, since they related to the problem of maintaining Georgia, he was sure that something was going to turn up. Something must turn up, now. For this rather gorgeous creature across the table was no longer adamant and expensive, distant and provocative, a woman whom he alternately desired abjectly and hated for her lambent caprice. She was his and he was hers, and they would face the rest of their problems together. It was a great life.

Presently he placed a cigarette between his lips and hunted for a match. The waiter hastened to bring him a box of them, with an ash tray, but when Jeff had lit his cigarette he turned back curiously to a vest pocket in which his search had discovered something that he had overlooked. It was a folded sheet of white paper, covered with penciled scribbings.

"I believe this was part of my haul," he observed. "I suppose we ought to have mailed it back to my victim along with his money, but it hardly seems important enough to send him another letter."

Georgia looked at it with a frown.

"Whatever in the world?" she said.

Indeed it was curious; a hodgepodge of names and numbers:

Gabby Detrt 1239373-4-5-6-7-8 1000 @ 43  
Kaplan Chi 434856-434878 100  
Blondy Phila PRR  
Hacksmith Cincy—

Georgia looked up, puzzled.

"Hacksmith. I've heard that name some-

where. I wonder—oh, well, what does it matter? Have you any idea what this is?"

"Might be almost anything. System for playing the market, most likely; or, for all I know, it may be this fellow's private list of telephone numbers. I'd have to study it a while."

Georgia yawned, and slipped the paper into her bag.

"Oh, well, we'll think about this to-morrow. It's getting late. Let's go home and get some sleep. And—Jeff!"

"Yes—sweetheart."

"How are you going to eat to-morrow?"

"Never mind that. Something will turn up."

"I'll tell you how we'll start," said Georgia. "You come over to the hotel and have breakfast with me. At eleven."

"But I can't."

"Why not?"

"I could," he explained laboriously, "if I had the price of a breakfast. But I can't treat you like a bread line."

"Nonsense. I broke our engagement for dinner; I invite you to breakfast instead."

"No," he insisted, "I can't do it."

"Jeff McCall, am I going to marry you or am I not?"

"You certainly are."

"All right; you're in the family. All for one and one for all. Now don't be foolish; I couldn't enjoy breakfast without you."

Her insistence gave him courage. He took her back to the elevators, and there was a crowd—guests returning from parties, bell boys lingering in the last hope of tips, elevator runners—even a cigar clerk staring at them over his counter. But Jeff gallantly took her in his arms and kissed her good night before them all. And she seemed to like it.

The whole rooming house knew the next morning that Jeff McCall had had a piece of luck. For he sang in his shower bath, along about half past ten—sang anything that came into his mind, from "There Is a Land of Pure Delight Where Saints Immortal Reign" to "Ridi, Pagliaccio," which last he rendered in a rather atrocious accent. It was an easy-going house, so nobody protested; but behind a closed door down the corridor Kay Devine sat on her suit case and listened with a cold anger that could not have been appeased by Caruso himself.

Five minutes she waited after Jeff had

left the shower, then she marched down the corridor and hammered on his door. He paused, half shaved, and bade his guest come in. He did not know who it was, and he did not care. It was a great morning; and since he wore the magnificent brocaded dressing gown that had come down from his days of prosperity, he was prepared to face any caller with a good deal of confidence.

Any caller, that is, but Kay. For Jeff had been thinking so hard about Georgia, ever since he awoke, that he had forgotten Kay completely. So when she answered his invitation by coming in and closing the door behind her Jeff was smitten by a sudden wave of compunction. He owed her an apology; no doubt about that.

Kay was dressed for the street, and she had her little illustrated paper under her arm.

"Well, Mr. Jeff McCall, what have you got to say for yourself?"

"Nothing very much," he confessed. "Kay, it was rotten of me. But those folks from my home town called me up and I had to go. In a hurry; they—they were awfully anxious to see me."

"In a hurry, I should think," Kay observed bitterly. "Too big a hurry even to yell upstairs and tell me about it. I sat there for a whole solid hour before I could make up my mind that you were really rotten enough to go off and leave me flat."

"Yes," Jeff admitted, "it was rotten." And that seemed to be all he had to say. Kay watched him as he finished his shave; watched him with an incredulity that slowly changed to certainty. He was not going to pretend to have an alibi; he did not even care enough about her to lie to her.

"If you've got anything to say for yourself," she observed, "you'd better say it quick. No gentleman would ever have treated a girl that way."

"Ah," said Jeff equably, "so you think. But you probably haven't known very many gentlemen. It has been my misfortune to be acquainted with quite a few, and——"

Kay rose with an effort at dignity and wrapped her gray dolman about her.

"Well, it's plain to me that you ain't one yourself, I'll say that. I'll give you one more chance to square yourself; if you can. If you're going out to breakfast——"

Jeff rubbed a handful of witch-hazel over his face and turned to her in honest contrition.

"I can't square myself," he admitted. "That's all. It was entirely inexcusable; I can only apologize, and I can't do that very well. I can't even go out to breakfast with you; because these folks from home have asked me to——"

"Folks from home!" Kay repeated in shrill scorn. "You mean Miss Georgia Somers, I guess. Oh, I know all about you, Jeff McCall. Never mind how I know about you; but I know a lot. About you and your money. And I guess you'll have nothing to say if I just keep the two hundred you slipped me last night and buy a ticket to Los Angeles. God knows Harold would never throw a girl down like that."

The door slammed behind her, and another slam a moment later told him that she had shut herself in her room. He heard the key turn in the lock. Jeff McCall was not particularly observant, but even Jeff, if he had not been so completely absorbed in thoughts of Georgia, would have suspected that the key was turned in the lock only in the confident hope that in a moment he would be hammering on the door and frantically demanding admission.

But he was not hammering on any doors this morning. He put on his coat and collar, neatly wrapped the blue tie with the red stripe so that the worn spot would not show, took up his hat and stick and started for the Biltmore. As he left the room he noticed that Kay had dropped her newspaper when she went out, but she was probably through with it, anyway; and Jeff thrust it in his pocket. If he knew anything about Georgia, he would have to wait; and since he had spent his quarter last night he no longer could buy a paper to read while he waited.

So he ran downstairs, gayly whistling "Un bel di Vedremo," and started across town to Georgia's hotel in a long-loping stride. Kay waited till there was no longer any hope of his return; then she took up her suit case, went downstairs and paid the landlady, and called a taxi. It was the first time in some weeks she had been able to do that, but the fact that the money in her pocket had come from Jeff McCall did not mollify her. At the station she bought her tickets to Los Angeles, loaded herself down with three or four magazines and a box of chocolates, and then, with a porter watching her possessions, she slipped into the nearest telephone booth.

"Spring 3100!" she snapped at the opera-

tor. "Hello! Police headquarters? Say, if you want to know all about that holdup on Forty-fourth yesterday—— What? Never mind who this is. I'm telling you straight. Go over to the Biltmore and you'll find the man that did it. His name's McCall—— Jeff McCall. No, he isn't registered there; but just look for a Miss Georgia Somers, and wherever she is you'll find him."

## CHAPTER X.

Jeff knew his Georgia. When he telephoned to her from the lobby he woke her from a sound sleep. She admitted in drowsy good humor that she'd left a call, but when the switchboard rang her bell she had turned over and gone to sleep again.

"You see," she explained, "I'd forgotten something. I knew I had an engagement for breakfast, but I was too sleepy to remember that it was a sort of permanent engagement for breakfast. But if you'll forgive me, Jeff——"

"I'd forgive you anything," said Jeff. "Even highway robbery on the street. Only hurry as much as you can."

"You'll be surprised," she promised.

So Jeff sat down on the alcove bench under the clock in the lobby and prepared to amuse himself with Kay's illustrated paper. And the first thing he saw in that paper, on the inner page to which Kay had opened it, was the portrait of his victim, Absalom Kalbfuss. There was a bold, black caption:

### TOUGH LUCK, ABSALOM.

And beneath that was a story which he began in perplexity and finished in horror:

"Jinx" Kalbfuss has been jinxed again. Jinx's real name is Absalom, and he thinks his parents wished his troubles on him by naming him that. For Absalom, if you remember, was the character of Scripture who got hung up by the hair. Absalom was playing a mule to finish first when he got his, and his namesake has played about everything else. Jinx was a well-known character on local race tracks for some years, and his ill fortune was proverbial.

A couple of years ago he moved to Cincinnati and became a broker. His luck seemed to have turned, and he made money; so much money that he thought he could afford a vacation in New York. Arriving yesterday with a roll of nearly twelve thousand dollars in his pocket, he registered at a Broadway hotel and then went out to get a couple of theater tickets at the agency at 197 West Forty-fourth Street, whose proprietor is "Chick" Bartz, well known for his connection with the Becker case. Absalom put his tickets into his pocket, but he was careless

enough to step out on the sidewalk as he was putting away what was left of his twelve thousand dollars. Thereupon, it is alleged, a bold, bad stranger knocked him cold and walked away with the money.

This, at any rate, is Absalom's story, as given to Detective Sergeant Slattery. Absalom didn't want to tell the story, for he said that the folks back home had heard enough about his reputation for hard luck and he didn't want to give them any material for kidding him. But too many people had seen the robbery, which caused great excitement on Forty-fourth Street. Chick Bartz, who admitted that he had known Kallbuss slightly in the past, observed that he did not believe he had ever had any twelve thousand dollars and the whole thing was merely a play for publicity. But if he ever had it he hasn't got it now.

The police up to a late hour last night had no clew to the perpetrator of the outrage. Nobody got a good look at him but a taxi driver waiting in front of the agency, and he could give no description of the offender except that he was a tall, slender man, wearing a blue tie with a red stripe.

Jeff's hand shot up to his throat, and then fell away hastily. A bell boy was loitering at the end of the bench; a youth and girl were absorbed in an eager whispered conversation across the alcove; a consequential-looking gentleman in a cutaway had paused a few feet away to light a cigar. None of them looked like detectives, but any of them might be. It was only by degrees that his courage came back to him, and he realized that it was next to impossible that anybody would understand that guilty gesture. A little more delay, and he began to regain the conviction that in a city of six million people a blue tie striped with red was a slim enough clew. There must be thousands of them.

If Georgia had been as prompt as she promised she would have found him still badly shaken; but Georgia could not reform overnight. It was a good half hour before she joined him, and in the interval Jeff's nerves had recovered from the shock. He had walked away from the alcove bench, leaving the damnatory paper behind him, carefully opened on another and more innocent page; and as the moments passed and nothing happened he gradually shook off his alarm. Indeed, before Georgia came down he had recovered far enough to realize that he was hungry again. That was strange, for he had thought after that huge dinner last night that he could get along for three or four days on cigarettes and water. Food, he concluded, was something like money; once

get a little of it, and it could easily become a habit.

But with his soul cleansed of sin and his heart buoyed up by Georgia's promise, he had no longer much fear of the future. He could get a job now. He wished he had two cents; he could buy a *Record* and look over the "Lost and Found" column. And he regarded it as an omen of the good luck that Georgia had brought him that presently he found a copy of the *Record* on a settee in the lobby, where some less eager reader had dropped it. He thrust it into his pocket and resumed his vigil before the elevator.

And at last she came—no longer the splendid Georgia whose gorgeousness in evening dress had made her ready surrender all the more wonderful, but an equally charming Georgia, fresh and buoyant in a trim suit of horizon blue, with three of Jeff's red roses at her waist. She came to him smiling, and his voice once more receded into his chest, and did not become really audible until they were at a table in the dining room.

"If I order everything I want," said Georgia, "I'll scare you. You'll think you can never support me. I can do with just some strawberries and coffee and rolls, but I'd like to have that and oatmeal and half a dozen sausages besides."

"Make it two," said Jeff. "I'm just beginning to realize that lack of food depresses your morale. If I conquer a breakfast like that, I'll go out and take somebody's job away from him. Georgia, our troubles are over. Six months from now eleven thousand dollars will be a mere nothing to us."

"It doesn't sound plausible," she admitted, "but I feel just the same way. Something is sure to turn up, now."

They shook hands on that across the table as the waiter brought the strawberries.

Of course they could not live on this plane forever. When the breakfast was out of the way and Georgia had taken one of Jeff's cigarettes—she'd had to slip away to her room to smoke back home, but now that she was going to settle in New York she could be bold—both of them realized with some misgivings that they were going to have to get down to things as they are.

"But there's no need to worry about that," said Jeff. "Things as they are might be a whole lot worse. Just for luck, I'll start with our 'Lost and Found' column." He was rather startled to find that in spite of his

absence at the war, and in the offices of the Hamar Publicity Corporation, the *Record* was still "our" paper. But maybe that was an omen. "Delano suggested that I might pick up some good stories there," he added. "And maybe I could look into some of them in the intervals of job hunting."

Georgia thought that was a good idea; so they pulled their chairs around beside each other and read the column together. Georgia's mind was running to sudden money this morning, and she could not resist the offers of thousand-dollar rewards to the finders of platinum-and-diamond bracelets; but Jeff wasted no time on these. He was looking for the unusual; for the advertisement with news value. And in a moment he was rewarded beyond his expectations. Silently he pointed to an unobtrusive item:

LOST—on West 44th Street, by party from Cincinnati, a sum of money and memoranda, valueless except to owner. Finder keep money and return memoranda, no questions asked. Return to agency, at spot where found.

But no address was given.

"Jeff!" she gasped. "You don't think that——"

"I'm not sure," he admitted, "but it sounds queer. You see, there's no address. Whoever inserted that notice didn't want to attract attention; he didn't mention the amount, and he didn't say anything that would connect it with Kalbfuss. 'Party from Cincinnati.' He thinks whoever stuck him up has read the papers to see how much the police don't know about it, so the mention of Cincinnati will give him a lead. I know there's a good deal of inference in that; but any ordinary loser would have said how much money, and where he lost it, and, above all, he'd have given the address to which the memoranda should be returned. But Kalbfuss knows that mention of the agency is enough."

"It sounds reasonable," she admitted.

"It does that," said Jeff. "And maybe I can run it down. If Bill McCoy is still in charge of our classified advertising I can probably persuade him to tell me where that ad came from. Scandalous violation of the rules, of course; but Bill would do it for me."

"But, Jeff, he says to keep the money! Nearly twelve thousand dollars. Do you suppose it was real money?"

"Quite a lot of it passed as real money," said Jeff. "I know it's a lot. But think

how much the memorandum must be worth if he'll trade in twelve thousand for it and no questions asked. I hope you didn't lose that sheet of paper."

"It's right here in my bag," said Georgia. "Goodness, we've done just the opposite of what he wanted. We've returned the money and kept the memorandum. I didn't look at it very closely, but I didn't think it was worth twelve thousand."

"Let's see it," said Jeff. "I don't know that it's any use for me to try to get a human-interest story for Delano out of this item, for if I saw friend Kalbfuss once again he might forget this no questions asked. But I have a certain curiosity about my own venture into crime."

Georgia was studying the sheet of paper, which read:

Gabby Detrt 1239373-4-5-6-7-8 1000 @ 43  
Kaplan Chi 434856-434878 100  
Blondy Phila PRR  
Hacksmith Cincy 465432-465458 Vct 1000s

"Hacksmith!" said Georgia. "Hacksmith! Where have I—— I know! Father's brokers in Louisville said they got some of their bonds from a man named Hacksmith; and I'm almost sure it was Cincinnati——"

"Let me see that!" Jeff exploded. "Here—— Yes, I believe it is. Georgia, our fortune's made. No wonder Kalbfuss was willing to trade his twelve thousand for this little sheet of paper. Those figures that I took for telephone numbers are serial numbers of bonds. Hacksmith is a broker in Cincinnati; so's Kalbfuss. Gabby and Blondy are probably brokers, too; but we can find out about that. Chick Bartz—the man that ran this ticket agency—knew Kalbfuss; he admits that. Chick Bartz has been suspected of knowing something about the Liberty Bond robberies; and Kalbfuss comes to town with some notes of brokerage transactions for which he's willing to trade twelve thousand in real money, and no questions asked. Georgia, I begin to suspect that this sheet of paper points to what became of five millions in stolen bonds—and maybe who stole them."

A slow smile spread over Georgia's face; but she was thinking hard.

"It would be wonderful if we could recover any of father's money——" she began.

"I wouldn't be too sure about that," said Jeff. "It may be that our best chance to recover father's money would have been to

keep that twelve thousand. But if this means what I think it means, I can get back my job on the *Record*; and there's a reward of fifty thousand——"

"But, Jeff, you can't take this paper to the police. They'd want to know how you got it."

"So they would; but it isn't much of a crime to steal a sheet of paper. And before night Kalbfuss ought to have got his money back, if the post office does its duty. But I wouldn't take this to the police, anyway. The man to look at this paper is Godfrey Kellmeyer, the counsel for the surety companies. They've put up the reward, and they'd see that the clew was followed up."

"In that case," said Georgia, "you'd better be my guest in a taxi, and we'll go see Mr. Kellmeyer. Wait till I sign the check."

The check was on the table beside her, but the waiter had gone away somewhere. Jeff looked up impatiently; and then a cold paralysis settled down on him. Three or four men were in conference at the dining-room door—the head waiter, a sallow person in a cutaway, who looked as if he might be an assistant manager, and two burly, mustached persons—and they were all looking furtively at Jeff and Georgia. And one of the burly men he knew—remembered from his old days as a reporter; Detective Sergeant Slattery.

"Steady, Georgia!" Jeff whispered. "Don't look and don't jump. But out there at the door are a couple of detectives, and they look as if they want me. We'll have to throw a bluff, with a hop on the fast one."

Georgia thrust the little paper into her hand bag, took out her fountain pen and signed the check, and laid a dollar bill on top of it. Nobody would have known from her manner that she had ever heard of a detective.

"I don't know the etiquette of being arrested," she said under her breath. "Do they come over to get you?"

"They may, if we wait long enough," said Jeff. "But we might as well make it easy for them. High-minded surprise is our attitude."

"Who's afraid?" said Georgia gallantly. "All right, dear; are you ready?"

They strolled toward the door with a nonchalant indifference that wasn't overdone, and there was an air of entire sincerity in

their surprise when Slattery waylaid them with a:

"Pardon me. Miss Somers?"

"Yes," said Georgia graciously. "I don't believe I recall you."

Slattery's companion—his face, too, Jeff was vaguely remembering—broke in rudely:

"Is your name Jeff McCall?"

"My name is T. J. J. McCall. Jeff to my friends. Why?"

The assistant manager was plainly in mortal fear of some violent and discreditable scene, and Slattery took pity on him.

"Come out here where we can sit down," he said. "We've got some things to talk over."

Jeff and Georgia yielded gracefully to what they appeared to regard as an unaccountable whim of a rather ill-mannered stranger. They followed him into the lounge, with the other detective guarding the rear and turning, when the four had seated themselves at a little table, to wave away the waiters who were gathering round them. Jeff looked at Slattery from beneath ironically lifted eyebrows, but his blood was running cold. For he saw that both men were looking at his tie—the telltale blue tie with the red stripe.

"Well, gentlemen, what have I done to incur your attentions? And why does Miss Somers have to be present?"

Slattery looked at him sharply.

"I don't suppose you know who I am," he observed with heavy irony. Jeff waved a suave hand.

"Of course I place you. Mr. Addison Sims, of Seattle."

"Hah!" said Slattery. "Never was in Seattle in my life."

Jeff shook his head.

"You see, Georgia, I overestimated the learnedness of the force. Miss Somers, let me present Detective Sergeant Slattery; and the other gentleman—just a moment—the name is coming to me—Cannon—no, Bannon. That's it. Detective Sergeant Bannon."

"I thought he knew us," said Bannon. "I've seen this bird somewheres."

"Why, to be sure you have," said Jeff. "I used to be a reporter on the *Record*. I covered the Pompilio murder, Bannon. Well, I remember how you were going to get a lieutenantcy for hanging it on her fiancé, till they were unkind enough to nab the man who really did it up in Montreal. And Slattery—why, I covered his trial for extortion,

back in 1916. The jury disagreed, as I remember. Am I right, Slattery? Your recollection is probably better than mine."

"You're a fine, funny fellow," said Slattery, reddening. "Maybe you'll be funny enough to tell us what you did with Kalbfuss' money."

"Kalbfuss?"

"Oh, none of that. Tell it to the magistrate."

Jeff looked apologetically at Georgia.

"This is rather unpleasant," he observed. "I'm sorry. These persons seem to think I've done something with somebody's money. Slattery, old Sherlock, I haven't any money—even my own. Now what's this all about?"

Slattery looked at Bannon and Bannon looked at Slattery. Then they both looked at the blue tie, and nodded.

"It means," said Slattery, "that you're under arrest for assault and robbery. Now don't try to start anything——"

Jeff spread out ostentatiously peaceful hands.

"I start nothing," he professed. "I'd like to stop this, if I can, however, for I have some things to do this morning. When and where did this assault and robbery happen?"

They would have disregarded him, but Georgia broke in with a rather scornful:

"I'm sure you won't mind explaining this, gentlemen. Mr. McCall is an old friend of mine—as a matter of fact, we're engaged. And this preposterous charge——"

"Who are you?" Bannon interrupted. "Somers—Miss Georgia Somers. That's the name, eh, Slattery? I guess you'd better come along, too. Maybe the inspector will know you."

Jeff had not expected this.

"Don't be a boob," he said sharply. "If you interfere with Miss Somers you'll fall over your own feet. I'm sufficiently well acquainted with your vagaries to go along with you and explain whatever you want explained, but there's no use in your annoying Miss Somers. If you won't take my word, call up—who are some of the people you know here, Georgia?"

"Mrs. Randolph Creedmoor," said Georgia, "and the Jonas van der Zoons, and the Countess de Lussignac—but I wouldn't want them bothered."

"You'd better let them be bothered," Jeff advised her, "if these gentlemen insist.

There's no limit to what our gendarmerie won't believe. Now, Slattery, whom did I rob and why and when?"

"I suppose," said Slattery, "you've forgotten all about knocking out a man named Ab-salom Kalbfuss, on Forty-fourth Street, yesterday afternoon, and taking eleven thousand eight hundred and seventy-one dollars away from him."

Jeff smiled sadly.

"You can search me, gentlemen, as you doubtless will, and you're welcome to any money you can find in my clothes. I never heard of this Kalbfleisch, or whatever his name is; and yesterday afternoon—— What time?"

"You know what time it was."

Jeff was patient with their stupidities.

"I asked," he said, "only because I was in the *Record* office till about three, and I was with a number of friends later. In between I went to a movie, alone. If this robbery you speak of happened around four o'clock, I suppose I'd have trouble proving an alibi. But not nearly as much trouble as you'll have proving that I did it, when I didn't."

Slattery and Bannon looked at each other.

"Come along," said Slattery. "You can say the rest of it in court—you that know so much about trials."

Georgia's cold contempt would have frozen some detectives; it might even have frozen Slattery and Bannon, if they had not been heated up by Jeff's imprudent reminiscences.

"This is all so absurd," she said wearily. "Mr. McCall is no more a thief than I am. If you'll call up any one of a hundred newspaper men or publicity men—or other men whose names he can give you——"

"Young lady," said Slattery, "many a man that had good character witnesses is doin' time to-day. Now, McCall, come along; and be good about it. And be thankful you're pinched in a hotel that doesn't like a fuss made over things; we'll take you off in a taxi."

Jeff rose with graceful acquiescence, though his heart had almost stopped beating. He did not know how they'd got him, but somebody could probably identify him. And he could get about twenty-five years, if his luck broke badly.

"I'm sorry, Georgia, but they seem to insist. Don't worry."

"Don't worry?" she flashed, springing to her feet. "I certainly am going to worry till

these idiots let you go. Where are they taking you?"

"I suppose to the branch detective bureau. Thence to the police court, unless I can convince the inspector."

"You'll need a lawyer," she said. "And you haven't any money."

"Come on," said Bannon roughly. "Forget that stuff."

"But we certainly won't forget it," said Georgia. "You needn't think you're going to carry him off and give him a third degree, or something, without anybody to look after his rights. I'll get you a lawyer, Jeff. Whom do you want?"

Slattery jerked Jeff's arm sharply. Georgia looked at Slattery, and his grip relaxed. She was a determined young person, and very sure of herself—and the hotel management had assured Slattery that Georgia was the daughter of an old and valued guest—above suspicion.

"Don't be a fool, Slattery," said Jeff. "I'm coming, without a fuss. Why, Georgia, you'd better try to get Gilbert MacLennan. There's no better criminal lawyer in town; and he commanded my battalion in France, so I think he'd wait for his pay. If he's tied up this afternoon he'll send somebody from his office. Tell him to come right up to the detective branch, if he can; and tell him I won't talk till he gets there. So, Slattery, there's no use of your trying your little persuasives; for there won't be any confession, unless you write it and sign it."

## CHAPTER XI.

They went out from the hotel and down the steps to the street—Jeff walking between the two detectives, all of them quite matter-of-fact; the sort of arrest that delights a hotel manager's heart, if arrests there must be. And Georgia marched gallantly along beside them, waited while they got a taxi, and reached in through the window to squeeze Jeff's hand.

"Cheer up, old boy!"

"Oh, I'm all right," he assured her gallantly. "Even when things look blackest the jury may always disagree—eh, Slattery? And we're a long way from that."

Nevertheless, the memory of Georgia's face as she waved good-by was about the only thing that encouraged him as they drove off in grim silence. Georgia was a wonder; she might get him out of this, some-

how. But without Georgia the outlook would have been pretty black. Any number of people might be able to identify him, and a man out of a job would be suspected of a more violent disposition than he might entertain in more fortunate times. He had been foolish enough to provoke Slattery and Bannon to a personal animosity that would drive them farther than professional zeal, and character witnesses—any he could think of—would be able to prove little except that he was desperately short of money.

Of course, he was essentially, if not technically, innocent. But Jeff was not sure that purity of moral purpose was in itself of much use in pulling a man out of a hole. The universe was queer.

Nevertheless, his confidence in Georgia buoyed him up during the formalities of booking at the station, and kept him smiling and silent afterward when Slattery and Bannon took him into the back room and gave him a bombardment of questions. At last they gave it up, and Slattery even softened enough to give Jeff a cigar. Bannon went away somewhere, but Slattery stayed with Jeff in the back room and smoked silently.

Jeff had almost finished the cigar before it occurred to him that the silence itself was part of Slattery's game to break down his morale—not to mention the cigar, which was having a ruinous effect on the internal front. For in silence he could think—think and listen to the muffled sounds of trampling feet and brusque voices in the outer room. They would be bringing in witnesses to identify him; they would be getting together enough evidence to warrant the magistrate in holding him for the grand jury in heavy bail.

And where was Gilbert MacLennan? In court somewhere, probably, arguing a case; and Georgia, unused to hurry calls for criminal lawyers, might be having difficulty in finding anybody else. Anybody else, for that matter, might be slow to take the case. Of course there was about every magistrate's court a pack of shysters who would jump at the chance of defending a man accused of stealing twelve thousand dollars—unless they thought he was innocent; but he did not want to intrust himself to any of them.

His confidence came back slowly as an hour passed, and another, and no sign of Kalbfuss. Bannon came in once and had a whispered conversation with Slattery, and they seemed disturbed. Then Bannon went



out again, to return after an interval with a thin, chalky-faced man in a pin-check suit who stopped in the doorway and looked at Jeff curiously. Then he shook his head.

"Don't know him," he muttered.

"Now, Chick! Look again."

"But I tell you I was back in the office behind the counter. All I see is Jinx hitting the pave——"

Bannon hustled him outside before Jeff could hear more. He turned curiously to Slattery.

"Is that the famous Chick Bartz?"

"I suppose you and him are total strangers," said Slattery facetiously.

"At any rate," Jeff observed, "he didn't seem to recognize me. Not much of a case, Slattery. Even if your friend Bannon persuades Chick to change his mind, I should think my word is about as good as his."

"His word was good enough to help send five men to the chair," Slattery reminded him.

"So it was. But why don't you produce my alleged victim? He ought to know me, if anybody would."

"We'll find him—don't you worry."

"We ought to be going along to court before long."

"Well, don't you think we'll go to court, unless we've got some witnesses. You'll wait here till we've got enough to hold you."

"Oh, no, Slattery, you couldn't do that."

"Couldn't we? I guess if you was as much of a reporter as you pretend you'd know what we could do—— Ah!"

The doorknob turned; there was a murmur of voices; the door opened, and Slattery started up—expecting, Jeff conjectured, the unhappy Kalbfuss. But it wasn't Kalbfuss who came in—it was a tall man in gray tweeds, with a bulging forehead and a beak nose and a smile all full of teeth. And Jeff McCall's worries blew away, for he knew that smile. He had seen Gilbert MacLennan smile like that when he was arguing a desperate case in court, and when he was leading his battalion into thickets full of machine guns; and the smile had seemed to bring results.

"Hello, McCall! Long time since I've seen you, and I hardly expected to find you in this sort of luck. But never mind; we'll get you out of it. Hello, Slattery. I hardly need to tell you I'm Mr. McCall's counsel. Now can you let me talk to him for a minute or two?"

Gilbert MacLennan was a personage whom even the inspector had to treat with some respect, and Slattery, who knew him of old, felt it best to yield the point. He went out, softly shutting the door behind him; both of them knew he was leaning against it.

"Well, Jeff, this is hard luck; but don't worry. That girl of yours is a wonder."

"No doubt about that," Jeff agreed. "I was afraid she couldn't find you at the office."

"Oh, she didn't find me at the office. She trailed me to the Criminal Courts Building and right into the courtroom. No getting away from her; not that I can imagine anybody wanting to get away from her. You're in luck."

"So far as Georgia's concerned I'm in luck. I don't know about this case."

"Miss Somers told me the whole thing," said MacLennan. "So you won't have to waste time telling me. That is—I suppose you told her the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?"

"Did it sound like the sort of tale a man would invent for amusement?"

"No; it wasn't plausible enough. Now if you want to prove an alibi——"

"I don't," said Jeff. "I couldn't. And even if your office has ways and means, I was foolish enough to admit that I couldn't. I've pulled several boners on this case, I'm afraid. But they don't seem to have found this Kalbfuss; and as Georgia probably told you, we suspect that he has his own reasons for not wanting to appear. If they can't find him their case goes to pieces."

"I wouldn't be too sure of that," said MacLennan. "Remember, we don't know how Slattery and Bannon got on your trail. But they must have had some evidence. And even if Kalbfuss got your letter, you didn't send him what he wanted."

Jeff shook his head.

"I think he's scared, if you ask me. He tried to hush the thing up, at first. He wouldn't have let twelve thousand slide so easily if he hadn't had some reason for not wanting the police prying into his affairs. And now that he's got his twelve thousand and——"

"But he hasn't got his memorandum," MacLennan reminded him; "assuming that that was his advertisement. If he gets the money without the paper, he may think you lost it, or that his memory was bad and he left it somewhere else. Miss Somers is hunt-

ing for Kellmeyer now; maybe he'll be able to interpret that memorandum; but he's a busy man and it may take her some time to reach him. However, regardless of Kalbfuss, we'll get you off. You can't send a man up the river for wearing a blue tie."

A knock on the door interrupted them; a heavy, triumphant knock.

"Come in," MacLennan called.

Slattery entered, grinning, and with him a stubby little man in a leather cap, with a taxi driver's badge pinned to his raincoat. They stared at Jeff a moment, then withdrew in silence.

"If he recognizes me," said Jeff, "it's more than I can do for him. I got the number on his badge——"

"So did I. No way he'd know your name?"

"Not till Slattery told him. And I refuse to believe that Slattery and Bannon can establish a chain of evidence pointing to me out of all the wearers of blue ties in this large city. They haven't the brains."

So MacLennan thought, and when he left his client Jeff was pretty well convinced that his detention would last only until he could come before a magistrate and get the charge scornfully dismissed. MacLennan had not taken time to tell Jeff much of what he was going to do, but he evidently had a good deal in mind; his inquiries for possible witnesses had indicated a formidable and extensive strategy. And Jeff felt that this was his lucky day.

Kalbfuss was missing, and Kalbfuss would stay missing. Even if he were found he might be unwilling to identify Jeff; for that would mean long connection with the case, constant contacts with detectives and district attorneys—everything that according to Jeff's theory Kalbfuss must be anxious to avoid. Anyway, Kalbfuss had got his money back; and he had never seemed to care much about his loss.

So Jeff lit a cigarette, and was whistling softly when the door was suddenly flung open and Slattery came in. He was mocking, jovial, triumphant. Behind him Bannon, and with Bannon the fat, red-faced man in the pink and green overcoat.

"Well, McCall," said Slattery, "you and your fancy lawyer will have your hands full now. Do you know him, Mr. Kalbfuss?"

The fat one's face grew redder and his lips trembled; he shook with mounting fury.

"Sure I know him. He's the guy that done it. I'd know him anywhere."

Jeff shrugged his shoulders, but rather feebly. Slattery shepherded Kalbfuss out and turned on the doorstep for a farewell gibe.

"I guess you'd give a good deal for a jury that would disagree, wouldn't you? You and your funny stuff. Hah!"

## CHAPTER XII.

"Thomas Jefferson Jackson McCall!"

With Slattery at his side, Jeff stepped out into the courtroom for the preliminary examination that was to determine whether he would spend the next night in jail—and perhaps a great many more nights. The late afternoon sunlight flooded through the tall walnut-cased windows and glared back from the high walls of yellow plaster; it dazzled him. Against it he could dimly see the gaunt figure of the magistrate—a sketchy picture of black gown and red face and flowing white hair and mustache; Jeff wished he could see his eyes. For the black gown had a depressingly judicial look, and there was a painful implication of law and order in the blue uniforms of the court attendants who stood about with the sunlight glinting from their gilt badges.

One of the gilt-badged persons addressed Jeff as he halted before the bench, and told him in the name of the people of New York that one Augustine Slattery did aver his belief that Jeff had committed assault and robbery in and upon one Absalom Kalbfuss, in the peace of God and of the said people then and there being; in that Jeff did then and there feloniously use violence to and upon him and did put him in fear of some immediate injury to his person and did carry away against his will to the value of eleven thousand eight hundred and seventy-one dollars, property of the said Kalbfuss. Set down in such detail, there was no doubt that it sounded pretty bad.

Jeff looked about with eyes gradually getting used to the light. There was no sign of the said Kalbfuss, but MacLennan's clerk dispelled any hopes that Jeff might have built on that by telling him in a whisper that Kalbfuss had gone downtown to his broker's, but was on his way back and would be in at any moment. And Kalbfuss seemed to be the only person Jeff had ever met who was absent. The courtroom was packed—chiefly,

Jeff observed, with idlers, court hangers-on, runners for the bond companies, cheap lawyers; and experiencing for the first time the painful sensations of one on the inside looking out, Jeff wondered why he had ever come to a court, as he had sometimes done in the past, out of idle curiosity. It was not at all kind to the prisoner at the bar. Anyway, he'd never do it again.

Besides the regular police court audience there were a good many people who had come to see what happened to Jeff McCall. Inside the rail Bannon stood with the taxi driver and Chick Bartz and two or three other men whom Jeff did not recognize; and in whispered conference with Bannon was the deputy assistant district attorney who was appearing for the people in the preliminary hearing. The sunlight fell full on his vivid green suit and on the vivid red hair brushed down sleekly over his temples; he was the central figure of the room—at any rate to Jeff—and he was chuckling in insolent confidence. Which, indeed, was part of his method. This gentleman, whose name was Coffey, was beginning to make a considerable reputation as a rough-and-ready prosecutor; in his modest way he was something of a terror. But Coffey knew that terrorist tactics would not go very far with Gilbert MacLennan; so he was taking pains to display a certainty that he did not feel, and that MacLennan knew he did not feel.

For MacLennan was a great man, who for years past had not wasted his time on the petty business of preliminary examinations before a magistrate. His very appearance gave the case a touch of distinction; and after the charge had been read everything was suspended while MacLennan went up to the bench and shook hands with the magistrate, and then crossed to the other side of the house and exchanged fraternal greetings with Assistant District Attorney Coffey. MacLennan, who was a good deal the taller, ventured an encouraging wink at Jeff over Coffey's shoulder; and Jeff bravely grinned back.

For, after all, a good deal of this crowd was rooting for him. First and foremost of all was Georgia, sitting on the front bench beyond the railing with a quiet little smile that was amazingly reassuring. Jeff noticed, with a good deal of satisfaction, that the old Irish magistrate was looking at Georgia with much approval. No wonder. Jeff observed as a curious detail that she wore no rings

to-day; perhaps she thought that she, too, had better pretend poverty.

Beside her sat Delano, solid and impassive as the Palisades he was a character witness. So, too, were the four formidable ladies who filled the rest of the bench; ladies who, incredible as it might seem, were really as eminent as they looked. All of them had come to tell the court that the great charities with which their names were associated owed much of their popularity to Jeff McCall's talents as a press agent. But Mrs. Marrowby had not been invited.

Then there was a dapper person with a waxed mustache. MacLennan's clerk whispered that he was a salesman from Viscount's, prepared to testify that the store had sold some eighteen dozen ties of blue, watered silk with a thin red diagonal stripe. There was Bill McCoy of the *Record's* classified advertising, and beside him a clerk from the advertising agency which had inserted the anonymous notice suggesting that the finder could keep the money if he would return the memoranda. There was his landlady, who would testify that Jeff had paid her five dollars for a week's rent the evening before; and who, though she did not know it, would be compelled to admit that nobody would continue to live in one of her hall bedrooms if he had just stolen eleven thousand eight hundred and seventy-one dollars.

There was also the waiter who had served Jeff and Georgia their coffee in the lunch room last night, ready to swear that Jeff had tossed him a quarter with the laughing remark that it was his last; and there was a waiter from the Biltmore who would testify that Georgia had paid for Jeff's breakfast. Last of all, but far from least, there was a stalwart, gray-mustached gentleman in khaki, with two silver stars on each shoulder, who had been brought up from Governor's Island to tell the court about the morning when he had pinned a medal, within sound of the guns, on Lieutenant T. J. J. McCall. Relevant or irrelevant, admissible or inadmissible, MacLennan had overlooked nothing.

Incidentally, on the bench inside the rail where three or four reporters crowded the witnesses for the prosecution, there was also Howard Hamar, present because he was assigned to the Kalbfuss robbery story, but eager to appear as a character witness besides and rather disgruntled because Jeff had refused.

At last the ceremonial connected with the

appearance of the great MacLennan in an obscure police court had been completed, and the court turned to consider the case of Jeff McCall. The magistrate cleared his throat, perched his black-rimmed glasses on a high, thin nose, and looked at Jeff. A rather distinguished figure, with his flowing white hair, he looked like a justice of the United States supreme court, which, indeed, at the outset of his career he had intended to be. At any rate, he did not bark, like some magistrates; his voice was almost friendly as he told Jeff that he could waive examination if he wished. MacLennan replied that they preferred to be examined.

But Coffey, it seemed, was not ready to examine just now. He explained that the principal witness for the people had not yet arrived, but would come in at any moment.

"You had him at the police station two hours ago," said MacLennan. "Why didn't you keep him?"

"He had some business downtown—said he'd be back in an hour."

"I must say, your honor," MacLennan observed, "that this seems a rather poor excuse for imposing a delay not only on the court, but on the large number of witnesses who have come here to testify for the defense."

"It's getting late, Mr. Coffey," said the magistrate. "It does seem to me that you might have the complainant——"

"He isn't the complainant," said Coffey. "He's the victim; but the information——"

The judge peered at a paper on his desk.

"Ah, yes. Sergeant Slattery."

"Our witness ought to be here now," said Coffey. "We could proceed with the examination of Slattery and some of the others. I suppose, Mr. MacLennan, you concede the robbery; you merely hold that your client didn't do it."

"We concede nothing," MacLennan barked, dropping suddenly into his courtroom and battlefield manner. "How do we know there has been a robbery?"

"Don't you read the papers?"

"We don't necessarily believe them."

"Very well, your honor," Coffey agreed. "We'll begin at the beginning, then. Herman Bartz!"

MacLennan subsided to a chair beside Jeff as Chick Bartz, evidently ill at ease in a courtroom, slunk to the stand. His name was Herman Bartz; he was a seller of theater

tickets; yes, he had been acquainted—slightly acquainted—with Absalom Kalbfuss for a number of years. He thought Kalbfuss lived in Cincinnati now. Kalbfuss had come in yesterday afternoon and bought two tickets for the Winter Garden, paying for them with a bill taken from a large roll. He had walked out into the street, binding up his money to put back in his pocket. As Kalbfuss reached the street Bartz had heard a shout, had seen Kalbfuss fall, had heard him cry "Stop thief!" No, he had not seen the man who knocked Kalbfuss down.

"Object!" said MacLennan. "No proof has been offered that he was knocked down. He might have slipped on a banana peel."

"I saw him knocked down," Bartz asserted sullenly, and MacLennan subsided with a grin. Kalbfuss had pursued the thief, but in vain; had come back and said that he had lost eleven thousand eight hundred and seventy-one dollars. That was all. Bartz, turned over to MacLennan for cross-examination, wore the look of a Christian martyr watching the Colosseum fill up with lions.

"Now, Mr. Bartz, you said you were a ticket scalper."

"Object!"

"Your honor," said MacLennan suavely, "I propose to show that the character of these witnesses offered by the people——"

"Objection sustained," said the magistrate.

"You said you were a salesman of theater tickets," MacLennan amended. "And Mr. Kalbfuss—assuming that there is such a person, of which we have no proof at all as yet——"

"I'll show you a corpus delicti soon enough," said Coffey.

"This alleged Kalbfuss bought two seats for the Winter Garden? Orchestra seats?"

"Yes," said Bartz, squirming.

"The sort that sell for three dollars and thirty cents at the box office?"

"You can't get 'em at the box office."

"But if you could get them at the box office, they would cost three dollars and thirty cents. How much did Kalbfuss pay you?"

"Object!"

"Your honor," MacLennan explained wearily, "my client is charged with the theft of a very precise sum of money—eleven thousand eight hundred and seventy-one dollars. I merely want to find out if there is any

evidence that Kalbfuss had that much money, or how much he had——”

“Objection overruled.”

“He paid fifteen dollars for the pair,” Bartz admitted. And paid, he further admitted, with a twenty-dollar bill off the top of his roll. No, Bartz had not seen the size of the other bills; it looked like a good deal, but he had no idea how much. Kalbfuss, when he was prosperous, was known to carry large sums around with him.

“Did you ever tell anybody that Kalbfuss never had that much money and that this was only a play for publicity?”

“I don’t remember.”

MacLennan nodded at one of the reporters, who stood up.

“Ever see this man?”

“I don’t remember,” said Bartz. “I never care much what I tell reporters, anyway.”

MacLennan smiled a toothy smile.

“I see,” Coffey remarked, “that my learned friend does believe what he reads in the papers, after all.”

“You said you saw him knocked down,” MacLennan pursued. “But a moment before you said you merely saw him fall.”

Then there was a reading back of the record, a sputter of objections, and presently it was set down that Bartz had said he saw him fall, then had said he had seen him knocked down. But he had not seen the man who knocked him down; had not seen anybody knock him down.

“He might have been blown over by the wind, I suppose?” MacLennan suggested. “That will do.” Bartz stepped down, vastly relieved that there had been no reference to his spotted past.

“Peter Donovan!” The taxi driver took the stand, and MacLennan whispered to Jeff:

“If this were a jury trial, I’d skin Bartz alive. The rest of their witnesses, too. But there’s no use trying parlor tricks before old O’Farrell. He knows what Bartz is, anyway.”

Peter Donovan swore that he had been waiting for fares in front of the ticket agency; had been standing at the curb beside his car; had seen Kalbfuss come out, rolling up a bundle of bills; and had seen a man strolling along the street turn suddenly, knock Kalbfuss down, and make off with the money. Did he recognize that man in the courtroom? He did; he identified Jeff McCall.

Then MacLennan took him.

“You were waiting for fares in front of the ticket agency. Is that a public hack stand?”

“I don’t know,” said Donovan, reddening.

“Don’t you know that it isn’t?”

“Object!”

“I think,” MacLennan observed, “that your honor might take note of what appears to be a violation of the traffic ordinances. But the point is immaterial. You have identified the defendant as the man who struck Kalbfuss. How do you recognize him?”

Donovan wriggled.

“How do you recognize anybody?” he said.

“But there must have been some points about him. Did you see his face clearly?” And after more of this Donovan admitted that the criminal had been tall, thin, and young, with a blue tie crossed by a red stripe.

“Don’t you know there are hundreds of ties like that in New York?”

“Object!”

“Objection sustained,” said the magistrate.

“I may say, your honor, that we intend to show that there have been sold, at the store where the defendant purchased his tie, some two hundred odd exactly like it.”

“You may show it at the proper time.”

“Leaving aside the tie,” said MacLennan imperturbably, “you saw that this man was tall and thin and young. Now, out of the several hundred thousand tall and thin young men in New York, when did you first see the defendant after the robbery?”

It came out gradually that he had seen him at the police station this afternoon; Donovan had been with Slattery.

“Did you know Slattery before?”

Donovan squirmed again. He knew him a little.

“Didn’t you serve three years for assaulting a passenger——”

“Object,” roared Coffey, “as incompetent, irrelevant, and immaterial.”

“May it please your honor, it is in the highest degree material. This man Donovan is a notorious stool pigeon whom Slattery has brought in to bolster up his preposterous case against the defendant.”

“I’m not a jury,” said the magistrate. “You can save your oratory, Mr. MacLennan. But the objection is overruled.”

Which was all MacLennan needed. Before Donovan escaped there was nobody in

the courtroom who could doubt that he was precisely what MacLennan had called him. Jeff and Georgia exchanged smiles.

Then came Slattery. He had been assigned to the case by Inspector O'Keefe; had questioned Kalbfuss and Bartz and Donovan, and had arrested Jeff at the Biltmore this morning. Yes, he had searched the prisoner, but had found no money. This was the substance of his answers on direct examination, MacLennan having shut off questions on any number of side issues. Jeff noticed that Coffey's confident smile had disappeared; and when MacLennan took Slattery for cross-examination Jeff settled back in his seat with a comfortable feeling all over him.

"Now, Mr. Slattery," MacLennan began, "had you any previous acquaintance with the defendant?"

"Not that I remember."

"Weren't you tried for extortion in 1916 — Oh, your honor, my learned friend opposite may think that is irrelevant, but it directly tends to establish animosity on the part of the witness."

So he was allowed to make Slattery admit that he had been tried for extortion and that the jury had disagreed. Slattery stuck stubbornly to his insistence that he did not remember Jeff as a reporter on the case, but MacLennan was satisfied; he had Delano and the *Record's* assignment book to prove that.

"Now, Mr. Slattery, you testified that as a result of information that had come to you, you and Sergeant Bannon went to the Biltmore and arrested the defendant. What was the nature of that information?"

Coffey's objection to this was of almost religious intensity. What hope was there for successful administration of criminal law if the police were compelled to disclose sources of information at the preliminary hearing, et cetera, et cetera? But MacLennan was unruffled.

"Your honor, I submit that the successful administration of criminal law depends chiefly on the display of at least a modicum of intelligence by the police. So far there has been absolutely nothing to connect the defendant with this robbery, if robbery there was, except the fact that he is unlucky enough to wear a blue tie. Even that rests on the evidence of a man who admits two convictions for felonies and two for misdemeanors. We intend to show in due time

that the witness Slattery has harbored a grievance against the defendant for some years. The chief witness for the people, the victim of this alleged robbery, is not present. We shall offer evidence that yesterday afternoon this so-called victim wanted nothing said about his loss.

"Now in view of all this, I think Mr. Slattery may properly be asked why on earth he should have attempted to fasten this very serious crime—assuming that there was a crime—on a man to whose blameless character a dozen people of the highest standing are ready to testify."

The magistrate cleared his throat.

"I think, Mr. Slattery, that you'd better give me some idea of your chain of reasoning. This is a very serious offense with which the defendant is charged. If I hold him for the grand jury the bail will have to be pretty large. If he is to be committed to jail we ought to have some better reason than has appeared so far. How did you come to connect him with the robbery?"

Slattery crossed and recrossed his feet. Then he muttered:

"I got a telephone call."

"From whom?" the judge asked.

"From a woman."

"What woman? Who was she?"

"I don't know."

Jeff shot a glance at Georgia, and saw that her eyes were sparkling. She would remember this.

"You got a telephone call from an unknown woman. What did she tell you?"

"She said this job was done by a man named Jeff McCall, and that I'd find him somewhere around the Biltmore with a Miss Georgia Somers."

There was a stifled murmur in the courtroom. The magistrate looked over his glasses, frowned, and returned to Slattery.

"Did you trace this telephone call?"

"I did. It came from a coin-box booth in the Grand Central Station."

"But you haven't found out who the woman was?"

"No."

The magistrate sat back in his chair and folded his hands.

"I submit, your honor," said MacLennan with a pitying smile, "that an anonymous telephone call from an obviously jealous woman can hardly be considered as meeting the statutory requirement of reasonable cause. That's all, Slattery."

Slattery stumbled down from the witness box into the camp of the prosecution, which was buzzing with dissatisfaction. MacLennan wore a contented grin. There was a pause, then:

"Mr. Coffey," said the magistrate, "have you rested your case?"

"We still have one more witness, your honor, and the most important witness of all—Kalbfuss."

"You might have taken some care to produce him," said the judge. "Even if he has no interest in what became of his money, this is a public offense."

"We'll have him here," Coffey insisted. "We sent a detective downtown with him to make sure he came back on time— Ah!"

Slattery had jumped up and beckoned eagerly. Jeff turned; and there in the door, a plain-clothes man with him, was Kalbfuss—redder than ever, flustered and hurried, and hastening to make his way down to the bar. Coffey thrust his thumbs into his vest and put on a satisfied smile; MacLennan's grin faded out. Delano, who had been reaching for his hat in the evident conviction that the case was about over, laid it down again and turned his impassive gaze on the new arrival.

"Absalom Kalbfuss!" said Coffey. "Take the stand."

Laying aside his overcoat out of some obscure ritual of respect to the court, the red-faced one took the stand and the oath. He was, he said, a stockbroker in Cincinnati; he had come to New York for a holiday and had brought along some twelve thousand dollars, thinking he might make some investments while in town. Yes, he had long been in the habit of carrying large sums of money around with him, when he had any money. He had gone into the ticket agency to buy two seats—

"How much money did you have with you then, Mr. Kalbfuss?"

"Eleven thousand eight hundred and eighty-six dollars. I counted it just before I left the hotel. I was going on to a broker's office—"

"Yes; you counted it just before you left the hotel. And how much did you pay for the tickets?"

"Fifteen dollars."

"Leaving eleven thousand eight hundred and seventy-one dollars. What happened then, Mr. Kalbfuss?"

"I puts away my tickets and starts to

bundle up my roll—it goes in an inside pocket, see? Them ticket agencies have hardly got room for a man to turn around in, and before I knew it I was out in the street with my money in my hand. Then somebody walks up, clouts me in the jaw, and, as I tumble, he grabs the roll and beats it. I goes after him, but he had too big a start."

"What did he look like?"

"Oh, he was a young fellow—not very big."

"Would you recognize him if you saw him again?"

"Sure I would. Any time."

"Do you recognize him in this room?"

Jeff, under the impression that it was his duty to be helpful, stood up. Coffey pointed at him with an accusing, damning finger.

"Is that the man?" he roared. Kalbfuss looked Jeff over with great care.

"No," he said firmly. "Not a bit like him. I never saw this fellow in my life."

### CHAPTER XIII.

Jeff knew that in this moment of unforeseen and incredible triumph he ought to turn his eyes to Georgia, but he could not help looking at Slattery instead. And Slattery's face was worth it. Dimly Jeff heard MacLennan saying that he did not care to cross-examine the witness, and the crestfallen Coffey admitting that the case for the people was closed.

"My client is prepared to make a statement," said MacLennan, "and we have a number of witnesses—"

The magistrate leaned back and wrote something on a piece of paper.

"I don't think there is any need of further statements," he observed. "Defendant discharged." And then everybody was flocking toward the door, Georgia's hand in Jeff's arm, and the major general shaking his other hand and telling him how glad he was to see him again, and the ponderous and eminent ladies hanging about and waiting their turn to congratulate him. As Jeff passed out into the lobby he heard behind him the voice of a court attendant droning:

"Hyman Greenberg! You are charged with operating a taxicab without a license and—"

In the midst of his chattering friends he spared a kindly thought for Hyman Green-

berg, whoever he might be; Jeff hoped he'd get off easily. In the lobby MacLennan drew Jeff—and Georgia—aside for a moment and grinned at them.

"Well, friends, this is our lucky day. Come and have lunch with me to-morrow, and we'll talk this thing over."

"I owe you a good deal of money," said Jeff uneasily.

"You don't owe me a cent. This was past-time. But you owe your friend Kalbfuss something—not to mention Slattery. His rough methods would ruin the best case in the world. And you owe Miss Somers something."

"I've assigned all my assets to her, present and future," said Jeff. "And if need be, I'm willing to throw in a little peonage on the side."

Georgia squeezed his arm.

"You don't owe me anything, either," she murmured. "I'd like to be a lawyer. I've been having the time of my life."

"I must say," MacLennan observed, "that for compelling the attendance of witnesses you're fully as good as a subpoena. Bless you, my children; and let me see you at the Bankers' Club at one to-morrow."

He left them, and Jeff noticed with relief that the crowd was thinning. Presently he would be alone with Georgia. But not yet. Bartz and Kalbfuss were whispering eagerly in the middle distance, with Slattery hovering about them. Presently Bartz broke away, shaking his head; and Kalbfuss came up to Jeff with outstretched hand, saying in a high voice that must have been meant for Slattery:

"Well, Mr. McCall, too bad you was bothered. You and me were both in hard luck over this business." And in an undertone: "Come over away from the crowd. I want to talk to you."

Two reporters had assailed Slattery and Bannon, creating a convenient diversion. With Georgia still clinging to his arm, Jeff followed Kalbfuss into a corner beside the glass doors through which they could see the court finishing off the last petty details of the day's business. Kalbfuss turned and glanced sharply at Georgia, and Jeff's dislike rose higher. This particular Broadway type he had always hated, and he had no right even to look at Georgia—still more to question her doings.

"Wherever I go," said Jeff calmly, "she goes, too. Now what is it?"

"If I'd identified you," said Kalbfuss, "you'd have gone up the river. But I didn't. Now gimme that paper."

Jeff was still rather dazed by the sudden lifting of the shadow that had hung over him; he wasn't prepared for this.

"What paper?" he temporized, wondering how he was going to reconcile his personal gratitude to Kalbfuss with his duty to the victims of the bond robberies. But Georgia cut in with:

"You mean the memoranda you advertised for in the *Record* this morning?"

Kalbfuss regarded her darkly.

"I never advertised. It was that fool Bartz. He thinks this was a phony holdup, see; that I framed it myself because he had a split in this roll——"

He paused in sudden alarm and his mouth clicked shut.

"Yes, yes," said Georgia. "Go on!"

Kalbfuss gulped and decided to fight his way out.

"But when I miss the paper he sees he's wrong," he went on, "and it rattles him. So he puts in this ad. I tell you so you won't think you got any money comin' from me. For I recognized you all right at the station, and I can recognize you again."

"So the reward is withdrawn," said Georgia softly, with sparks glinting in her eyes. "Well, it wasn't much of a reward anyway, for that paper. I suppose it's worth a good deal."

"You give it here," said Kalbfuss venomously.

"But why," Jeff broke in, "did you identify me at the station, if you didn't mean to stick to it?"

"Why? Because you still got my money then. I think you got the money and the paper both, see; and you don't get away with nothin' like that. But when I go back with Chick afterward, here comes a letter with the money. But no paper with it. And I gotta have it. Now you give it here, or I'll——"

Georgia gently swung her hand bag against Jeff's knee.

"I haven't got it," he said.

Kalbfuss was shaking in the struggle of two emotions, but fear finally triumphed over avarice.

"You win," he said. "I give you the money for it. All the money. Eleven thousand eight hundred and seventy-one dollars. It's a lot."



Jeff and Georgia looked at each other and smiled sadly. It was a lot. And Jeff was still struggling with the conviction that he owed Kalbfuss something. But he could not compound the larceny of five million dollars' worth of bonds; and even if that had been possible he could not have taken the money for doing it. This certainly was a queer universe.

So he shook his head; and Georgia shook her head. Kalbfuss glared at them, and then his face glowed with sudden triumph.

"You ain't got it!" he shouted. "You ain't got it. You'd take the money if you got it, but you ain't got it. I must have lost it somewhere, and my God, I almost let you get off for nothing. Here—police! Police! I recognize him now! I recognize him now!"

The reporters had gone; the character witnesses had gone; the idlers had gone. Worst of all, MacLennan had gone. But Slattery and Bannon had not gone; they drew near, puzzled, but evidently hoping that something might come out of this to restore their self-esteem.

"Grab him!" cried Kalbfuss. "I recognize him now!"

The glass doors swung open to let out a friend of Hyman Greenberg, and they heard one of the attendants reciting a formal:

"Any person wishing to speak to the judge may do so at this time, otherwise the court is adjourned till ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

"I want to speak to the judge!" yelled Kalbfuss, plunging back into the courtroom, "Judge! Judge! I recognize him now!"

Slattery took Jeff by the arm.

"Come in here," he growled. "I thought there was something funny about this."

Slattery and Bannon and Jeff and Georgia came down to the railing as Kalbfuss poured out his story—a story from which the return of the money was conspicuously absent—the magistrate stood erect, immensely tall, his white hair waving above the long, black draperies of his robe. He looked down on Kalbfuss with intense disgust; but he was listening, and when Kalbfuss gradually subsided, like a dying geyser, the magistrate took off his glasses and rubbed them slowly with a yellowed silk handkerchief. It seemed to be time for something to happen.

"I want to speak to the judge, too," said Georgia.

"Eh?" said the magistrate, hurriedly put-

ting on his glasses. "What is your connection with the case?"

"I was going to be a character witness for Mr. McCall," said Georgia. "In fact, I'm going to marry him; I reckon that shows you what I think of his character."

The old man smiled paternally.

"It does indeed, my dear. Though it's hardly competent as evidence in a criminal proceeding."

"This man," said Georgia, "is going back on what he said in court because he wants Mr. McCall to give him a certain paper. Mr. McCall hasn't got it. I've got it. And"—she opened her hand bag, stepped inside the railing, and handed it up to the magistrate—"I want to put it in custody of the court."

Kalbfuss emitted a feeble wail.

"Double-crossed," he muttered. Then, his voice rising again: "But he robbed me. He took my money. Don't he get nothing for that? I recognize him now!"

Georgia took a long chance.

"This man never lost any money, your honor. Ask the detectives to search him. What's that brown envelope in his inside pocket?"

"Let me see it," said the judge. Kalbfuss hastily drew his coat together, but Slattery ripped it open with an oath, tore out the envelope, and handed it to the magistrate. He peered at it, then started, then grinned.

"Hold on to both of these men," he ordered sharply. "Now, Miss—er——"

"Somers."

"Miss Somers, I see that this envelope is addressed to—— To the Gentleman Who Lost His Roll, No. 197 West Forty-fourth Street. And it contains"—he took out the contents and counted them carefully—"it contains eleven thousand eight hundred and seventy-one dollars." He looked at Georgia over his glasses. "Can you explain this?"

"Of course I can explain it, your honor. We—we throw ourselves on the mercy of the court." And, encouraged by his smile, she climbed the steps, sat down beside him, and began to talk in an eager undertone.

"Somebody gets a good long term for this," said Slattery vindictively. "I don't know who or why just yet, but I know there's something wrong."

His voice boomed out on this last, and the magistrate looked up and smiled again. Nobody was there but the two detectives,

Jeff and Kalbfuss, Georgia, and the court attendants.

"Mr. Kalbfuss," said the magistrate, "I return you your money. Nobody seems to deny your title to it. Now there remains this slip of paper. Miss Somers, you said you'd explain its significance——"

The glass doors parted to admit a fat little man in a fur overcoat; a little man in a big hurry, who seemed much alarmed at finding the courtroom all but empty.

"This gentleman will probably be able to explain it," said Georgia. "With a little help from me. He had an engagement with me here, but he's a little late. Your honor, let me present Mr. Kellmeyer."

At the mention of the name Kalbfuss had made a stupendous effort to break away from Bannon. He shook off the detective's clutch, but as he leaped past Jeff McCall, Jeff's arm shot out and once more he caught Kalbfuss on the jaw. Then Bannon was on him, and in a moment they heard the click of handcuffs.

"I said we'd get somebody," said Slattery.

"Exactly," said Jeff. "And, Slattery, as a true friend let me give you a tip. If you want to save your face, beat it down to Forty-fourth Street and grab Chick Bartz. He's bigger game than I am."

The magistrate looked at Georgia.

"He's right," she nodded. "That is, if Mr. Kellmeyer will agree with my explanation of these memoranda."

"Before we get to that," said the magistrate, "I want to clear up this case of Thomas Jefferson Jackson McCall. Under some circumstances, a charge of robbery could lie for the violent taking of a business paper. But as I understand it, this paper has been turned over to me for transmission in proper form to the district attorney's office. That being the case, even though the procedure is somewhat unusual, a charge of robbery could hardly be supported. But the majesty of the law must be upheld. Oh, yes, my dear"—as Georgia gasped—"this is a court of law—and of justice." He turned to the clerk. "Draw up a warrant for the arrest of Thomas Jefferson Jackson McCall—on the charge of disorderly conduct. Over that offense this court has jurisdiction. Thomas Jefferson Jackson McCall, do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty," Jeff admitted with a grin. The magistrate grinned back.

"My young friend, you seem to be a person of sudden impulses. Some of them are laudable, but all of them are a little too rough for our somewhat delicately adjusted civilization. Society needs some protection against you. I'm going to suspend sentence, but I shall put you on probation—with Miss Somers responsible for your good behavior. And, son, never let anybody tell you that justice is blind."

#### CHAPTER XIV.

Godfrey Kellmeyer had stood by, plainly rather impatient, while the case of the people against Thomas Jefferson Jackson McCall was being put out of the way. Now he turned to Georgia, with a little smile.

"All right, Miss Somers. I suppose we can talk business at last. Where's this evidence?"

"The judge has the evidence," said Georgia. "You see, your honor, I called on Mr. Kellmeyer early this afternoon and told him I thought I could throw some light on the bond robberies. He asked me to wait while he finished an important conference, and——"

"And when I finally had time to see her," Kellmeyer confessed with a chuckle, "she wasn't there. They told me that her fiancé was on trial up here and that she'd come up to help him out—taking my evidence with her. Well, we're young only once, Miss Somers; I don't blame you. Now where is this document?"

"I think I'd better tell you what we know about it," said Georgia, "and what we—that is, Mr. McCall and I—have inferred."

The magistrate with a wave of the hand invited Kellmeyer to the bench, and the three of them put their heads together and engaged in a whispered conference; while Thomas Jefferson Jackson McCall sat down beside Slattery, Bannon, and Kalbfuss. He was free at last—and his conscience was free. Free, but broke and out of a job. However, he had Georgia.

The magistrate looked up.

"Slattery, I think we shan't need you and Bannon any longer. The officers of the court can take charge of Mr. Kalbfuss till I decide if there is ground for holding him."

Bannon turned over his prisoner to a man in blue, and rather reluctantly followed Slattery toward the door. Jeff caught up with them, halfway down the aisle.

"I hate to let go of this bird," said Bannon. "Maybe they'll get something on him."

Slattery snorted.

"You and me, Mike, have stayed around here long enough. McCall, this stunt was pretty raw, but you got away with it. But don't think you'll get away with anything again. Better watch your step; for if I ever get a chance, I'll get even with you if I break myself doin' it."

"Now that," said Jeff regretfully, "is a very ungenerous attitude. As for me, I feel quite kindly toward you, Slattery. So kindly that I'll give you a tip. We *have* got the dope on the bond robberies, if I know anything about anything. As soon as they get through with this little exercise in higher mathematics the judge will hold Kalbfuss, and he'll issue warrants for some other people.

"Murray and his gang at headquarters have been on the bond-robbery cases, and they've got nothing. Not a thing. Kellmeyer owes them no thanks; and your boss O'Keefe hates Murray like the devil hates holy water. Stick around, gentlemen, and you'll have a chance to square yourselves with O'Keefe for the boner you pulled this afternoon."

Bannon seemed to think this was reasonable; and even Slattery stopped and scratched his head.

"I'm telling you, gentlemen," said Jeff serenely. "String along with me, Slattery, and I'll make a great detective out of you, as soon as I can persuade you not to believe what you hear over the phone from anonymous women."

"You go to hell," said Slattery fiercely. "If you pull any more of your funny stuff, I'll bust you in the face right here, and then old O'Farrell will have us both locked up. Come on, Mike!"

Jeff watched their departure, rather sorrowfully; returning good for evil was not always as easy as it should be. Then he went down once more to the front bench to wait for Georgia. She straightened up as he sat down, and he heard her saying:

"But, you see, Mr. Kellmeyer, I knew this man Hacksmith. My father's a banker, in Kentucky; and Hacksmith sold him a lot of bonds that turned out to be stolen."

"Umm!" said Kellmeyer. "I know Hacksmith, too. We've had our eye on him; but he's wise. Well, Miss Somers, I guess we've

got a good start, anyway. And once started, we'll be hard to stop. Your honor, can you have this man Kalbfuss held on a short affidavit? Suspicion of grand larceny. And I think we can get friend Bartz——"

Their voices were raised, by this time, and Kalbfuss no less than Jeff could hear every word. At mention of the short affidavit the red-faced one had collapsed in despair against the shoulder of the policeman who was guarding him; but he straightened up a moment later, partly because the policeman had dug an elbow in his ribs, partly because the judge was saying:

"I hope you can, Mr. Kellmeyer. But I don't think we have enough yet to justify the issuing of a warrant. And even if you get him indicted, you know his record. Nobody is better and quicker at turning State's evidence."

Kalbfuss stood up suddenly, perspiration standing out all over his face.

"He won't turn no State's evidence on me," he shouted. "The dirty thug! Says I hold out on him, does he? Yes, and thinks I stage a phony holdup; and now he'll turn State's evidence. No, he don't. Not on me. What I could tell you about Chick Bartz would——"

Kellmeyer looked at him with a contemptuous smile.

"It is expedient that one man should squeal for the people," he observed. "Do you mind waiting a few minutes longer, judge? And you, too, Miss Somers—and McCall. Now, officer, if you'll take our friend away where we can talk to him——"

Down the corridor that led from the courtroom to the jail the policeman took Kalbfuss, and Kellmeyer followed them. The judge beckoned Jeff to the chair that Kellmeyer had vacated, behind the bench.

"The landscape is certainly pleasanter to look at from up here," Jeff confessed.

The magistrate grinned.

"The mills of the gods grind slowly," he said, "but they grind fine—sometimes. Quite often they don't grind at all; but we ignore those cases, for purposes of moral discourse. Fifteen years ago I defended a man who was in on a rather nefarious swindle, with Chick Bartz. Bartz squealed and my client got ten years. I've been hoping ever since that justice would catch up with Chick, and maybe at last she will. Unluckily, I'm busy this evening—I have to deliver an address at a dinner over at the University Club, as soon

as I can get away from here. But if you young people have nothing to do to-morrow night I wish you'd come around to my house for dinner."

"That would be fine," said Georgia. "And my father is coming to town the last of the week; I'd love to have you meet him. He used to be a judge, too."

The magistrate chuckled.

"No wonder you know all the weak points of the judiciary. Here—what's this?"

For Georgia had taken one of the three red roses from her belt and was fastening it in his buttonhole.

"As a very slight token of our appreciation," she said.

"Corruption of the bench," he protested. "You're a menace to society, you and your young highwayman. But if I can be of any further service to you——"

"Maybe you can," said Jeff with a boldness that he could not have commanded an hour ago. "Are you authorized to perform the marriage ceremony?"

"I am."

"Then"—Jeff looked at Georgia—"we could get the license to-morrow; but I suppose you'll want to wait for your father."

"As for that," she said lightly, "father always said that when I got ready to get married he didn't want to know anything about it till it was all over. But——"

"But I'm out of a job," said Jeff, "and I haven't a cent. Never mind—I can borrow some money, and—— By Jove! I should say so! Of course I can get a job, if Kellmeyer is decently grateful—— No—wait till I see him. But I'll fix it. And if you don't mind, Georgia, we can bring the license with us when we come in for dinner to-morrow night."

She affected much hesitation.

"I guess I'll have to," she sighed at last, "to save you from these jealous women."

The judge laughed.

"McCall, if I were forty years younger, you'd have to fight for this girl. Ah, well! If ever I hear that you're mean to her, I'll commit you to jail for life."

## CHAPTER XV.

Then Kellmeyer emerged from the corridor, whistling softly between his teeth.

"I think we've got Bartz," he announced cheerfully. "McCall, will you and Miss Somers get a taxi and wait for me. Now, about this warrant——"

They left him explaining to the judge and went outside. Half a dozen taxis were drawn up at the curb, and the drivers swarmed up from all sides. Jeff was about to take the first who reached them; then he looked again and recognized Peter Donovan, Slattery's stool pigeon. And Donovan recognized him.

"Say, chief, don't hold nothing against me. I didn't want to put you in wrong, but you know how it is; Slattery had me, and I——"

"A good name is more precious than rubies," Jeff informed him. So they climbed into the next taxi, and in a moment Kellmeyer joined them.

"Police headquarters," he told the driver. "We've sent a man after Bartz, and now I want you two to go down with me and tell Inspector Murray what you know."

"Did you find the memorandum useful?" Jeff asked him.

"Useful? With what I knew already, it gave us a good running start. And Kalbfuss did the rest."

"Then," said Jeff, "I'd like to ask you a favor. I'm a newspaper man—or I used to be. I can get my old job back, if I turn up a good exclusive story. Can you let me have the story of these arrests to-night, all to myself?"

"You see," Georgia explained, "we want to get married to-morrow. We're going to, anyway, but if we have a job we'll feel a little more sumptuous, don't you see?"

"I see," said Kellmeyer. "Never was married, but I've been broke. Sure you can have it exclusive, McCall. And I'll fix Murray. The big bonehead has been working on these cases four months and never got anything except some pleasant trips around the country. If I slip him a little of the glory—say about twenty-five per cent—he'll be willing to keep his mouth shut till to-morrow morning. Now I suppose you and Miss Somers won't want any more publicity in this case than you can help, after all you got this afternoon. So when you write this story, try to remember that most of the credit goes to Godfrey Kellmeyer."

"Take the credit," said Jeff. "All I want is a job."

"He deserves it," said Georgia. "That memorandum meant a good deal to him."

"It means more now," Kellmeyer admitted. "Kalbfuss told me everything he ever knew in all his life. McCall, you're

twenty years younger than I am. Let me give you a little advice. Maybe you think honesty doesn't pay. But it pays a-plenty better than a reputation like Chick Bartz's. There may be honor among thieves—some thieves; but I've never seen it. You see, the scheme is something like this. One gang sticks up bond messengers. Their boss passes the stuff on to Bartz, who gives him anywhere from one to five per cent of the face value to pass around among the strong-arm men. Then Chick spreads the bonds over the country through three or four agents—of whom Kalbfuss was one. They sell them for about half price to a bunch of brokers that are in on it, and Chick and his traveling men make an even split of what they get.

"That's why Kalbfuss had to keep books—Chick wouldn't trust him. Chick, it seems, makes a careful note of every bond he gets—serial number and everything. He makes a note of everything he passes out to every agent; and the agent has to bring back a report of who got the stuff and what he paid for it. This particular report had the names of four brokers that Kalbfuss visited on his last trip. Two of them we've suspected—Hacksmith and the fellow he calls Gabby, in Detroit; but we couldn't get anything on them. We've got it now; they'll all be locked up by morning. I'll give you the names and details later, McCall.

"Well—Kalbfuss comes to town from his last trip, with his little written report all down in detail so that Chick can check up on it. Also he brings some of the money he took in. Chick looks it over and then sends Kalbfuss downtown—at any rate, this is Kalbfuss' story—to play the roll on a stock that he thinks is due for a rise. Kalbfuss thought Chick's information was pretty good, so he'd put his own money in behind it. So, you see, of this roll that you took away from him as he was stepping out of the ticket agency, half was his and half was Chick's.

"Observe, my young friends, the commercial value of a spotless reputation and a character without a flaw. Chick thought the holdup was a plant; so did Kalbfuss. Each of them was sure the other had hired somebody to steal his half of the money. When they found that the memorandum was missing both of them began to worry, but neither of them was quite ready to trust the other. Bartz finally put the advertisement

in the paper to see what he'd draw; and what he drew will hold him, I imagine, for about five years. All of which goes to show the importance of exercising care in the selection of your business associates."

"You're going to arrest Hacksmith and the other brokers?" Georgia asked.

"We certainly are."

"And are you likely to recover some of the bonds, or the money they got for the bonds?"

"We'll get what they haven't unloaded on their innocent customers. But the money—not much hope, I'm afraid. That's blown on the races, or on women; or buried. The most we can hope to do is to stick these fellows with heavy sentences so that other ambitious crooks will be scared away."

"I was just asking," Georgia explained, "because my father's bank—perhaps I told you—bought a lot of bonds from Hacksmith and found out afterward that they were stolen. I'm afraid he's in for a pretty heavy loss."

Kellmeyer looked at her in amazement.

"Who's his lawyer in New York?"

"He hasn't any as yet. He's coming on in a few days."

"Then you'd better telegraph him to-night and tell him to stop worrying. He doesn't bear the loss."

"He doesn't?"

"Not a cent. They handed down a decision in one of these cases week before last; a purchaser in good faith owns what he bought. Nobody can recover from him. That is—what did your father pay for them?"

"The market price—whatever it was."

"Then he's all right. You'll remember from Kalbfuss' memorandum that this fellow out in Detroit paid forty-three for a lot of Liberties that are selling around eighty-seven. A swell chance he'll have to prove that he bought them in good faith. But your father can keep his bonds; they're his, and nobody can take them away from him."

Georgia leaned over and laid her head on Jeff's shoulder.

"I'm not going to cry!" she said defiantly. "I'm not! But, you see, for a week or so I've been thinking father was ruined; and this is rather sudden——"

Jeff petted her into calmness, and presently she sat up and exclaimed:

"But who does take the loss? Do you mean to say the banks and brokers from

whom they were stolen simply have to grin and bear it?"

Kellmeyer looked at her irritably.

"Why shouldn't they grin and bear it? They take a kid who gets five or ten dollars a week and load him up with a lot of packages for other firms in the Street, and tell him to hurry up and deliver them and get back in forty-five minutes so he can start out again. How does he know whether his armful is worth twenty million or twenty cents? And what does he care? All he knows is that he's likely to lose his job if he doesn't get back on time. And when he turns into—well, say the Equitable Building—he's got to call at about five offices, all the way from the ground floor to the thirty-second. That means changing elevators and losing time.

"Suppose a well-dressed citizen looking pretty much like fifty million dollars meets him in the elevator and says, 'Got anything for Jinx, Blooey & Co.? All right; I'm Mr. Blooey; I'll take it.' What does he care if this bird is Mr. Blooey or not? He looks like Mr. Blooey to the kid; and this fortunate meeting with Mr. Blooey means that the kid can finish his trip on time.

"Grin and bear it! They'd better. But the trouble is they grin because they don't bear it—the wise ones. They figure that it's cheaper to load their messengers with heavy bonds than to pay salaries for people with brains. Of course they grin, damn them. We bear it—the people I work for—the surety companies. That's why I've stayed up of nights trying to catch these fellows while Murray and his sleuths were in their downy beds. That's why we hung up a reward of fifty thousand dollars for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the men that turned the job. And unless something goes badly wrong that fifty thousand belongs to Miss Georgia Somers."

Jeff and Georgia looked at each other blankly.

"H-half of it belongs to Jeff," she gasped.

"Never mind that," said Jeff. "It's all in the family. But do you know, I had a hunch something was going to turn up."

#### CHAPTER XVI.

It was eight o'clock before Jeff and Georgia had finished their work at police headquarters. By that time Murray knew all that they could tell him, and they knew all Kellmeyer could tell them. They had

seen Chick Bartz brought in, and two of the men who had done the strong-arm work in Wall Street; and they had Murray's solemn promise, which Kellmeyer assured them would be kept, that no newspaper would hear of the arrests until to-morrow.

"I've got something I can sell," said Jeff as they took a taxi in front of the gilt-domed building. "But I'll have to ask you to pay my fare up to the *Record* office."

"All for one and one for all," said Georgia. "Do you suppose we'd have time for a sandwich? I'm awfully hungry."

"I won't," said Jeff. "I want to get this thing off my mind. But you'd better stop in and get something—I don't suppose you've had time since breakfast."

"I certainly won't eat alone," said Georgia disdainfully. "Have you a bench in your office? Well! Then I'll sit right down and wait for you, outside the door."

"If I go in, you go in," said Jeff. "And the telegraph room will take a message to your father. He ought to sleep easy to-night."

Jeff piloted her through the city room and introduced her to the chief telegrapher; then he made his way to the railed inclosure where a gray-haired man was peering through steel-rimmed spectacles at a handful of proofs—the managing editor. He looked up and smiled at Jeff.

"Delano tells me you had a close call this afternoon," he observed. "Better take off that blue tie. How's everything?"

"Well," Jeff admitted cautiously, "everything is pretty fair. But I'd like to have a job."

"So Delano said. But there's no room on the staff just now."

"I've got a story for you," said Jeff. The managing editor laughed.

"All right. If it isn't some invention of one of your friends in the publicity business, we'll pay you nine dollars a column for it."

Jeff lit a cigarette with great deliberation while the managing editor returned to his proofs.

"Some of your rivals would pay better than that," said Jeff. "They've solved the bond robberies. Four arrests here and six in other towns—and I've got it sewed up."

The managing editor stared at him; then: "Mr. Markle! Oh, Mr. Markle!"

The night city editor came to him in three running jumps.

"Yes, sir. What is it?"

"Got anything on the bond robberies?"

"Nothing doing to-day. Gregory saw Kellmeyer early this afternoon and Murray along about five o'clock; and neither of them knew anything."

"Well," Jeff insisted, "they know it now. But no use sending Gregory out into the dark night. They won't tell him. That story is my personal property till six a. m. to-morrow. How about it, boss? Do you want it? I expect they'd take it down on the *World*, but I always felt that I was only on vacation from this paper."

"You're hired!" snapped the managing editor. "Sit down and write it."

"When I left," said Jeff, "I was getting sixty a week. But that was before the war. What with the rise in prices, and everything——"

"We'll give you sixty-five. Now go borrow a typewriter."

"Sixty-five won't do," Jeff insisted. "Besides, I'm going to be married to-morrow. Make it a hundred."

"Get out," said the managing editor. Jeff put on his hat.

"Tell them to forward my mail to the *World*, if anything comes for me."

"McCall, you used to be a very improvident young man. There was no incentive to pay you more than sixty a week when you sat around the office till daylight and lost it all playing poker with the telegraph operators. But if you're going to be married and——"

"I'll give the society department an exclusive on that," Jeff offered; "just to show you that my heart is still true to the old sheet."

"You're hired at a hundred. Want an advance?"

"I certainly do," said Jeff. "And a couple of weeks off for a honeymoon. Starting to-morrow."

"Here—there's a hundred. Report two weeks from to-morrow, and don't forget to give me your first week's check. Remember you've got to pay attention to business hereafter; and if this bond story doesn't stand up, we'll fire you right out into the middle of next week."

"It will stand up," Jeff promised as he moved away. "Hey, Hamar—lend me your mill for half an hour."

It was more than half an hour, however, before Jeff could get out; for nearly everybody seemed anxious to tell him how good

it was to see him back; and Hamar was eager to try his luck at some more stud. If nobody had been waiting for him, Jeff would have gratified his craving, for the luck certainly could not run badly twice; but Jeff was beginning to realize that he was now a young man with responsibilities.

Still, there was nothing the matter with Georgia as a responsibility. She was waiting for him at the door, and it pleased him to observe that of all his budget of good news the thing that suited her best was the two weeks off for the honeymoon.

"I've got only a hundred," he said, "but maybe Kellmeyer can slip us a little advance on that fifty thousand. Anyway, I can buy you a meal, right now. That alone is a pleasant novelty."

"I don't know how you feel," said Georgia as they went down in the elevator, "but I'm so hungry I can't wait to find a good restaurant. Is that lunch room across the street at all endurable?"

"Not having eaten for ten hours," said Jeff, "I'll say it is." So presently they faced each other once more, across an oilcloth-covered table. Georgia studied the card, and once again he noticed her bare fingers.

"Georgia, where are your rings?"

"I thought we might need a lot of money," she confessed. "But we did not, and I've got the pawn tickets in the bag. So we can get them back to-morrow."

"And another one to go with them," said Jeff. His hand slipped across the table and clasped hers.

"Now, Jeff! We're here to eat. What do you want?"

"What I want," he said, "is something that they don't know how to make at any restaurant, good or bad. A strawberry shortcake."

Georgia laughed.

"Jeff, you know I said that when I started East this time I'd sort of made up my mind to stay with you——"

"Yes."

"Well, I wanted to make you comfortable, so I went around to your Aunt Lizzie, and got her to show me how she makes those wonderful shortcakes of hers. And as soon as we find a place to live——"

"A place to live? I could live with you in jail, and like it."

"Of course we'd like it," said Georgia. "But they wouldn't let me live with you in jail. That was why I had to work so hard to keep you out."

# Moments of Destiny

By Lincoln Colcord

Author of "An Incident of the Pacific," "The Drifting Diamond," etc.

From Cape Horn to the Golden Gate, Captain Chandler's burden was heavy. Perhaps Fate was kind, at the last

FOR two weeks the ship had been hove to off Cape Horn, plunging into a black sou'wester that seemed only to gain strength and persistence as it blew. Day after day brought the same story, without a hint of change; the adverse weather seemed fixed for all time. It was as if they had run head-on into a wall of wind and water, as if a gigantic hand had reached down out of the sky to bar their way around the tip of the continent.

Ben Williams, the first mate, lunged aft along the weather alley. The gale screamed steadily overhead in the mizzen rigging; the ship staggered as a fresh squall struck her. He looked up to find Captain Chandler standing at the corner of the after house.

"A fine prospect, captain! Blowing harder than ever this morning."

"Yes. Think it is." Captain Eben Chandler spoke with unusual quietness for a young man. "We may as well make up our minds to a long spell of it. Let the ship take her medicine. There's nothing to be done till the wind changes."

"It's collision I'm worrying about, captain. I've never sailed in a finer sea boat than the *Resolute*. But this infernal blow has collected quite a fleet of ships already. I counted eight sail o' vessels at dawn this morning, all hove to. When we come around on the other tack, we'll strike into a perfect nest of 'em."

Captain Chandler nodded gravely. "Right you are. Well, that's our business, Mr. Williams. Beginning with to-night, you'd better have a man in the slings of the fore yard, in addition to the double lookout. Believe him every hour. And have our own sidelights reported every quarter hour. I'll try to keep on deck myself as much as possible in the nighttime."

The mate drifted forward, while the captain paused a moment at the corner of the

house, gazing across the bleak expanse of the Antarctic Ocean. Even in the narrow sector that his eye happened to rest on, there was a ship in sight, hull down in the murk and spray on the weather quarter. Her bare spars, carrying only the three lower topsails, leaned sharply out of the smother, like the masts of a vessel sunk on some hidden reef in the open sea. Other ships were scattered along the horizon; they appeared and vanished through the driving squalls, sometimes standing out for an instant with startling clearness against the ragged fringe of the sky. It was the season of long nights in those low latitudes. Williams was right; the abandoned waters of Cape Horn were getting dangerously populous.

His own ship handled herself sweetly, as she always did. The long curves of the *Resolute's* handsome hull eased over the tremendous seas with a full reserve of buoyancy, in spite of the heavy cargo under hatches. Captain Chandler, standing clear of the house and swaying his body to the violent heave of the deck, watched her performance with approval. He liked to feel that she was his property, every stick and timber of her, that nothing in ordinary luck and reason could take her away from him.

He took a few turns to the stern rail. A low, leaden sky, turning almost to black in the west, hung on the sea, letting the daylight filter through in broken patches. Stretches of wild water were thrown suddenly into high relief, only to be as suddenly blotted out by the lashing rain. A dismal, hopeless day. Captain Chandler quickened his pace, his oilskin coat rattling like a suit of armor, as the scene closed in on him.

Before he knew it, he was fathoms deep in the memory that always lay in wait for him now, walking the quarter-deck with grim, frantic energy, like a man running a



race with destiny. He might have won her, if Steve Goodall hadn't got in the way.

His body shivered with passion as he paused at the stern rail to think of her, of her alone, her face. He saw her too clearly—the fine eyes, a little sad, as they had looked at him when they had sent him away, the mouth, with its strong curves and maddening allurements, the woman herself, so lovely, so infinitely desirable, and now so wholly unattainable. He turned away sharply. At moments like this he felt on the point of flinging himself into the sea.

She always had cared more for Steve Goodall than for any one else. But Steve had been away so constantly—three or four years is a long time at the age of twenty-five—and there had been nothing definite between them. Eben Chandler had felt, when he came home to fall in love with Hope Thatcher, after having known her all his life, that she had forgotten Steve in a certain measure, that the coast was clear for him. And she had responded, had let him show his love. She had been learning to love him, slowly and secretly, as women will. So it had seemed.

Then Steve had turned up unexpectedly, home from his voyage around the world with a good report and an engaging personality, and the old, desperate battle for a woman had begun. But it had not lasted long. Hope Thatcher was not the girl to doubt her own heart, or throw away her life in sentimentality and unavailing sacrifices. She was too brave and true for that—and thus the more desirable. She had let Eben love her, to see what would come of it; but when the other had appeared and brought the old affection with a new meaning, she had chosen him unhesitatingly, and had told Eben exactly how it was.

So Steve had won, and they were to be married next voyage. To Eben Chandler, still fighting over the lost battle on his quarter-deck, it did not seem possible. How was life to be endured, without the happiness that he had only begun to know?

Day after day, and night after night, the loss pursued him, tormented him. There seemed to be nothing left to live for, no use in trying. He was beginning to neglect the ship; had not thought of the danger of collision even, until Williams had reminded him of it. Perhaps he really did not care if the ship were lost to-night, sinking him along with all his hopes.

Time, they said, would heal such wounds. Well, let time pass, then, as quickly as it could; he had need of some ministrations. Unless he found a different outlook, he began to feel that he would soon go mad.

What a strange thing it was, this choice of love! If Steve had not appeared, it might have gone just the other way; or if he had not found Eben so near to winning Hope Thatcher's love, he might not have wanted it himself. As it was, he had not striven very hard for it, had not seemed to lift a finger. It had come to him.

Damn him!—luck always followed Steve Goodall. This voyage, for instance. Steve, in command of the ship *Orion*, had sailed for San Francisco two weeks ahead of the *Resolute*. He must have reached the Horn before this gale, the first of the season, had set in; had rounded it, probably, with all sail set, and now was swinging north in the Pacific while the *Resolute* thrashed her heart out and spoiled her passage in the grip of a black sou'wester. To him that hath shall be given.

Darkness had begun to fall. The mood of revolt had temporarily worn itself out. Captain Chandler stopped at the weather rail, waiting for the mate to come aft. No use to blame Steve—no use to blame any one—an ordinary turn of life. But was it? He could not forget, could not restrain the bitterness in his heart. His mind was weary, adrift. Why had Steve turned up, to spoil life for him?

The mate drew up beside him in the gathering darkness.

"I'm going below for a while, Mr. Williams. She lies nicely now. Call me at once if you sight anything."

## II.

How long he had been sitting on the cabin couch, staring straight ahead at the lee wall, he had no idea. Long enough to go over the whole tale once more, to dwell on the face of his dreams, to realize with heavy heart the appalling emptiness of the life that lay ahead.

Through his mood of bitterness he became dimly aware of confusion on the deck overhead—a faint hail from forward; a loud answering shout from the quarter-deck. Heavy steps along the alley—some one running. A hoarse crying in the waist of the ship. A hand at the door of the after companion—

then a voice drifting down, a frantic summons:

"Captain! Big ship under the lee bow!"

He leaped to his feet, shaking himself like a man emerging from deep water. In a few strides he was up the companion, had reached the lee rail. Leaning forward, he peered intently into the night. The glow of the cabin lamp still blinded his eyes. Holding the rail, he ran forward and leaped to the main deck. Abreast the main rigging, the mate's hand fell on his shoulder.

"About a point on the lee bow, sir. Close aboard! There! See his green?"

Captain Chandler swung himself to the top of the bulwarks, hanging by the main rigging. Then he caught it—a tiny point of green light, lifting high in air as the *Resolute's* lee rail sank to the level of the water. As he watched, the vague outline of the vessel herself, little more than a shadow against the blackness, loomed on the crest of a great wave. He fancied he could make out her tall forefoot, stripped to the keel as the wave passed under. She was hove to on the opposite side—coming toward him almost head-on. If he fell off, he might pass to leeward of her; the *Resolute* carried steerage way, but would respond slowly. No time to lose. If the other ship fell off likewise, collision would be inevitable. If she were going to fall off, the order would already have been given, and nothing could change it. Rules of the road made little difference in such a pass. All depended on what the other fellow was going to do.

At that instant a torch suddenly flared up on the forecastle head of the oncoming vessel. The tall forward spars, the narrow belly of the lower foretopsail, the lurid glare above the overhanging bows, leaped without warning out of the night, and stood poised in the surrounding blackness like a gigantic and terrible apparition.

"My God, she's almost on us!" screamed a thin voice from the main deck.

"Shut up!"

In all the ship, these were the only words spoken.

To Captain Chandler, the lurid scene a couple of ship's lengths away was more than an apparition. He clutched the rigging behind him with a grip of iron. Something seemed to snap in the very center of his being. The man holding aloft the torch on the opposite forecastle head was Steve Good-

all, standing alone at the knightheads of the laboring vessel. No mistake—the attitude, the outline, were characteristic—he knew them too well, even at that distance, in the midst of that inferno. The ship, too—he began to recognize her features. It was Steve Goodall, in the *Orion*, lunging toward him out of the night.

In the brief moment of the flaring of a torch, Eben Chandler had realized that the other had no intention of falling off—knew it intuitively, through the message of the torch, through recognition of the man. Steve was an able sailor, a man of sound judgment; and this was the correct decision for him. Too far athwart the other's hawse to save himself, it was his duty to keep on, passing responsibility for action to the other. And Eben Chandler could clear the *Orion* yet, if he gave the word to put up the *Resolute's* helm. If he did not give that word, now, immediately, the ships would come together, and neither God nor man could stop them.

Well, why not? Finish it up, here and now, the last round of the contest. He was ready. Let them both render their accounts, in a final tragedy of the sea. Let them sink together, success and failure in the same renunciation, and have it over with. Was it this—or was it the instinctive knowledge, not consciously admitted even to himself—that he stood the better chance in a collision, that as the ships lay and as they would come together, the *Resolute* would deal the *Orion* a ramming blow somewhere along the starboard side?

Why was he waiting, this irretrievable moment of destiny? Was he considering the fact that the failure could never be brought home to him, that it would be attributed only to momentary indecision in a crisis where no one could have been certain of his ground? His mind was a mass of fire. Fragments of memory kept bursting through the pattern of his thoughts—vivid snatches of past scenes. He seemed to be spanning vast distances, receiving unimaginable impressions. He trembled as if in the throes of violent transmutation. All that it meant appeared before his eyes like a panorama, all that it might accomplish an awful gamble, a horrible and devouring temptation.

Even the mate, on the main deck at his feet, could never know. The captain lost his grip—usually quick of decision—inexplicable—tight place, though—only an in-

stant—no question of blame. So would run the opinion of the nearest expert, a man confronting the same situation.

A little longer. Yes, it was Steve, beyond the shadow of a doubt. Ruined his life. Always lucky. Married next year. A little longer.

All this passed in a fraction of time, while the vessels advanced half a ship's length toward each other. Then the torch went out. Pitch darkness swallowed ships and men.

"Captain Chandler! Are you there, sir? Only one chance——"

"I think she was falling off, Mr. Williams."

"No, sir! No, sir! We must put the helm up!"

Silence. A little longer—a little longer and——

"Captain Chandler! For God's sake!"

"Put the helm hard up!" The captain had found his voice at last; the roar carried above the noise of the gale. Several men started aft, shouting wildly. "Helm hard up! Helm hard up!" In the lead, the mate stumbled up the steps and dashed along the weather alley. He was crying like a child in the excess of emotion. "Oh, my God, it's too late now! Helm hard up, there! Oh, damn you, hurry!"

With the same instinctive precision which had marked his every movement during the instantaneous crisis, Captain Chandler leaped lightly to the main deck, gained the weather bulwarks, and hurried aft. Abreast the mizzen rigging in the weather alley he paused, wrapped an arm around the sheer pole, and turned forward again—waiting.

Over his shoulder he heard Williams struggling frantically at the wheel, gasping and cursing. A heavy squall had flattened the ship to her lee scuppers. He tried to make out if she were beginning to answer the helm—tried to estimate the remaining margin of safety, but it was impossible to estimate time itself. The moment seemed interminable. He felt as if hours had passed, as if a lifetime of anguish had suddenly descended on him with the weight of eternal retribution.

What had he done? Had he gone mad—or had he really tried to kill his rival? Before his eyes, floating rapidly past in the heart of the night, appeared the face of Hope Thatcher—appeared, looked at him steadily, and was gone. No, no, not that—he wasn't a murderer. Before God, he

hadn't meant—— It wasn't too late! This squall—there would be time——

The *Resolute* began to lift on a long sea. As she rose forward, her bowsprit seemed to be ripping out the pillars of the sky. Directly under her bows, but a little to windward now, a second torch flared. It disclosed a great ship prostrate before them, her waist presented to receive the blow that was coming. Under the impact of the squall, the *Resolute* had fallen off nearly enough to swing clear. Her bowsprit was stripping the other's mainmast. Yards were falling like trees in a forest, gear was snapping like a volley of musketry. A wild crying, like the voice of a distant mob, streamed through the gale. Suddenly the bowsprit itself carried away, leaping in air like a live thing, and taking with it the fore-topgallantmast.

Then the *Resolute* came down on the sea. A terrific crash rent the storm. The shock that went through the ship seemed to tear her asunder. Top-hamper from all three masts crashed to the deck. The horrible splintering and grinding forward might have been her own bows or the exposed flank against which they had crashed. The two ships swung together, pounding heavily, their yards clashing like rapiers, carrying the battle into the sky.

Captain Chandler ran forward, dodging the falling débris, and swung himself into the weather forerigging. The spell was broken now, the instinct of self-preservation had done its work and lost its power. He looked down into a narrow mill race of boiling water that opened between the two ships as they rolled apart. Again their ponderous sides crashed together. Above his head the topmast went over the lee rail, while almost at the same instant the foreyard fell at his feet across the bulwarks, sparing him miraculously. Directly opposite, in the bulk of the other vessel, yawned a great hole through which the ocean was pouring. Fifty feet of her starboard side seemed to have been bodily crushed in at the water line.

The second torch had gone out; the rest was to be a voice in the night—a voice he knew.

"What ship is that?"

"*Resolute*—Eben Chandler. Is that you, Steve?"

"Yes. Eben, I'm done for!"

Captain Chandler leaned far to windward, funneling his hands. "Try to jump aboard

when they come together. I may be done for, too!"

No answer. Something was happening aboard the other vessel. Confused shouting broke out again. A great wave came, breaking the grip that the ships had on each other. Before Captain Chandler's eyes the *Orion* slowly vanished in the darkness to windward. The shouting along her decks became mingled with the roar of the storm. Suddenly the hail came again, far away, but astonishingly loud and clear, as if a channel had been opened for it through the elements.

"I'm sinking, Eben! Tell her, '*Never mind!*'"

Dropping to the main deck, Captain Chandler crumpled on the waterway in the lee of the bulwarks and covered his face with his hands. He was sobbing violently. A man running aft stumbled against him.

"Captain! What is it? Are you hurt?"

He leaped up savagely, throwing off the mate's arm. "No, I'm all right. Have you been forward, Mr. Williams?"

"Yes, sir. She's badly stove in. The bowsprit's gone at the knightheads."

"Sound the pumps, and let me know what you get."

"Yes, sir. What's the matter, captain? Have you been struck?"

"Nothing has touched me. I am perfectly all right, Mr. Williams. I'll wait here."

The mate hurried aft. Captain Chandler leaned against the bulwarks, burying his head in his arms. He could not go forward, not yet—could not bring himself to look at the damage under the bows. He wanted this moment, a moment more, alone—to think, to realize—

"Tell her, '*Never mind!*'"

Oh, God, could it be possible?

When Mr. Williams returned with his report, he found the captain himself again.

"She seems to be making no water, sir. Must have struck with her overhang, as she came down on that sea. But she's a wreck, both forward and aloft. The other vessel— Gone."

### III.

Once in the southeast trades, they began to make up the time lost off the Horn through storm and collision. The gale had blown itself out the day after the tragedy; a spell of unusually favorable weather had

set in. The *Resolute* was badly crippled aloft, but incredible as it seemed, her hull was sound. In two weeks they had set up a jury rig. Then came a slant of easterly weather that carried them around the cape and well across the zone of variables.

For some time the officers noticed nothing strange in Captain Chandler. The work of rigging up the vessel in an open seaway occupied all their attention. The captain himself was a fiend of energy, driving the crew day and night, planning, contriving. Had they known what lay behind his ceaseless activity, they would have been alarmed. In spite of the constant demand on his craftsmanship, the labor was largely automatic; his real thoughts were engaged in other business. They roamed far, adrift in the universe, restlessly going over and over a record that had closed. Alone on the quarter-deck at night, lost in the hollow arch of the wind and stars, in the immensity of the elements, he gave himself up to the awful consciousness that his heart held. At times he would cry out suddenly, or halt at the rail in an attitude of tense attention. The man at the wheel often had a weird tale to tell in the forecabin, but it took some weeks for the rumor to find its way aft.

They had reached the trades, the work had let up, leisure had returned along with tropical skies and quiet days. With leisure, the terrible burden had increased on his soul. He faced the truth, for he was not a criminal. It had been for only a moment, but he had deliberately waited—and that moment had carried death on its wings, death to a whole ship's company! He had known exactly what he was doing; he saw it clearly now. Perhaps a different nature had temporarily mastered him, but that was no excuse. He had waited, when he knew better, when waiting would not do. He had committed murder. And no one knew.

He began to keep to the cabin more and more, especially in the late afternoon and evening when the mates were apt to be aft. Hour after hour he sat motionless in the big armchair beside the chart table, refusing to go out to supper, apparently failing to notice the steward when he came in on tiptoe to light the lamp. A profound change was gradually taking place within him, a remarkable enlightenment. Many things that heretofore had seemed obscure and meaningless were now growing very plain.

Sometimes, in those long, silent evenings, Steve Goodall came in to talk the matter over. He would sit down on the sofa, laughing in his old jaunty way, apparently much amused at the situation.

"Why did you do it, Eben? Did you really think that you could get me out of your road?"

"God knows, Steve. I guess I didn't think at all. I loved her too much, to stop to think. Can't you understand?"

"Loved her, or loved yourself? Maybe you're not to blame. But you see, don't you, that you can't have her now?"

"I see more than that, Steve. This rests with me alone. I must be my own judge in the matter."

"And your own executioner?"

"I haven't fully decided yet. Haven't determined what the right thing is to do."

Sometimes, too, Hope Thatcher would come in for a moment, bringing with her a fresh odor that seemed to sweep through the cabin like a faint breath of land breeze. She would not sit down—would only stand for a moment, looking at him and always speaking the same words.

"I loved him, Eben. I told you that I loved him. I chose freely. Did you expect to change my choice?"

These were the times when the helmsman would be startled to see the captain rush out of the after companion like a man pursued by ungovernable terror, flinging himself into the open air of the deck with spent breath and staring eyes.

The rumor had come aft now. Mr. Williams tried to scoff it down, but his own mind was troubled. In his night watch on deck, he could not help hearing disquieting sounds through the cabin windows. Once or twice, without being observed by the crew, he had crept to the skylight to see what was going on below; but all that he could make out was the captain sitting in the big chair, talking to himself, now and then making a slight gesture, as if some one else were with him in the room. He began to fear that the terrible experience off the Horn had broken the captain's nerve.

There was this question of eyesight, too. Or was it eyesight? More than once lately, on deck with him at night, the captain had plucked his sleeve and drawn him to the lee rail.

"Mr. Williams, isn't that a vessel on the lee bow?"

"Where, sir? I don't see anything."

"There, there! Close under the lee bow? Don't you see her?"

"No, sir—there's nothing there."

"Nothing there?" Whenever this had happened, Captain Chandler would lean across the rail, gazing wildly off into the night; then, with a muttered exclamation, would turn and go below.

One night, in his watch below, the mate was wakened by a violent commotion on deck. Men were running about, yards were swinging, quick orders were being given. He rushed on deck to find the ship in stays, with everything flat aback. At first he thought she must have been caught by a sudden shift of wind.

"What's up?" he demanded of the second mate.

"God knows, Mr. Williams! The captain came on deck, and I went forward. I saw him run to leeward. Next thing I knew, he had her flat aback."

Williams hurried aft. Instinctively, he knew that he would find Captain Chandler in the lee alley.

"What is it, captain?"

"My God, Mr. Williams, we were almost on top of a big ship! I caught sight of her close under the lee bow, standing toward us. What's the matter with our lookout, anyway?"

"Have you seen her since you came into the wind, captain?"

"No. She must have gone about and stood away on the opposite tack. See if you can pick up anything with these night glasses."

The mate took the glasses with a heavy heart. He knew well enough that there was nothing to be seen. Then he went forward to straighten out the ship on her course again. When he came aft, the captain had gone below.

#### IV.

One morning a couple of months later, the *Resolute* stood in from sea toward the Golden Gate. Picking up a pilot inside the Farallons, she closed with the land rapidly, heeling to a steady breeze that seemed to sweep directly off the heights of Mt. Tamalpais.

After a few vain attempts to engage the captain in conversation, the pilot drifted forward, joining the mate on the forecaskle head, where they were busy with the anchor.

Fort Point was coming up under the lee bow; he wanted to keep a close watch of the vessel. With the tide at ebb, the reef on the point ran out a considerable distance; they might not be able to make it on this tack.

"What's the matter with your old man, Mr. Mate? He'll hardly open his mouth."

"That experience off the Horn that I was telling you about, was pretty harrowing. It seemed to hit him hard. I think he's been brooding on it ever since."

"You don't say so? Nothing worse, I hope?"

"Oh, no. But it was a dreadful accident—enough to break any man's nerve."

Mr. Williams let his eyes rest on the approaching land with a look of heartfelt relief. He himself was worn out with anxiety and loss of sleep; for the past two months he had kept the captain constantly under surveillance. The necessity for doing this without arousing the other's suspicions had made it doubly difficult. At no time had Captain Chandler's condition warranted removing him from command. He was still in charge of the vessel, to all intents and purposes. The worried mate thanked Providence that, with the pilot aboard and the ship already entering the Golden Gate, the voyage was at last safely over.

She swept forward at an eight-knot clip as the sea smoothed under the lee of the land. The fresh breeze, flurrying down from the heights above the harbor entrance, shifted to northward for a period of five minutes, long enough to luff her past Fort Point with a safe margin. The harbor of San Francisco, with many ships lying at anchor, began to open up. Almost immediately, however, the wind jumped into the west, heading her off against the strip of shore between Fort Point and Telegraph Hill.

"Now we'll see some quick work!" exclaimed the pilot, as he watched the ship's head fall off point by point. "Does she handle cleverly?"

"She never missed stays in her life," answered the mate.

"Then I'll let her sag in as far as I dare. That spindle stands on Anita Rock, but there's a reef lying well outside. It's good to have a real ship under you: the last vessel I brought in was nothing but a cow."

While this went on forward, Captain Chandler, who had been pacing the quarter-

deck in moody silence, taking scant notice of the ship's progress or the approach of land, stopped suddenly at the port rail and gazed along the empty reach to windward with an expression of fixed attention. For a sailor, the action was unaccountable; all the interest lay just then on the starboard side, where the shore line was rapidly coming up under the lee bow. But no one noticed him.

On the forecandle head a tense silence had fallen.

"How far does that reef run out?" asked Mr. Williams anxiously.

"Quite a way. It's deep water almost to the margin of the rocks. I'm afraid we can't squeeze by. But we can hang on a little longer."

A little longer. All unknown, they were approaching another moment of destiny.

At last the pilot whirled. "About ship!" he shouted, passing the signal to the captain with a wave of his arm. He and the mate started aft together.

Crossing the main deck, they began to realize that no order to bring the ship about had issued from the captain. She held her course unchecked, racing toward the danger that could not be approached any closer. As the realization struck them, they broke into a run, shouting frantically.

"About ship! About ship! Put the helm hard down!"

Captain Chandler stood in the port alley, still gazing intently on the weather bow. His eyes were wild; he seemed like a man in a panic of fear and irresolution.

"In a minute! We aren't clear yet, Mr. Williams."

"Aren't clear? We'll be piled up in a minute! Put the helm hard down, there!"

"No! My God, Mr. Williams, we can't luff into the waist of that big ship! *We aren't clear yet!*"

"What ship?" cried the pilot, staring to windward in amazement.

"There, on the bow! I've been watching her a long time."

Mr. Williams did not stop to look. He tried to get past Captain Chandler and reach the wheel. The helmsman, puzzled by the confusion of authority, had completely lost his head. For an instant the mate and the captain struggled in the narrow space.

"Captain, let me go! You'll lose the ship! Put the helm down, there!"

"No, no! Stop, Mr. Williams! Not yet! *I won't do it a second time!*"

While they struggled, the pilot scrambled to the top of the house, ran aft, and seized the wheel. He whirled the spokes madly. The ship came into the wind with a rush that seemed almost like a conscious effort to escape her doom. But it was too late. With a grinding shock, she took the outer ledge—crashed ahead, staggering and pounding, while again gear rattled from aloft, and spars went over the side. When she settled to rest on the point of the reef, her whole bottom had been knocked out.

### V.

Two weeks later, another ship stood in from sea toward the Golden Gate. She seemed to carry an unusually large crew; men were scattered everywhere along her bulwarks, half a dozen officers were on her quarter-deck.

"Well, Captain Goodall, here you are. That land must look good to you. If ever a man escaped from the jaws of death——"

"I feel almost as if I hadn't any right to

be here, captain," answered Steve Goodall. "Will any one believe that a boat could live in such a sea?"

The pilot, who had just come aboard, was listening to the conversation. "Did I understand you to say, sir, that you were run down by the ship *Resolute* off the Horn?"

"Yes. Why do you ask in that way?"

"There she is." He pointed toward the south side of the entrance, where the tall spars of a wreck, leaning sharply offshore, had begun to open up behind Fort Point.

"What do you mean?" cried Captain Goodall, staring incredulously. "Is that the *Resolute*?"

"Yes, sir. She went ashore two weeks ago—a total loss. The captain piled her up, in perfect weather, as they were coming in. He'd gone crazy, it seems, but no one knew of it. Thought there was another ship on top of him, and didn't come about in time."

"Poor Eben!" exclaimed Captain Goodall. "I hope it wasn't—— What happened to him, pilot?"

"A hopeless case, sir. They had to take him away."

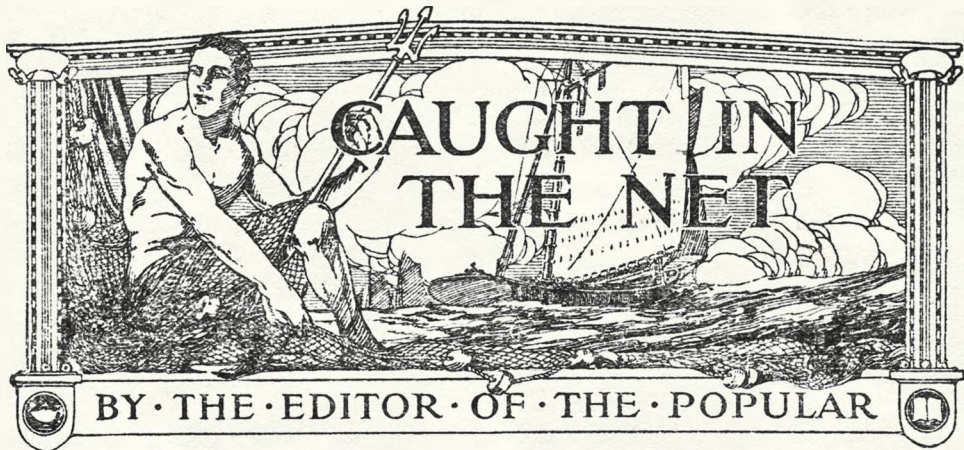


## WHY WE PUNISH

**Y**OU will take a different attitude toward your criticism of others when you realize the double motive behind the impulse to criticize. We are in the habit of saying: "We criticize and punish objectionable conduct in others so as to deter them from repeating such offenses." That is true, so far as it goes; but there is another object served in all punishment.

We are fundamentally all alike. We differ only in the degree to which the elemental emotions and mental mechanisms in each of us have been developed. The offender does wrong because he has failed to develop his strength of will as much as those who keep to the right path. But all of us, no matter how strong we are, feel instinctively that we might go astray if too sorely tempted. And, to keep ourselves within bounds, we build up a defense of horror; we unconsciously train ourselves and are trained by others to despise the wrong action. We do that to save ourselves, for, naturally, if we feel a tremendous repugnance to certain conduct, we are less liable to indulge in it.

Therefore, when we criticize or punish others, we discipline not only those who have offended, but we also discipline that part of ourselves which has a tendency to commit that offense. In effect, we reason: "By punishing him, I am teaching the rebellious phase of myself that it will suffer and make me suffer if it asserts itself too strongly." Outrageous cruelty in punishing or criticizing is the result of an overwhelming consciousness on the punisher's part of the impulse to do evil.



## OUR FRIENDS TO THE SOUTH

**E**ACH passing year sees an improvement in our relations with the nations of Latin America. Unfortunately, the attitude of the Mexican government makes it necessary for us to maintain toward our neighbor across the narrow Rio Grande the attitude characterized by ex-President Wilson as "watchful waiting," but there is hope that before long Mexico will fall in line with the other republics of Central and South America and realize that the United States wants to be numbered among her real friends. With the other Latin-American countries our intercourse steadily is becoming closer and more pleasant. The American of the South is losing his dread of the dark designs of the American of the North, and those of our citizens who come into close contact with the people of our sister republics are beginning to understand them better and to like them more.

Expressions of this spirit of friendship between English-speaking America and Spanish-speaking America are becoming frequent. At the unveiling last spring of the monument to Simon Bolivar, in New York, at which President Harding was a speaker, there was a deal of mutual good feeling displayed. With the nations of Latin America and the West Indies we have much in common. American doctors have accomplished miracles of preventative medicine for some of our neighbors. With Cuba we have a traditional friendship that dates back to the days of her long struggle for independence. Some of the Latin-American states were our allies in the World War. Sport, too, is beginning to have its usual effect of promoting mutual understanding and respect. This year the Cuban army sent a polo team to the United States to play against our army officers, and there is talk of a Pan-American military polo league. The galloping game is popular in Argentina, a country that promises to become a prominent contender in several branches of international sport.

The strength of international friendships cannot be measured by the volume of trade; yet peoples that have important commercial interests in common are likely to become well acquainted. So, considered from the viewpoint of cementing our friendship with other American countries, as well as from the more selfish angle of dollars and cents, the news that last year our trade with Latin America increased tremendously is more than welcome. In 1919 our exports to Latin-American countries—including the West Indian islands—amounted to \$987,589,685; last year they totaled \$1,568,227,284—a gain of 58 per cent. Imports from Latin-American countries last year amounted to \$1,809,961,283, as compared with \$1,345,134,293 in 1919, an increase of 34 per cent. Thirty-six per cent of this trade was with Cuba. Argentina was second on the list. For the first time in our commercial history our Latin-American trade amounted to 25 per cent of our total foreign trade.

The years of effort on the part of the Pan-American Union are bearing good fruit; the people of the Latin-American countries are beginning to realize that we want to work



with them for the good of all America; that we want to do business with them to our mutual profit; that we want to meet them on the fields of sport with as much good feeling as marks our contests with our cousins across the Atlantic—and that we *don't* want to quarrel with them or make them the victims of any North-American imperialism.

## INDUSTRIES READJUSTING THEMSELVES

**R**EPORTS for some time from different industrial centers in the United States indicate that the unsettled conditions in labor are being slowly readjusted in some industries. Unusually high wages still prevail in many branches of industry, but the number of unemployed is now beginning to show its effects in the acceptance of wage reductions by labor unions in various trades.

One of the latest organizations to accept a reduction in wages is the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, one of the largest unions in the clothing trades, whose principal headquarters are in New York City. The organization, after a general strike lasting twenty-four weeks, has agreed to a reduction in wages of fifteen per cent. At a conference held very recently between committees of the union and the Clothing Manufacturers' Association an agreement was reached by which the strike was ended. The principal clauses in the agreement are that the union shop will prevail and that a general reduction of fifteen per cent in wages, except in the case of the cutters, goes into effect. Future labor disputes are to be settled by a joint board of arbitration. An agreement has yet to be reached with a group of employers who refuse to treat with the union and insist on the open shop.

About the time this agreement was reached a local union of plumbers in Elizabeth, New Jersey, accepted a reduction in wages of a dollar a day for its members, the new scale calling for eight dollars a day of eight hours. The plumbing trade is one of the most strongly organized in the building industry and the plumbers' unions have been always among the first in the field in forcing up wages.

In some other organized trades strikes have been settled or averted by the workers accepting reductions in wages. One contributing factor in the settlement of labor disputes in these trades was in most cases the falling off in the demand for workers, though unions in the past, all the same, have protected workers.

That wages are regulated by competition for work was shown in past years when there was a low demand for workers. Individuals a number of years ago, in one city, in a trade in which there was a larger supply of workers than in most of the other building trades, during an unusually acute business depression, were allowed to work temporarily at less than union wages, when it was a question of working or starving, without being disciplined by the union in their trade.

In clerical work there has been for many years an oversupply of workers, resulting in these workers being paid lower wages as a rule than those working in the building and other manual trades. Of late years the remuneration for clerical work has been growing higher, the principal factor in bringing about this change being a lessening in the oversupply of labor in this work.

## JAIL AS A HOME

**F**ROM time to time criminals who escape from jail and are caught and brought back and other criminals who have served many prison terms and are sentenced to imprisonment for some new crime, profess to look on jail as a home. Their jailers are skeptical, however, and watch these jailbirds as closely as they do those who openly express their dislike for imprisonment.

Recently, at Frankfort, Kentucky, two Louisville bandits and a man convicted for a murder, escaped from jail. They had four days of freedom before they were caught and brought back to prison. They were welcomed there by the prison band, which played "Home Sweet Home," and one hundred prisoners headed by an "official reception committee." One of the three prisoners who tried to escape then said: "We are glad to be home again."

About the same time a man, eighty-seven years of age, who had been a pickpocket

most of his life and had served many prison terms, was caught in New York, while he was exercising his chosen profession in a crowd of people, by detectives who were watching him."

"We saw you," one of the detectives said, when he was arrested.

"Well, you needn't shout and attract a crowd," the pickpocket said, as if his self-respect were jarred. He said afterward that he felt at home in some jails.

Few jail wardens or other prison officials believe in statements of prisoners, who have served many jail sentences, to the effect that they feel at home in jail. If an escape from jail is planned among a number of prisoners the leading spirit is generally a man who appears to feel at home there. Prison officials in different cities report that while prisoners serving long sentences appear to become reconciled to their surroundings, they are all the time on the alert for an opportunity to escape.

"A man who has served many jail terms," a prison official in a large city told us, "is a criminal because he will not observe the law's restrictions. Of course, such a man will be more at home, apparently, in jail than a prisoner who is serving his first term. He knows all the tricks of the game, however, by experience, when an escape is planned, and a man who would not be bound by the restrictions of the law and of ordinary life, likes still less the restrictions of jail. That is only human nature."

## GRAPHOMANIA

THIS seems to be a scientific age, in which everything must be given its exact label and definition, whether complimentary or otherwise. We thought that we had become used to it. But when the urge for scientific classification of human activities extends into a field with which we are so closely identified as we are with the craft of writing we sit up and take notice anew. "The graphomaniac," announces the French *savant* Bergson, "is a man who is a prey to the irresistible need of writing. It is an impulse, obsession, passion." The thought that we have been spending our lives encouraging people in the incurring of this dread "disease" of graphomania gives us a feeling of having been breaking the law or something.

"In the literary form of this disease," continues Monsieur Bergson, "the subject copies and reproduces every thought which comes to him. Probably the subject once produced original work, but when he gets this disease he cannot produce original work any more."

We are no scientist, and doubtless Monsieur Bergson knows what he is talking about. We have known cases, however, where this latter description of the situation would be putting the cart before the horse. More than once we have seen it to be the fact that it was rather the inability to produce original work which led to the copying—even to the extent of attempting to pilfer the thoughts of authors thoroughly well known. Be all which as it may, we are happy to say that further conclusions reached by the French sage are less disturbing to our peace of mind, amounting to nothing more than the giving of a new name to old news. "The affliction," he says, "may take the form of the desire to write one's name everywhere—on books, trees, walls, et cetera. There is also epistolary graphomania—an irresistible passion to indite letters—even unto writing to oneself." We seem to remember an old rhyme, somewhat antedating Monsieur Bergson, to the effect that "Fools' names and fools' faces are always seen in public places." And surely those sturdy pen wielders of the daily editorial pages, "Pro Bono Publico" and good old "Civitas" are no new phenomena.

Looking at our book-publishing statistics, Monsieur Bergson might be led to consider "graphomania" somewhat on the decrease among us. We note from the latest available figures that in 1919, in the United States, 7,625 new books were brought out, to which should be added 969 new editions of books already published—making a total of 8,594. In 1918 we published new books to the number of 8,085, plus 1,152 new editions—a total of 9,237. These figures include pamphlets. Of the 1919 graphomaniac book flood 7,179 of the publications were attributable to American writers, and 1,415 to foreign authors. For the 1918 output the number of Americans to blame was 7,686, the number of foreigners, 1,551.

As for the magazine output the only statistics at present available seem, from Mon-

sieur Bergson's point of view, less encouraging. We can only give a comparison between 1904 and 1914. The total yearly circulation of weeklies, for 1904, was put at 1,800,000,000; for 1914 at 2,600,000,000. For monthlies the figures given are 770,000,000 in 1904, 950,000,000 in 1914. Even the weighty, dignified quarterlies increased their annual circulation from 46,000,000 to 75,000,000 in the period in question. The increase in yearly circulation for all other classes of periodicals was from 63,000,000 to 190,000,000.

In respect to newspapers—for which no later comprehensive figures are available than for 1919—the circulation in the United States for morning papers, per day, was close to 8,000,000 in 1904 and in 1919 was 12,763,000. Corresponding figures for evening papers for the two dates are: For 1904 a daily circulation of 19,500,000; for 1919, 21,600,000. Circulation for Sunday papers for the same dates was respectively 16,479,943 and 17,233,000. In 1904 there were 2,452 morning and evening daily papers in the country, and in 1919 there were 2,562. As far as papers and periodicals go we would seem to have to admit ourselves a nation of pretty confirmed graphomaniac tendencies and let it go at that. It is only in the matter of book production that we seem to be evincing any self-control at all.



## POPULAR TOPICS

**F**OR the eleven months ending with May last, our foreign trade decreased by more than a billion dollars from the total for the corresponding period ending with May, 1920. Imports for the 1921 period were \$3,471,876,268, as compared with \$4,685,746,580 for 1920; and exports were \$6,179,603,978, as against \$7,479,611,906 for the 1920 period.



**T**HERE are only 9,311 bison in the world, according to a recent census taken by the American Bison Society. In the United States there are 3,427 captive and 100 wild bison; in Canada, 4,916 captive and about 800 wild. The remainder of the bison are in captivity in various parts of the world. During 1920 a total of 1,700 calves were born. Compare this tragic remnant with the herds that used to roam the Western prairies—and the next time a game conservation question comes up in Congress let your representative there know that you are interested in saving other species of American wild life.



**T**HAT each of us is \$1.99 poorer than we were a year ago, is the cheering news handed out by the treasury department. Or, at least, on June 1st last per capita circulation was \$55.43, as compared with \$57.42 on June 1, 1920. The total of money in circulation dropped from \$6,102,162,244 to \$5,983,258,293—and the population increased!



**T**WENTY-SIX tablets to the memory of distinguished Americans were unveiled recently in New York University's Hall of Fame. This brings the total number of tablets unveiled to sixty-three. There are in the Hall of Fame panels for one hundred and fifty tablets, which are to be filled by additions each five years until the year two thousand. Among the men and women honored this year were Mark Twain, Edgar Allan Poe, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Patrick Henry, Alexander Hamilton, Francis Parkman, and Daniel Boone.



**L**AST year American manufacturers produced 537,954,750 pounds of explosives, an increase of 120,320,280 pounds, or 29 per cent, over the production for 1919. Black blasting powder produced totaled 254,879,825 pounds, 41 per cent more than in 1919; high explosives, 229,112,084 pounds; other explosives, 53,962,841 pounds. The large increase in black powder production is attributed to the heavy demand for this explosive for use in coal mining.

**T**HE 1921 apple crop, it is estimated by the bureau of crop statistics, will total 108,000,000 bushels, as compared with 240,000,000 bushels last year, and a five-year average of 103,000,000 bushels. Washington, with an estimated crop of 5,511,000 bushels, and New York, with an estimated crop of 3,427,000 bushels, are far ahead of the other apple-producing States. This year's peach crop is estimated at 31,700,000 bushels, as compared with 43,700,000 bushels last year. California, with 13,166,000 bushels, tops the list of States. Georgia is second with a crop estimated at 4,650,000 bushels.



**G**ERMANY is running into debt at a rate of a billion dollars a year. Losses of a million dollars a day incident to the government's operation of posts, railroads, and telegraphs, and widespread tax dodging, is blamed for this failure to make ends meet.



**T**HE bureau of biological survey estimates that from five to six thousand silver-black foxes are being bred in captivity in the United States. Figures so far received by the bureau show that there are 215 fox ranches in various Northern States, having 4,849 foxes, and a value in animals and equipment of \$4,279,830.



**S**ECRETARY OF WAR WEEKS has recommended that the government purchase the Cape Cod Canal for \$11,500,000. The canal now is operated by the government, having been taken over by the railroad administration in July, 1918, and transferred to the war department early last year. The canal will be self-supporting, and in time of war would be of great military value.



**D**URING the last five years 160,318 forest fires, sweeping over 56,488,307 acres of land in 45 of our States, have caused damage estimated at \$85,715,747. Minnesota was the heaviest sufferer, with a loss of \$30,895,868. Sparks from railroad engines caused the greatest number of forest fires due to human agencies.



**T**HE American Red Cross spent \$780,000 last year in giving relief to victims of fifty-seven major disasters in the United States, which caused the loss of 425 lives, 2,700 injuries, and property loss estimated at \$11,250,000. Among the fifty-seven disasters were twenty-two fires, three explosions, six floods, eleven tornadoes and cyclones, two cloud-bursts, five shipwrecks, and two typhoid epidemics. Aid was given 159 communities, and about 3,750 families—at least 19,000 persons—were affected. Another half million dollars was expended under Red Cross supervision in helping the victims of the 1919 Corpus Christi, Texas, flood.



**T**HE Hawaiian sugar crop for the season of 1920-1921 is estimated at 667,000 tons, an increase of 13,000 tons over the crop of 1919-1920. It is said that strikes cost sugar planters \$20,000,000 in 1920.



**M**ANY of us are fond of saying that the winters aren't so cold, or the summers so hot, as they used to be. It isn't so—and the weather bureau is ready to prove it. Data extending back to the Revolutionary War, on file at New Haven, Connecticut, shows that in the last one hundred and forty years there has been no noticeable change in our temperature. The coldest decade on record, the ten years ending in 1820, had a mean temperature of 47.5 degrees Fahrenheit, and the warmest, the decade ending in 1920, a mean temperature of 50.5 degrees. But the decade ending in 1790 averaged 49.6 degrees, and the one ending in 1910, 49.7 degrees. For the seventy years ending in 1850 the average was 49.1 degrees, and for the seventy years ending in 1920, 49.5 degrees.

# The End of the Road

By H. de Vere Stacpoole

*Author of "Kadjaman," "It Is Paris!" Etc.*

A jest and a tragedy in Perugia

**I**N the year 1913 I was on a walking tour in Italy. If you want to see a country you must walk through it. Speed blinds, and every one traveling over four miles an hour wears goggles.

I had no special destination. Rome lay behind me and before me autumn and the Apennines; no luggage except a knapsack, no worries, no letters to follow me.

If you want to see a country you must not only walk through it, but walk through it alone. Then it talks to you without interruption. You must have no worries to join in the conversation, no present but that which lies around.

So, day after day, with no companions but the vineyards and olive groves, the hills and the blue sky and the berry-brown country folk, Italy became a reality for me; and the fact is that Italy, despite the railways and the doings of Marconi, is still the Italy that the Borgias knew—the same passions, the same blue skies, the same people; though maybe outwardly altered a bit. It has the same fleas, also, I should imagine, to judge from my experience of the taverns where I put up at nights.

One evening before sundown a turn of the road brought me to an inn, a solitary building, standing on the right-hand side of the way, with not another house in sight, and placed there as though in defiance of custom.

Buildings have for me almost as much personality as people. There are houses that repel, houses that attract and houses that leave me absolutely indifferent. This old inn standing there in its naked loneliness seized my imagination at once. Repelled me, yet attracted me. Over the door, in vague blue letters almost burned out by the sun, appeared the words *Osteria del Sole*; on a long bench to right of the door an old man was seated enjoying the afternoon warmth, and by his side was a black cat.

I asked for the landlord and he told me

that he was the landlord, giving his full name as one gives a visiting card—Alfredo Paoli. With a half flask of Chianti to help the conversation we sat and talked in the warmth of that delightful sunset. We talked of Italy and the grape harvest and the taxes, and a reference to Garibaldi brought out the old fellow's age. He was eighty-five. Then, when I discovered that the town for which I was making lay more than six English miles away, he proposed that I should stay at his inn for the night. "You are welcome," said he, "and the place is clean as you will see for yourself. This is not an ordinary inn, and we who live here do not set ourselves out to entertain travelers except those who stop for a glass of wine, but your conversation pleases me, and I like you for yourself."

Now that invitation in that lonely place to a traveler on foot and with money in his pocket might have savored of robbery and murder to a suspicious mind. But I am not suspicious by nature, and old Paoli was plainly and evidently a person who wanted to rob and murder no one.

All the same he robbed me of a night's sleep and murdered my rest.

I agreed to his suggestion. He rapped on the bench with an empty glass and called out "Giovanna!" A woman's voice replied from the house, and in a moment Giovanna appeared at the doorway in the last rays of the sunset, a woman bent with age and incredibly wrinkled.

He ordered supper, and "the room" to be prepared for a guest, and then, Giovanna vanishing, relapsed into conversation about Garibaldi.

## II.

Later that evening as we sat on the bench before the door, he told me his story, or rather the story of his youth. He spoke with the detachment of a man telling another man's story, as though age had made him

indifferent to all personal things, and yet with the vividness of an artist in words stirred by an interested audience and warmed by wine.

"I was born in Perugia," he said. "A different city from the Perugia of to-day. My father was an antique dealer—his shop situated at the top of that steep street leading from the Piazza del Papa to a Piazzetta from where you can get a good view of the Umbrian Hills.

"His shop, at the top of this street, was in a bad position for business you will say. But my father was not a man to spread his net in a bad position; he reckoned to get as customers all the visitors—and they were many—who climbed the street to see the view. His family consisted of only two sons, myself and Arturo. We were twins, alike both in faces and dispositions; but Arturo was the more adventurous spirit and, having a passion for the sea, he became a sailor, while I, the eldest by some fifteen minutes, fell into the antique business as assistant to my father.

"That business requires a great deal of knowledge both of men and things, for who knows anything of tapestry who knows nothing of St. Florent of Saumur—or of bronzes who knows nothing of Gallien? But all knowledge is useless without the flair. This my father had and this in some measure I possessed. Things cried out to him their worth, and the most skillful forgery could have made itself known to him in the dark. Now why was this so? Very simply, because he had descended from generations of men who had dealt with art, both as artists and dealers. Old Italy lived in him, as in me. Old Italy with its passions and, alas! its power of hatred. So things went on till I had reached my twenty-second year.

"Then one day my life changed. One day in the Via dei Bontempi I met a girl.

"Now I had met this girl many times before. She was, indeed, distantly related to my family, and lived in a street close to where is now the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele. Her name was Giovanna Batista. She was of Genoese extraction, blonde, like so many of the Genoese women, and very beautiful. Hers was the beauty of a spring morning—the beauty of youth.

"Yet, though I knew her, it seemed to me that till that day I had never met her before. Though I had recognized her beauty it had never given me more than a passing

thought. But to-day she looked at me differently. She had, in fact, suddenly chosen me. Just one glance of her eyes and her beauty fell on me like an avalanche, and I was hers. A moment before if I had heard of her death it would have left me almost unmoved.

"But I said nothing that day to her. I was like a man who has suddenly found a treasure in the street and who hides it under his cloak and hurries home with it.

"Next day I met her again, and again her eyes told me what I dared scarcely believe. I was new to the business. I did not know what to do. Alone with her in some country place I could no doubt have brought things to a conclusion very quickly, and almost without speaking, but, as I was, there in Perugia, there was nothing for me left but to call at the house where she lived or tell her of my love for her in the street—in cold blood! Anything seemed easier than that, and so I let things drift. And then she left Perugia.

"She had only gone away for a holiday of a month, but her leaving nearly killed me, and increased my love for her tenfold, if that were possible. Every place where I had seen her became for me a place of torture, and, at night, under a moon, full as it is now, I would stand on the opposite side of the way before her house, torn between sorrow, hope and passion. Surely love is a madness!"

He ceased for a moment to drink, and as he raised his glass in the light of the great broad moon, the old woman's croaking voice came from some room in the interior of the inn.

"Alfredo, the hour is late."

He laughed, called out to her to be still and leave him to his own affairs, and went on:

"Love had so completely taken me and eaten me that I was not more than the shell of a man. I had no head for business, nor eyes for art. I quarreled with my father, who could not make out what was wrong with me, and I lost five hundred lire over a deal on a spurious bronze that was palmed off on me by a trader from Florence.

"If things had gone on like this, I would have left Perugia and my home and business. But one day I recovered. Giovanna returned to Perugia and seemed to set all the bells ringing and the whole town *en fête*. I had news of her return through my relations. I met her in the street and I no longer delayed. I told her of my love for

her, and she listened with head half turned away, then she turned to me and looked me in the eyes and smiled. She was mine.

"After that I was a new man. My prospects were good, and there was no opposition from Giovanna's parents; we would meet of an evening and stroll outside the town, always in the same direction, toward a grove which was a veritable lover's walk, filled as it was with paths leading nowhere. Here we would sit on a fallen tree trunk we had made our own, not minding if the weather was cold, and talk of the future, of our love for one another, and of the hundred nothings that make up the conversation of lovers.

### III.

"We were to be married in the summer. And meanwhile came Carnival.

"In those old days Carnival was perhaps a more joyous affair even than now. There was more joy in the old world, I think, than in the new. Men forgot their businesses and women their houses and children their toys. King Carnival ruled them all and made them forget even Lent.

"It was the last evening of Carnival, and I was to meet Giovanna at a selected spot near the Duomo. She had chosen a Spanish costume, and as for myself I had chosen a suit of motley and a crimson mask.

"Now mark how things happen in life.

"My father, who had not been very well for some time, remained at home that day. Knowing of his ill health and wishing to be in touch with him without returning home, I had given him the places where I could be found at certain hours. I would be at my friend Manfredi's at noon, I would be in such-and-such a place at two o'clock, and at ten minutes to six I would be at the Fonte Maggiore close to the Duomo to meet Giovanna. You would have said that this last appointment would have found me at the place before the time, and yet I was late.

"The clock at Manfredi's house was slow. There were many robbers about, that year, and I had left my watch at home rather than trust it among the crowd of Carnival, and, as a result, when I finally reached the Fonte Maggiore the bells were striking. I had not heard the quarter chime, and I could scarcely believe my ears at hearing the hour strike nor my eyes when they did not show me Giovanna.

"Then I knew. I had offended her. She

had come and, not finding me, had gone away. If I had thought for a moment, I would have seen the impossibility of a young girl waiting there by the Fonte Maggiore alone, and I could have put the blame entirely upon myself. Instead, anger and bitterness filled my heart.

"I knew for a fact that Giovanna, for all her soft ways and looks, had a temper sharp as steel. I stood there looking about me filled with this thought and the anger of a disappointed man. People were passing, all making for the Corso, all talking, laughing and with an air of festivity and enjoyment that increased my anger and irritation till it seemed to flow against the whole world. I crossed the way and entered a wine shop. Here I took my seat and called for drink, heedless of the other drinkers.

"I did not notice a dark, slim man seated at a table near by. I drank. In those days a very little wine was sufficient for me. I had not a good head for the drink, but this evening it seemed to me that were I to drink a tun, it would not drown my wits; and I was not drinking wine but Lambec. It was a Gambrinus—Lambec laced with cognac.

"Men talk of magicians, but where will you find a magician like to alcohol? In ten minutes I had passed from anger to a sort of despair and from that to recklessness. Then of a sudden I had all but forgotten Giovanna. I was talking to the thin, dark man who had recognized me and who spoke to me by name. He was an art dealer from Pisa. I had seen him at my father's shop, and he had called there that day to do business despite Carnival time, but could not gain admittance owing to my father's illness.

"He had several things to dispose of at a marvelously low price—things most likely the product of some robbery received by him and dangerous to traffic within Pisa. We had often customers like this. It was not our business to inquire into other men's morals or the morality of their transactions, and as long as we did not suspect them to be robbers themselves, we took their goods.

"He had with him, this man Bodini, a cross of pure gold studded with small stones, a pair of earrings, and a dagger of Florentine work with a silver hilt. He offered them and told me the price. I had not that amount of money with me, but that did not matter to Bodini; our business was as good as a bank and our name good for a thousand times the

amount he asked for—which was seventy lire for the cross and earrings and twenty for the dagger. I placed the jewelry in my bosom, and the dagger in its sheath I placed in the single pocket that the costume maker allowed a fool. Then Bodini took his departure and, just as though a cord had snapped, I plunged back into trouble and misery of mind. I left the tavern.

“The lights were now springing alive and the stars breaking out overhead. The noise of the Carnival rose through the evening like the sound of a sea.

“I stood undecided. Should I go to Giovanna’s house on the chance of finding her there? Then still undecided I turned toward the Corso. Perugia seemed mad that evening. The spirit of Carnival had flared up like the flame of a lamp, all sorts of conditions of people went to make up the mob into which I now plunged, but they were all in the same condition of mind—gay to the point of madness. Bullfighters jostled fools and Pierrots soldiers. In the crush I half forgot Giovanna for a moment and, carried along by the stream, I acted the part of Folly though I had forgotten my jester’s bauble.

“Then, of a sudden, the crowd parting slightly before me, I saw Giovanna.

“She was with a man. Their backs were toward me, they could not see me, though I could almost have touched them. He wore the coat of a Pierrot and a false nose tied behind the ears; taking advantage of the crush, his arm was about her waist. They were laughing. The sound of the last trumpet could not have stricken me as that sight did.

“Now, in my dealings with Giovanna, I had always forgotten one thing, and that was the fact that I was not the only man in Perugia. She had chosen me from a score of lovers and that fact had made me forget the score. I remembered them now.

“The dagger in my pocket jumped into my hand. A moment more and it would have been plunged in the back of the Pierrot, but that moment did not come. A horse, loose and garlanded, came racing down the Corso, the crowd swayed and rushed back carrying me with it, and separating me from my revenge.

“Giovanna and her companion were nowhere to be seen. They had been swallowed up by the crowd.

“You can fancy my position—rage in my

heart and a dagger in my hand—jostled by laughing fools—carried hither and thither against my will. But my will was strong, and, though unable to command the movements of the people around, it enabled me to return the dagger to my pocket, to grip the situation with my teeth as you may say, and to regain my calm. I resigned myself to the situation and, though now I could have escaped from the crowd, which had thinned, I let myself drift with the stream.

“Then I had my reward. Close to the Via Piccolo Umberto I saw my quarry. I saw Giovanna and her Pierrot. I came upon them so suddenly that I could have counted the hairs on the back of her neck or untied the tape that held his false nose to his face, yet my hand did not fly to the dagger in my pocket. I was cooler now, I could wait my time, and do my business without running the risk of death by the executioner.

“I followed them along the Via Piccolo Umberto. They never once turned, so interested were they in one another. But, one moment, monsieur—”

He rose and took the empty wine flask and went into the house. I heard him lighting a lamp and poking about, and then I heard his voice asking Giovanna what she had done with the key of the cellar, and Giovanna’s voice replying that it was on its nail by the door.

The old woman seemed angry at being disturbed, and I could hear her grumbling. What an hour to be sitting up talking! Had he no sense—and with his rheumatism drinking with strangers like that? And he was telling her that his rheumatism was his own and that if he chose to feed it no one had any right to interfere. Then he came back with a wicker-covered flask and, taking his seat, continued:

“I followed them along that street and then through another leading in the direction of her home.

“Then they entered the street where she lived, and right before her door they parted. Hiding across the way, I could not believe my eyes. True it was dark, and there were few about, yet it was known in the whole quarter, nay in all Perugia, that she and I were engaged to be married; and here, a few months before our wedding and for a trifling offense on my part, she was saying good night to a stranger, a man who had placed his arm round her waist, a man she had picked up in the Carnival. I saw their



heads pressed together, and I heard the kiss. He had removed his false nose to enable him to kiss her, and now she was tying it on again for him.

"They were laughing, then they parted. She went into her house and he turned down the street walking swiftly, gay, and whistling a tune.

"I let him get thirty paces ahead, and then I slipped after him. In those few moments while hiding in a dark entry and watching the parting of those two, I had tried them in my own mind, judged them, and it was now for me to carry out the sentence of the judge. The man with the false nose had to die, the woman with the false heart had to die. But the man first.

"It was quite easy for me to kill him right there in the street. But were I to do so, I would be captured to a certainty, and then the woman would escape. You see my point, monsieur."

He uncorked the flask as he spoke and poured out the wine with a hand as steady as the hand of a young man, albeit the moonlight, now strong almost as the light of day, showed the metacarpal bones separately and distinctly as though it were the hand of a skeleton.

"You see my point, monsieur. I had to be careful, I had to treasure my life till my revenge was complete, and my revenge could not be complete till Giovanna had paid as well as he.

"Meanwhile I followed. My gentleman had picked up a jester's bauble from somewhere and now as he went he used it, striking here and there on the backs of folk with the bladder, laughing and jesting as he went, unconscious of the jester who was following in his footsteps armed with a dagger.

"He seemed to draw mirth and attention to himself just as a magnet draws iron. Girls, young men, old men, clowns, harlequins, monks, all had a word or a laugh for him or a handful of confetti. No one had a word or a laugh for me, eclipsed by his gaudy and content to follow.

"Then my gentleman, not content with his affair with Giovanna, must seize upon another girl, taking her by the waist and whirling her off into a restaurant by the Corso. Several of her companions followed, but that made no difference to him. He had plenty of money and meant to spend it, and in a moment the Asti Spumante was flowing.

"You can see me outside, with death in

my heart, watching the merry-makers and drinkers. I could not see my man's face for his back was turned toward me, but I could see that he was the life and soul of that party.

"Then it broke up and they all left, departing this way and that, he alone and taking the Via Andria Doria.

"It was there I did the deed. The street was deserted, there was no one to watch; it was so dark between the lamps that as I seized him by the shoulder, I could only see his face as a whiteness, something without form, something to destroy. I was mad. The whole events of the day and evening had come to a point. My love for Giovanna, my jealousy, my hatred—and under all the alcohol working like a serpent. He struggled with me, something stung me in the left shoulder as we fought, it was a knife he had drawn and which he dropped on the pavement as I drove my dagger through his heart.

"He fell and lay at my feet, a white heap. The dagger was still in his body, but I thought nothing of that, my only idea was to hide him.

"Now that was the strangest thing, for my mind was made up to kill Giovanna and then myself. So why should I wish to hide him, why should I trouble to hide him? I do not know. I only know that the mind of man is beyond the comprehension of man, and that in moments of great trial and tragedy it works in ways of its own.

"I dragged the body to the entry of a court and propped it up half sitting in a doorway. There in the half light given by an oil lamp swinging from the wall it looked like a man drunk who had fallen asleep. Then I walked off, marking the court and where it lay, in my mind, and went home to change to my ordinary clothes—for I had now to meet Giovanna—and then die, and I had no mind to die in motley. I was careful not to wake my father.

"Then I went quickly to Giovanna's house, knocked and was admitted. Her family were still out, keeping up the last of the Carnival, but Giovanna was at home, and had not retired yet. After a moment's waiting she came down.

"I was standing in the room into which I had been shown—standing by the table facing the door. She came in and looked at me in surprise.

"'Why have you come back?' she asked. 'And so changed?'"

"I laughed out loud and looked at her and said not a word.

"Then she drew back and I saw that she was frightened. But what a strange thing is expression. It was driven in upon me at once that her fear was not of the consequence of her infidelity to me. I saw at once that her dread was that I had been drinking or had gone wrong in my mind. I had no weapon, only my hands, but they were strong enough. I looked at her.

"I said, 'What was his name?' She answered, 'Whose name?' I laughed. I said again, 'Where did you pick him up?' She answered, 'Who?' This enraged me and I said, 'Who? Why, the man who left you at this door not an hour ago.' She answered, 'I have met no man this evening but yourself.' I saw at once that she spoke the truth, yet I had seen what I had seen with my own eyes. There could be only one meaning to the business, some man must have impersonated me.

"I said so, and she laughed me to scorn. 'You were with me,' said she, 'and you alone, dressed as a Pierrot, with a false nose which you took off when you met me by the Fonte Maggiore.'

"'But God in Heaven!' I cried, 'I did not meet you there. I was late for the appointment and you were gone.'

"I saw that she either believed me a liar or mad. I felt mad indeed, just then. I found myself doubting my own mind. Had all this been a dream?

"I stood without speaking, feeling absurd, my eyes fixed on the floor. Then I thought of the man in the dark entry leaning against the door with the dagger in his heart, and at that recollection, as though a hand had been placed on each of my shoulders turning me, I turned, rushed to the door of the room, and left the house.

"I had entered that house to kill Giovanna, I left it half crazed, balked of my purpose, not knowing what to do.

"Then I found myself at my own door.

"The house was still in darkness, as before. But as I turned the key in the lock and entered, I heard my father's voice calling to know if it was me. He was lying in bed in his own room at the right of the passage, and as I entered I saw him there on his pillows propped up, a shaded lamp beside him and a book on his knees.

"'Ah, it is you,'" said he. 'Where is Arturo?'"

"You will remember that I said I had a twin brother, a sailor, as like to myself as one pea is like another.

"'What do you mean?' I asked. 'Arturo is at sea.' Even as I said the words a fear like the hand of death seized my heart.

"'Arturo returned to-day,' said my father, 'seeking you. I told him he would find you at the Fonte Maggiore at six o'clock where you were due to meet Giovanna.'

"Then I sat down beside the bed and, leaning an elbow on it, I said to my father:

"'I was late in reaching the Fonte Maggiore. Arturo got there before me. Giovanna mistaking him for me spoke to him and he, knowing that she must be my fiancée, and, for a jest, did not deceive her. He was wearing a false nose and spending his money like a sailor. He saw her to her house, still keeping the jest up, and then when he had left her he made for home, reckoning to meet me and have the laugh on me. He did not know that I was following him, thinking him a stranger, with rage devouring me—'

"My father suddenly, as though a bullet had struck him, gave a leap on the bed and cast the book to the floor.

"'What are you saying?' he cried. 'Where is Arturo?'"

"'Dead!' I replied, 'with my dagger in his heart.'

"I said the words as though I were repeating them from some other person's lips. I was quite calm. I could not seize what had happened at all with my real mind.

"Yes—that is the whole affair. They did scarcely anything to me, the pity of it was so great. I told the whole story just as I have told it to you.

"Then I married Giovanna. We went to Pisa to live; that was many years ago. So we have gone through the world never prospering greatly, coming at last to this.

"'Well, at the end of the road what does it matter?'"

We finished the wine and he showed me to my bedroom, and then lying awake and watching the white bars of moonlight on the bare wall of the room and listening to the wind in the olive trees, I could hear Giovanna's grumbling voice—"Well, you have come to bed at last. A nice thing, truly, keeping me awake like this."

# An Injun Maid

By Frederick Niven

*Author of "In the Smoke Drift," "Penny Scot's Treasure," Etc.*

Steve Benson touches on romance

IT was when I was working for an outfit on the Little Missouri I got acquainted with Steve Benson, who one evening tells us his story of an Injun maid.

There was nine riders and, seeing we had begun to put up considerable hay, there was a machine-man regular, and there was a cook and the boss. Some good summers and hard winters I put in up there with Steve and the rest, observing all them things that constitutes God's country: heat haze, dust whirls, them still summer days, and hauling cows out of sloughs; and blizzards, and getting up at two in the morning—"Tumble up, you sons of guns!"—so's to keep track of where they were drifting.

In all these there occupations and enjoyments, and perils what ain't enjoyable except in the recollection, this here Steve takes part like a man. We was a kind of happy family there, for the boss he don't care for men to come and go too much. He says to any prospective assistant: "I don't look upon this ranch as a hand-out place for hobos, nor a passing resort of globe-trotters hitting across America. I like a man to stay a reasonable time, not just to quit when he gets able to tell his own stock without prying and wondering." Consequent men came that meant to stay, if they could hold it down at all reasonable; and most stayed a good spell, and as I say we was a kind of happy family. The machine man didn't fit in very good; but he had been there so long that he was part of the family, although with a tendency to making what they call a *break*. Fred his name was. I disremember his last name—Babbacombe or Hecatombe or Somethingcombe, anyhow.

It was one night when the thin snow was managing somehow to come a-sifting in at a window, a-sieving through some indiscov'able crack and making a tiny indoor snow-fall on the window ledge, and the stove was red-hot, and the riders for the day had come

in, and supper was through, and that there clinging aroma of hash and apricots was bein' dispelled by this here aroma of Bull Durham rolled in wheat papers, that Steve indicated his story to us. I says "indicated" on purpose and intentional, for he was not utter obvious about his story. He leaves something to the imagination of his intelligent hearers, him feeling the story too deep to tell everything.

Getting his story at all came about owing to George Harrop, one of the riders, mentioning how he had met a string of Indians that day, and how they-all had stopped, tails to wind, to sign talk, just a passin' palaver in the drivin' snow. We talked first of all about sign talk, and shows each other signs, each addin' to the other's repertory so to speak! and we-all marvels at this here Babylonian strife of tongues among them aborigines, what makes sign talk a necessary invention.

This here machine man, Fred, he kind of snorts at sign talk and allows it might maybe serve for asking where's wood and water and eats, but not, for example, for expressing opinions and ideas. Him talking about ideas! It was just at that point Steve drifts in to explain that emotion and ideas is sure capable of expression in sign language. He knew more about Injuns than any of us; so he could let us talk through our hats a whole lot and get the ground cleared—same as I'm clearing the ground for this here story of his—before chipping in at all.

Having corrected what you might call this machine man's superior ignorance regarding the impossibility of expressing heart trouble, or brain storm, by sign—instead of only signaling them simple desires, wood, water, and eats—he falls out of the talk and wets his wheat paper meditative where it had coiled loose from the tobacco. I see him yet. It's when the machine man says:

"Me, I don't have any use for natives anywhere," that Steve arouses himself again.

"We-all are natives of somewhere," he murmurs, and again lapses into silence.

It was an interesting powwow with only this here fly in the ointment, so to speak, of Fred's foolish asides. But we evades unpleasantness, being in the mood for a soc'able evening, with the snow flying straight along outside and the stove red-hot inside. If it had only been the little machine man—this here Fred—who had made aspersive remarks about squaw men—which department of Injun talk we sure touches on in the course of our palaver—maybe Steve would never have spoken about his Injun maid. But George Harrop, with more intelligence, he promulgates his idee on that topic.

"Marrying a Injun don't appeal to me," says he at some point in our powwow where the remark fits in. "I've seen some squaw men."

"So have I," says Steve. "Drunk half the time—whisky peddlers—noble white men that make some kind of an alliance with a red squaw to carry them home to a dug-out and bring them round. The best Injuns despises them."

"You can't edicate them," says this here ornery machine man. "It takes generations to turn a savage into a civilized person."

"Yes, I guess!" agrees Harrop.

Steve crushes his cigarette under his heel. "Sometimes it takes only a few years," he announces definite; and then he lets us have it.

Their intellects vary, he tells us—all the same as intellects of white men, and he launches a nod at Fred. Some of them don't get the hang of what you-all calls civilization in a lifetime; some can pick up anything to it and understand it first pop. He sure is fair and unbiased, is this here Steve. He tells us how a full-blood Sioux, what come out of a tepee, ended with a M. D. degree and practices medicine; but he tells us also of an Injun that wanted to be a policeman, and the agent demurs; and so's to impress the agent with his ability, this here Injun comes to him one day and says: "Now you make me policeman. I see a family of Injuns going off the reserve without your leave, and here's the scalps of the whole bunch. Me make heap good policeman."

Steve tells us both sides—about the

ornery savage and the savage that becomes a company president sittin' at a roll-top desk. He tells us how another full-blood Injun—not a back-East, second-generation Injun at all, but a Cree or Ojibwa, born in a wigwam—became a sky scout, with full credentials, and able to quote chapter and verse in Greek and Hebrew. I can't give you it in Steve's words; he spoke fine and dandy himself, with a whole herd of vocabulary when he got whetted up that a way.

We all allows by our silent smoking that we realizes Steve has the floor, and the right to the floor, by reason of knowledge of his subject; and we kind of makes annoyed gestures, scratches our heads, shifts our positions, when little Fred holds up Steve's tendency to talk. But it is this Fred after all who draws him out full length of his rope, to talk from personal experience, clean out o' his heart, by insisting, the way a guy like that does, on a p'int we thinks is passed over.

"All the same," he says, "I can't understand a white man ever marrying one, any more than George Harrop can."

Steve sighs.

"Ten years ago I was teaming from the Platte into Pine Ridge," he says. "And one day, crossing Wounded Knee Creek there, just as I get the wheels onto the bank, I looked up and saw an Injun girl watching me. I can see her still. Her head was a little on one side and a little bent, so she looked at me under her brows. She stood a little kind of sideways, one hip in advance; and she had braids of hair, thick and long, on each side of her face. She was in a blue-print gown with a pattern of flowers on it, and she wore a silver bangle on her wrist.

"I looked at her, and I tell you right now that I think that there race hatred is foolish. I saw her several times after that. We used just to look at each other and half smile, then look away. I met her proper, so to speak, was introduced and all formal, first at the agency," Steve goes on. "She had her hair coiled and a blue hat on, and was dressed like a white person; but I think she looked even better with the braids hanging down."

He tells us how he says to her, when they was introduced formal by somebody at the agency: "I've seen you often;" and how she, quite frank, says she's often seen him, too. He used to meet her a heap often,

thereafter, to talk to. Down along the creek where there was two-three lodge frames near the crossing—he describes the scene to us with this here doting affection of memory—he would frequent see her. She was mighty fond of going down there and just watching the water a-flowing past, he explains.

What they talks of, we-all gathers, is these there ineffectual things: about the color of the stones in the water, about the comical little gophers, and how quaint they look settin' up imitating a stump and a twig with one foot straight out; and she tells him Injun nursery stories, so to speak, about the gophers' homes and the man what shrunk himself small to go visit them.

Steve explains to us all how she was full of this love of her people, and an encyclopedia of her people's stories; and what brought them together—apart from this inscrutable and everlasting sex business of which he is reticent, but which we-all realizes as present—is his liking for God's country likewise. She could speak English fluent, and Steve told us he believed she could have written a book all about these Injun stories in better American than some white folks know how to talk. I guess if there had been a different atmosphere in that there bunk house, what they call reticence might have taken Steve right there, and we'd never have heard any more; but the stove hums, and the snow sifts along the window, and we-all is attentive and at ease.

"I got a copy of a book of legends by that Canadian Injun, Pauline Johnson, for a present for her," he goes on, "to sort of stimulate her. She was as proud of being Injun as a Scotsman of being Scotsman, and as fond of the foothills of the Black Hills and the queer ridges of the Bad Lands standing up to west as a Kentucky man of the blue-grass country. When we discussed getting married she said to me: 'Maybe you will want to leave Dakota and Nebraska some day, and go clean away, and then,' she says, 'I'll be like Ruth and I'll say: *Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God.*'"

"That was early one morning, when I was just getting ready to pull out on the wagon road, and all the smell of the morning was in the air, and it was sure good. I said to her: 'Annie, Annie,' I said, 'there's only the one God over us,' and I turned around the way I'd seen some of them old Indians

do, facing the sun that was up over the east, and lifted my hand with the palm flat to it. I can still see the way she stood looking at me, with her big dark eyes."

It was at this here juncture he explained her name to us.

"That girl," he mused aloud, so to speak, "Annie Red Willow she was called, was as good as any white person. Her father was Chief Red Willow," he says, deflecting off his narrative. "He gives himself the name because he likes so greatly the smell of this here red willow burning in a camp fire. I guess Annie got a lot of what was in her from him. She told me how she got her name, and told me that the smell of burning red willow meant a lot to her, too. Going in from the agency school, or from visits to the agency, she'd feel something in her heart kind of rise up and sing when that there scent came to her nostrils. 'It's part of my people,' she said, 'and I love my people. And you love them, too.'"

Steve shook his head.

"I just told her," he said, "that I loved her, and that I loved individuals everywhere—white or red. I like folks," he says, "the way I like horses and dogs. I've liked a buckskin horse and a sorrel and a pinto; and I've known 'em mean—buckskin and sorrel and pinto. Same with folks. Injuns ain't Fenimore Cooper maybe, Fred," he says; "but they ain't 'the only good Injun is a dead Injun,' and don't you forget it."

He recalls her telling him of her earliest memory, which was lying under a cottonwood tree as a papoose and following up all the ramifications of the branches, all in among the moving sunlight and green leaves.

We-all opines to ourselves—and mentions to each other afterward in discussing this story of Steve's—that she was sure suitable to him if she had been pea-green instead of the color of a new one-cent piece—which you see when you get back East where a dime ain't the smallest coin in circulation. For Steve was always talking of nature things. He would set and watch a dust whirl till it pirouettes from sight, and he couldn't pass a bunch of wild honeysuckle in the bush without he put a sprig in his hat, and he's always the first to announce, in the spring: "I hear a crow a-cawing over to-day." But as for his story:

"Well, sir," he said, "we were to be married, and then that there white man down in Utah began telling the Utes about the

Messiah, and, of course, they got it wrong—thought it meant the buffalo coming back and the whites dying out and no more barbed-wire fences and grain elevators anywhere."

This here remark gets us where we live. Cattlemen don't admire barbed wire and grain elevators any. We-all, at them words, has an additional jolt of fellow feeling with Steve's reticent narrated but whatever love story.

"The Utes," he explains, "carried the story to the Sioux in their annual visit. They began dancing. The ignorant ones—all same as in white communities—outnumbered the sensible. It is sure the bogus sentiment that is put over easiest and the real goods waits a long time for followers," says Steve. "They danced, and hypnotizes themselves dancing. Then they braids up their horses' tails for war, if so be the Messiah wanted them to make a fight for it instead of just supernacherally eliminating the whites and bringing back the buffalo. They was dancing at the Fort Hall reserve in Idaho, and scaring folks around Pocatello with the tomtoming; and down on Green River the Utes were on the verge of shooting up the settlers. The Pine Ridge reserve got it so bad that the stock men thereabouts were getting their womenfolks out of the country.

"And then the cavalry comes along with their patrols and the cordons; and next a bunch of black cavalry is sent down. The Injuns starts loadin' their Winchesters. This here is an insult at such a moment, when their scrap is chiefly with white folks. Progress has sure its way with what Fred calls 'natives,'" says Steve. "And where there are guns, guns are liable to go off. It's in the nature of guns. They went off all right, eventually, and it culminates in the cavalry charge on Big Foot's camp at the Pine Ridge reserve. Down they charges, seein' the Injuns refuses to desist from dancing; and the camp pots and kettles is sent flying, the tepees is knocked down, the

troopers yell, the Injuns war-cry, and it's all whoops and the biff of six-guns and rifles."

He pauses, and then he says: "The Messiah did not come," he says, and opens the stove door with his toe, throws in his cigarette end, then taps the door shut again, not fierce, but slow and deliberate. "Well, we got to be fair and just," says he. "I suppose we got to take life philosophical. What's done is done."

It was little Fred, of all men, his eyes protruding, who asks: "But what was done? What d'ye mean got to take life philosophic?"

Steve puckers his lips, recalling, and looking into the past.

"When the cavalry charged Big Foot's camp where Annie Red Willow lived, they sang out that they'd revenge Custer," he says. "They did all right. There was an inquiry afterward about that battle—the battle of Wounded Knee Creek, they calls it—and America Horse and some others even went to Washington to give evidence. It was an incident that calls for an inquiry. And, the finding of that inquiry was that the troops couldn't tell an Injun woman from an Injun man—not in the dusk. Maybe they couldn't. I try to look at it calm; and I'm inclined to think, trying to be just, that perhaps they could not."

"But about this girl?" persists that foolish machine man.

Steve looks at him sadly for a moment as if sorry for his intellect. He had felt it all too deeply inside him to do more than what you might call indicate this here love story of his, instead of narrating it with a whole raft of obvious detail same as a man might who did not feel it hard. Some folks you got to tell everything to, and Fred's one of 'em.

Says Steve: "Annie Red Willow was killed in that charge. They couldn't tell an Injun woman from an Injun man—not in the dusk."



### HE SAID SOMETHING!

"Now that we are on the subject of Europe," said the professor, "perhaps you can tell us something you learned while you were over there."

"I can, sir," replied the young man. "I found out that it's a whole lot easier to learn history than it is to make it."

# Chanting Wheels

By Hubbard Hutchinson

## WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

If you had met Dante Rossetti Raleigh at a studio tea and listened to him talk about musical art, you might have had doubts about him being a regular fellow. But if you had been near the Hydraulic steel mills and seen him help a girl with wonderful eyes care for a fatally injured workman, those doubts would have disappeared. Lots of people misjudged Raleigh, among them his uncle, David Harde, head of the Hydraulic. That's why he smiled so grimly when Raleigh applied for a job—musical art wasn't paying regular dividends, and even a genius must eat. Raleigh got a job—in the hot-press shop, under Pat Culhane. There he made good, heard music in the roar and clatter of the machines, made a real friend of Fred McGill, and used his fists to convince big Mulgully that humor is best kept within bounds. Finding many music lovers among his fellow workmen, he became immensely popular by organizing singing classes. Also, he met Eleanor Grayson and was invited to tea, befriended Smetana, a cousin of the man who had been killed, and got in bad at the "Y," where he lived, because of his unconventional ideas on religious matters.

## (A Four-Part Story—Part II.)

### CHAPTER VII.

**B**UT Eleanor," protested Mrs. Grayson, "don't you think it is a little unusual to ask a perfectly strange young man to tea?"

"It's because he is perfectly strange and more than a little unusual that I'm asking him, mother, dear," returned Eleanor. "He's the first really interesting person I've seen since I've been home. Any one who can read 'Pelleas' on a trolley that smells like a garlic sandwich is worth knowing. Either he has the concentration of an Edison or no olfactory organs. Either is a diverting possibility."

Mrs. Grayson sighed, and shook her earrings. She moved across, gliding as do middle-aged women who somehow convey an impression of floating leglessness, and paused at the door.

"But, Eleanor—is he a gentleman?" It was her exit line.

"That, mother, depends on what you judge him by. His occupation, according to Pat Culhane is"—she consulted a small notebook on her desk—"is 'press hand on hot-press No. 5, in shop five.'"

Mrs. Grayson made a sound like a strangling duck, but Eleanor proceeded unperturbed.

"His clothes—what I saw of them—came, I should say, from New York and Paris, and had crossed many Rubicons. Let me see, what else does one judge a gentleman

by? Oh, yes, his hands. Well, his hands looked like Peter's do after he's greased the Packard's transmission. You can take your choice."

"He sounds like a crowd to me," murmured Mrs. Grayson, amused in spite of herself. "However, as you've asked him, there seems to be nothing to do. If he cuts your throat and makes off with the silver, don't blame me. Are you going to the Vermylas' theater party?"

"I'm afraid not. A shaded box and entr'acte music would give Vernon another chance to propose, and I don't think I can endure that again—at least, for a week. And now——"

She saw her mother's chins set, and knew what was coming. "I don't see why you ——" began Mrs. Grayson.

"And now," interrupted Eleanor firmly, "I think I'll wash the Sapinski baby from my hands, and"—she paused a moment before the long Louise Quinze mirror—"go down to Madame Lestrangle's for the well-known wave of permanence."

Mrs. Grayson's chins remained set. She folded her hands before her.

"I don't see why you *will* spend all your time at the Sapinskis'."

Eleanor's lips tightened a little. "I don't. I'm at the Kalousdians' and Borofskis' quite as much."

Mrs. Grayson waved a plump hand. "I mean with all these—people. It's all very

fine, and you doubtless do an immense amount of good, but your friends never see you any more. I saw Helen Storey at Blumenthal's store, yesterday morning, and she said Bob Trevor told her you weren't at Anne Wycherly's dance, and that——"

Eleanor went swiftly to her mother and put her hands on that lady's plump and modish shoulders.

"Mother, dear, please—*please!* Don't you understand yet? These people bore me till I want to scream. I know it sounds frightfully conceited and horrid, but they seem just like a row of dolls, or marionettes. It was all right before France, but"—she dropped her hands from her mother's shoulders with a rueful little smile—"oh, it's no use. You cannot understand, of course."

Mrs. Grayson regarded her daughter with more keenness than her sleek air of slight petulance revealed.

"Just what was there about France that has made people into dolls for you?"

Eleanor looked up quickly and moved restlessly about her room, her hands clasped behind her, a gesture that Mrs. Grayson knew meant with her control.

"Oh—I don't know—everything was so *real*—it was like electric wires with the insulation pulled off—contacts. Of course some of it was horrid, but every one was so alive, and the work—you didn't have a minute to think about yourself and consequently get bored. It was just the France of 1917, that's all."

Mrs. Grayson was thinking to herself that no woman was ever as affected by an abstraction as her daughter appeared to be by the France of 1917. To her there was a person under it. Wisely she had never voiced this. She was a kind woman when she did not try to be clever.

"Just why," she observed, "a year's ambulance driving in France should unfit you for enjoying your friends I cannot quite discern."

Eleanor's voice resounded from the depths of the little wash room whither she had retired to wash her hands.

"It hasn't. It's unfitted them for enjoying me. It's a continual masquerade with me. If I didn't quiver like a jellyfish over the latest baby or Isabelle Meighan's divorce, I'd be considered 'queer.' If I disturbed Harry Anderson's monologue about golf with a question on books, I would be finished socially. Fortunately it's fairly

easy to be a sausage grinder, and turn out linked platitudes, each one tied up with a confiding smile and bulging with candor."

Miss Grayson's delightful, melodious voice had edged itself, and her mother raised one eyebrow. She allowed a little silence to be filled only with the sounds of Eleanor's vigorous ablutions, then went out.

Eleanor smiled to herself, and wiped her fingers. What a trump her mother was, in most ways. Eleanor did not herself understand exactly what had drawn her out of her warmed, pleasant life, filled with innumerable small things, into the active expression that her mother so failed to understand. At least, she was not sure of the reason. She had put it resolutely out of her mind, and the months of work had served to largely efface it.

This work had grown. Beginning in a very small way through a dinner at David Harde's and subsequent talk with Parker of the welfare department through coffee and cigarettes, the channel thus opened had spread and widened before the stifled energy she poured into it. At first, it had not been easy—this work of showing tired women how to laugh and fretted children how to play. But the months of experience abroad, as naked of conventionality as a baby of clothes, had bequeathed to Eleanor a gift utterly foreign to her—an easy power of contact with unfortunates. Without realization, the work had all grown until now it took most of her day; and if she occasionally felt a weariness creeping up her back, she remembered the weariness it had banished from her brain and was glad.

She hurried out of the house, climbed into her sedan, and moved off down Devonshire Drive to the city. In a snarl of traffic she encountered a truck. There were words. The driver, a young rough in a greasy army coat, glared at her. Eleanor recognized his faded shoulder badge. He mumbled something about "damn women drivers."

Eleanor shot back at him.

"Don't talk to me about women," she snapped. "I'll bet you're one of the silly sheep that drove down the embankment outside Nancy and blocked the reserve artillery for hours." She grinned at his blank look of chagrin, and whisked off ahead of him as the traffic whistle blew.

She drew up before Madame Lestrangle's, already basking mentally in the relaxation that lady's rigid fingers always imparted.



A curtain divided madame's temple to tonsorial and manual beauty into two parts; an outer court, where the masculine might—and did—come to acquire the gleaming terminals of the perfect manicure, and an inner shrine where women bared their scalps' secrets to professional confessors discreet as any priest.

Madame Lestrage bore down on her like an ocean liner—a large, firm lady with brushed-up eyebrows, an air of perpetual surprise, and shining black orbs a trifle bulgent. She was incurably romantic, as are so many large ladies. She mourned a husband who had been a barber. Madame Lestrage, telling you of him, managed to convey with great delicacy, and between sighs of affection for the defunct Victor, that she had married beneath her.

"Ah, ma petite Mademoiselle Gree-szong!" she cried, and floated her out of her wraps and into her own chair next the dividing curtain on a steady stream of light French. Eleanor had walked straight into her heart a year before, with her fluent tongue, and her easy knowledge of Madame's Mecca, Amiens. She had the true provincial scorn of Paris. Her voice continued to ripple about her, as Eleanor's hair rippled down her back.

"But, mademoiselle, it is too true! These women, they come here, with no knowledge of that which is fitting, and they say, of a high voice, 'Gimme the best y'u've got!'" The exactness of her French mimicry brought a giggle from Eleanor. Madame's eyes rolled to heaven. "But, yes, mademoiselle! And one might see, at a glance of the eye, that they had known never the ways of a lady of fashion. But think, mademoiselle! Only yesterday comes a large woman—I was a reed beside her, mademoiselle—oh, very large, and of the hairs blondine.

"It was in the morning, even as now, and she wore long earrings of the pearls false, and platinum chains and a necklace completely of large blue stones like eggs. She desired the perfumes. I showed. She asked, 'Is this best?' and asked the price. Then did she put her nose even more up, which mademoiselle knows was difficult, for it was long, and pointed to her breast, and demanded something better, which is to say, of a greater price! And she is depart, this stylish lady, with a bottle of L'Oregon Côte!" Madame sniffed, and began sham-

poing Eleanor's hair vigorously in the initial rite of the permanent wave.

"But who are these women, and who are their husbands?" asked Eleanor from under the shadow of her hair.

Madame Lestrage snorted, and her eyebrows rushed toward her hair like mice to cover.

"Who but these men of the war wage, of the factory, mademoiselle. Never have they known such, and still it is more, more, more. And look at the poor girl in the shop, and the young clerks who work in offices!"

She broke off to seize a bottle of hair tonic and began deluging Eleanor with it. The more she talked the faster went her hands, until Eleanor was being showered. She rattled on.

"Fancy, mademoiselle—one of my girls—you noticed, Mees Bangs, of the golden hair outside, in the outer room—a sweet cabbage, mademoiselle. She has a friend. He is of the papers. He writes of police and murders—most charmingly. They would wed, and may not, because of his small wage. It is *disgrace*—that they must remain apart while these other women buy diamonds!"

Eleanor's mind veered to her own work. One of her problems had been to try to transform the flooding tide of silk shirts, eighteen-dollar shoes, expensive and ugly ties, and jewelry into a new ice box—a vacuum cleaner—a growing balance in the check book, and to prophesy without offense the inevitable morrow of lay-offs and falling wages.

Her reflections were rudely broken. An undercurrent of voices from the outer room which had been running unobtrusively in the back of her mind, rose suddenly to the surface, and scattered her thoughts as a rising trout scatters minnows.

"Well, of all the cheek! You get right out of here, this minute!" The voice resounded brassily, and its clangs transfixed Madame Lestrage's active fingers. A low-pitched and apologetic masculine made answer they could not catch. "Didn't do nuthin', hey?" the feminine voice went on. "I'll tell the world you didn't do nuthin' to me, you old daffy-dill. You ain't no gentleman—you ain't no gentleman. Get out of here right now, or I'll call Madame Lestrage and have you throwed out!" The voice was scintillant with outraged virtue.

Never so silently leaped the panther as Madame Lestrage and Eleanor. Amid a

shower of hair tonic they sprang to the curtain, and peeked.

A middle-aged man, very red of face, was gathering up coat, hat, and gloves in one stride to the door. He flung a bill on the counter as he passed. It was a quick, clean exit, but not too quick for Eleanor to recognize the grayed dark hair, the full, sleekly handsome face, the emotionless gray eyes. Then the door slammed, and Corinne Bangs, she of the police-reporter friend, turned loftily to the mirror, her balloonlike and brilliantined puffs quivering with indignation. Marceline Mulvaney, her colleague, surveyed her with burning curiosity.

"What'd he do to yuh?" she asked eagerly.

Corinne tossed her puffs.

"The ole fool——"

The other girl calmly cut her off and drew nearer. "What did he *do* to yuh?"

Pinned to the specific, Corinne showed faint signs of embarrassment. "Oh," she said grandly, "he begun squeezin' my hand. I didn't pay no attention to that—they all do. Then he begun squeezing my knee under the table, the ole fool." She walked off down the shop, surrounded by an aura of righteousness like a Fra Angelico saint.

Eleanor withdrew an amazed face, then burst into peals of mirth. He—of all people in the world! She laughed till she cried, and Madame Lestrangle had to caution her against the effect of salt on the permanent wave.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Raleigh leaped into his clothes that afternoon with such agility that McGill, who had secured an adjacent locker, stared at him.

"What's the big rush?" he asked.

Raleigh's voice came muffled from the depths of his locker "—— tea," was all Fred gathered. Then a flushed face appeared. "You'd better hump yourself, Fred, if you're going on the same trolley with me."

Thus adjured, Fred humped, and the two tall young men swung out together. Raleigh fished for cigarettes, gave one to Fred, and they were off—a strangely different pair, but linked with the kinship of youth and abounding vitality. To Raleigh, McGill had proved himself indeed an Everyman in his industrial "Pilgrim's Progress." He suspected it was largely Fred's secret words that had secured him the foremanship of his press on Roberts' defection. In this he was wrong; it

was his own intelligence, and the swift prominence his fight with Mulgully had given him. Culhane had chuckled over it. "Maybe a fool, but he's got the stuff," the foreman had thought, and had told David Harde as much in recounting the incident to him.

To McGill, Raleigh presented an enigma. His unconcealed liking had flattered and pleased him. His naiveté on matters mechanic amused him. Most of all, his startling moods of frankness, his talk, like some one out of a book, puzzled and intrigued McGill's less complex mind. It was characteristic that he sought no explanations; that he swiftly took Raleigh to his heart as a bewildering but very real pal, and accorded him inarticulate and ceaseless devotion. Whole planets separated them as to intellectual interests. On only one common tangible point did they touch—music. Here Raleigh had stirred unexpected and vague depths in McGill.

They had journeyed, on a night early in their friendship, to the movies, and, from the remoteness of the "smoking stalls," watched silently and with few words. Then the orchestra had without warning emerged from some pilly-willy syncopation into the prelude to Tristan. Raleigh had settled back and watched his friend curiously. The great house, under the spell, had gradually stilled. At first Fred seemed undisturbed. Then he slowly grew very quiet, and his cigarette burned out. The music lifted, swelled, and leaped into the glorious crescendo that holds all human emotion. Fred took a quick breath, and his hand shot out to Raleigh's arm and gripped it. The display of emotion startled him, as did Fred's face when the lights flashed up and showed it with tears dropping from his eyes. Raleigh's heart leaped at the unconscious revelation. McGill gulped, and blew his nose.

Thereafter he had sat, hours on end, while Raleigh improvised in the twilight of that intimate musical borderland nearest the musician's heart—played with a consciousness of the big lad's stimulation, of the dumb sympathy to which he was giving vicarious expression, the depths of Celtic emotionalism so carefully concealed beneath McGill's bluff and casual exterior. This unexpected response had been the meat and drink of human sympathy to Raleigh without which the artist starves. No amount of intellectual sophistication or drawing-room glibness for a moment supplies it.

They boarded the trolley and struggled to seats at the end.

"Say, Raleigh—I gotta new guy for the quartets."

"Fine; can he sing?"

"You're damn tootin'. Heard him out in the crane yard last noon. He's got a voice most like a girl—high and awful sweet-soundin'."

Raleigh clutched him. "A tenor!" he cried with the rapture of all leaders of amateur singing where those *rara aves* are concerned. "Bring him to-morrow night if you have to leash him. Don't care if he knows a note—I can teach him. That makes only two more that we've got to find. What's his name?"

"I forget. But I know where he works. Runs the magnet crane. He wants to come—says he knows you—lives at the Y. M. C. A. himself. He says, 'Ah, the meester Raleigh,' he says, 'he has the heart of kindness.' He's a sad-lookin' little pup; cousin of that guy was killed when you first came."

Raleigh's countenance softened. "I wonder where I saw him?" he murmured. It spoke for the numbers who had experienced the "heart of kindness."

"Oh!" He turned to Freddy with sudden animation. "Did I tell you that Parker fell on my neck about the concert? Says he'd love to have us put on a stunt, and gave me a free hand. I think we can do something really interesting—all the bunch is crazy to give a minstrel show—and I can work in some real quartet singing, too."

McGill was seized with a sudden thought. "Say—I 'most forgot. Ma wants you to come out for dinner Sunday. Will you?"

"I'd love to. I was so sorry that I couldn't come before, but I'd have been no possible use. I was in a mood. It was that poor old elephant of a Mulgully. One might as well allow oneself to be annoyed by a warehouse. But I was. I'm glad that's over, Fred. I wonder when people will stop considering men effeminate if they use polysyllables and display a germ of feeling?"

This Fred wisely chose not to answer. "Ma says if she don't see you soon, she won't believe there is any you. An' Peggy said she was comin' down to the shop some day and stand outside and whistle some highbrow tune like 'Humoresque' till everybody gets out. She knows that'll fetch you."

"I'd fly at her with rapture," laughed Ra-

leigh. "She's the little one, isn't she, who tied the wrong tooth to the door and pulled it out?"

"Naw—that's Annie. Peg's nineteen last May. Say, if you think I like music, you oughtta see her. She eats it up. She's a funny girl; when she was little she used to go out in the back yard and sit under a bush talkin' to people that wasn't there at all. She's always been"—Fred groped for a tenuous distinction—"different, somehow; maybe 'cause she went to school longer than us boys. You'll like her."

"I'm sure I will," returned Raleigh somewhat absently. His mind was picturing Eleanor Grayson behind a tea table, and from this comforting vision had turned to the selection of a necktie with the greatest care.

"Listen," McGill intervened between his choice of the one with gold butterflies and an austere silver and black stripe. "Why don't you and me go to a show Saturday night? Then you can come home with me and be right there for breakfast?"

"Fine. Love to." The trolley slowed to Fifty-fifth Street, and Raleigh rose hastily. "By, Fred!" he called, and catapulted for the door, leaving a swath of sudden vacancy and a ripple of profanity in the crowded car.

At the Y. M. C. A. he flung off his clothes, bathed, and twenty minutes later emerged, a changed being, immaculate and shining, with the comfortable assurance of good clothes, and a stick, and a new pair of gloves wrapping him round. At the desk the clerk gave him his mail—with a smile of sinister meaning. He saw an envelope with the red triangle in the corner, and with a sudden loss of assurance, glanced quickly down the page. The letter concluded:

We have investigated the matter thoroughly and regret that we see no other course than to ask you to leave the building. This is unfortunate, for we feel that what you are doing with the singing in your shop is worthy work. But your conduct and speech deeply offended our Mr. Brahley, and we fear that your attitude on religious matters is such as to be gravely detrimental to the spirit which, by precept and example, we seek to foster.

We shall consider your room as available a week from next Saturday. Most sincerely,

REGINALD AUGUSTUS STOKES,  
General Secretary.

Raleigh stared for a moment unbelieving, then a gust of rage shook him. He turned on the clerk at the desk, who had

been watching him furtively. The clerk looked hastily down.

"Where's Mr. Stokes?" demanded Raleigh hotly.

"His office is upstairs. He won't return till five-fifteen."

Raleigh glanced at the clock. Four-twenty. He bit his lip. Then suddenly he threw back his head and laughed so loudly that the clerk at the desk looked a little frightened. He would have something amusing to tell Eleanor Grayson, anyhow.

"Tell him Mr. Raleigh wants to see him to-morrow."

The clerk began raising little barriers. "You'll have to make an appointment through the office——"

But Raleigh had turned on his heel. "Oh, go to the devil," he said with a cheerful grin, and waving his stick at the horrified clerk, went out whistling.

### CHAPTER IX.

At the Graysons' he was greeted by a tall and solemn butler, a darky with the face, the color and the dignity of Rameses II, so kindly preserved to us in the Metropolitan Museum. With a sudden swift rush of pleasure Raleigh surrendered stick, hat, and gloves, his ruffled feathers smoothing more and more, until, when the old fellow slipped off his coat and adjusted his collar with a respectful pat, he drew a deep breath and began to purr with delight. Rameses departed, on his inquiry for Miss Grayson, and he looked round. There was no need to analyze the fine old pictures, the shaded lamps, the peep of an Aubusson carpet glimpsed through an open door, the rich quiet and luxurious warmth. Raleigh bathed in it all gratefully.

Rameses, a tall shadow, strode softly back, grinned suddenly, and his face split into a million fine lines like a crackle-ware plate.

"Miss Eleanuh's waitin' fo' you, suh."

Raleigh paused at the door for an instant. Never was a deliberate stage setting of Eleanor's making—and they were many—more instantly appreciated. He crossed the room quickly and she gave him a firm, small hand, then swept his figure appreciatively, and laughed, the Chopin waltz of a laugh that he remembered.

"I knew you'd give me a chance somehow," he cried triumphantly after the first greetings.

She made a little grimace. "I had to. You were so abominably composed."

"That was bluff. I nearly fell out of the trolley after you. I'm glad the bluff worked. How in the world—you said in the note that Culhane told you about me."

She nodded, laughing.

"May I ask where you encountered my Cuchulain of a boss? Don't tell me you work at the Hydraulic, too?"

"Well—I do. In a way, that is. Lemon or cream, Mr. Raleigh?" She was pouring tea.

Raleigh leaned back, half closing his eyes, and looked. Behind her the top of a Victorian tip table drew a circling pattern of old gold and roses, of which her small head with its gold-shot brown hair formed the center. Firelight and candles glowed gently.

"Beautiful words!" he sighed. "It's been at least two months since I've heard them. Lemon, please, and mountains of sugar. 'Cream or lemon, Mr. Raleigh?'" He repeated it like a refrain.

Eleanor smiled with a certain softness—the ineradicable mother instinct. "You—you know no one here?"

He leaned forward and nodded vigorously.

"Yes. Lots. But I've spent my off hours trying to avoid them. I can imagine Reg Tyson's horror if he caught me going to work. He'd fly screaming to the nearest club, and presently it would be all over that Raleigh was doing something queer again, and I'd be dragged to dinners and to see babies and exhibited as a freak." His voice dropped to a more serious key. "They're fine chaps—most of them. We seemed to have had a financially minded class in college. They've all gone into the bond business or banking—at least, all of 'em out here. They'd never for a minute understand what I was doing."

Eleanor looked at him curiously, and indicated the cake tray. Raleigh seized it with delight. "Brownies!" he exclaimed. "Who told you that I liked them better than anything in the world?"

"Not Pat Culhane, certainly."

Raleigh roared suddenly, and demolished a brownie. "I'll bet not! What *did* he tell you? I guess he thinks me mad."

"Yes, I think he does—in a harmless and interesting sort of way. You see, it came about this way. I'm doing some work through Mr. Parker of the welfare department, and asked Pat if his wife wouldn't

help with the girls' sewing class. Then he asked me if I wanted any singing taught. He said, 'One of my new press hands has a bunch of quartets, they're tellin' me. Purty soon I s'pect we won't be able to hear the noon whistle fur the warblin', and we'll have the tractors scatterin' canary seed 'stead of billets.'

"You don't think he minds?" queried Raleigh.

"Mercy no—he's amused. Naturally he doesn't understand."

"I'll get him down to a rehearsal some night," said Raleigh. She was looking at him curiously. He caught it.

"You mean you don't understand, either?"

"Perhaps. I'm awfully interested. It's wonderfully clever of you to go right in and work with the men. No amount of settlement work will give you the same contact."

It was Raleigh's turn to stare. Then he laughed. "But my dear Miss Grayson, I'm not being all noble, and playing the industrial Cinderella. Not for one minute. I'm making my living."

She stared, too, at that, then laughed lightly. It was for an instant embarrassing. "But your music——" she protested.

He nodded, and ostentatiously waved his right hand to conceal the fact that his left was sneaking its fifth brownie. "Yes, of course. You see, I found that I wasn't breaking even down in New York, in spite of occasional publicity jobs and orchestrating things and such. And my digestion was being ruined by studio teas, and my point of view clogged by studio atmosphere. It's a dangerously subtle thing. People come in. They talk and talk and talk—mostly about Life and Art and Love, free and otherwise, and one feels very grand and lofty. You remember the song of the Banderlog. 'Now we're going to—never mind! Brother, thy tail hangs down behind!'"

She knew her Kipling and her eyes twinkled.

"Well, it was just like that, exactly. 'Now we're going to'—and never did—not even to having the piano tuned or ordering more wood in time to keep us from freezing. All talk and no work. And it was rather Art—y, too. I felt that if I saw one more batik smock I'd have to don a flannel shirt and lumberman's boots and take to chewing tobacco. So I—I simply came out here——"

"To your Uncle David," she finished.

"I hope you haven't told any one that," he said gravely.

"Not a soul. I wormed it out of David the other night, and once I had, he told me reams; he's inordinately proud of the way you're doing."

Raleigh gasped. "He *is*? It's the first time on record he's had the remotest use for me, then."

"He's never understood you. He confessed to me that he thought he had misjudged you utterly. If you knew David, you'd know how much that admission meant."

Raleigh laughed.

"It seems funny to hear you telling me 'if I knew' my own uncle. But it's perfectly true. I've only seen him five times in my life, and always wanted to like him and never could. I think now I might."

Eleanor was very earnest. "He's one of the finest people I know. He worked so hard he perilously near forgot how to play." A tendril of a smile played round her mouth for a moment. "Since my *début* I've been teaching him to—a little." She thrust the cake tray at him persuasively. "Now do tell me about the singing classes. I'm terribly interested."

"Oh—it's really nothing. I ran onto a boy my first day with a fine voice—chap named McGill——"

He stopped, for she had suddenly leaned forward.

"McGill—what does he look like?" Then, as if to relieve the abruptness of it, "I met a man of that name in France. I took care of him in the hospital for a while. How curious if it should be the same one! What does he look like?"

"Big chap—heavily built—very alive blue eyes—very straight eyebrows—plume of dark, mousy-colored hair."

She shook her head, with disappointment, he thought.

"It's not the same. It was a little absurd to think—the name's common enough." She seemed to Raleigh's quick, intuitive sense a little irritated with herself. "Go on, please. I chatter like a magpie on a pole."

"Well, McGill and I were talking about singing, and two lads at the table—it was at lunch—joined in, and presently we had a quartet that got together at noon, and sang. The men used to come round and listen, and liked it. Particularly the foreigners, of course. One day some of them started up

an old Slovenian folk song. You can't imagine; those dirty, dingy-looking men, finishing garlic sandwiches, with a stage setting of punch presses and cinders and grease, and singing this beautiful old thing. We'd just finished 'I'm Sorry, Dear' in a way to draw tears from a shear blade. Then this. It was like finding a fine Rembrandt etching in a comic supplement. I nearly fell on their dirty necks, bless 'em."

She was watching his lighted face with curious, appreciative eyes.

"So you scented competition and absorbed them," she interjected. "And I suppose it grew from that."

"Exactly. I'm having a real course in folk music—some of the things they bring use old modes that I know of, but never heard in use."

Her brow wrinkled. "Modes?"

"Ancient themes built on scales of music much older than ours. They are older than the pyramids. They were connected with incantation and astrology, with an old and vanished civilization that we can only guess at. They have tremendous power when properly used." He hesitated; she'd think he was queer if he kept on.

"And, of course, the men love it."

He returned to the men with slight disappointment. "Oh, yes." Modes evidently interested Miss Grayson only in so far as they graced her trim body. "They come to the Y. M. C. A. and we rehearse in the——"

She caught the dismay flooding his face.

"Why, what's the matter?"

He smiled ruefully. "I guess that's all over now," he said slowly. He thought for a moment. She waited. Then he looked at her gravely.

"You see, I've been living at the Y and using the auditorium for rehearsals. Today comes this." He reached in his pocket and handed her the letter from Stokes.

She raised perplexed eyes. "What——"

Raleigh dramatized the Brahley incident and his refusal to attend Bible class in a few sentences. She nodded, anger darkening her eyes for a moment. "Not typical, but not too rare, I fear," she murmured, bending again to the letter.

At the end, Raleigh saw her pale, and she gasped, then without warning doubled over the letter with peals of laughter. Raleigh joined. She shook her head at him, through tears of mirth.

"But you don't know—you don't know

the half of it!" She read aloud in a laughter-broken voice:

"——detrimental to the spirit which by precept and *example* we seek to foster."

She exploded again, then looked at him, weak and red-eyed. "Do excuse me, but— but this is rarer than much fine gold—yea sweeter, too, than the honey in the honey-comb." She stopped a moment, thinking. Then her eyes danced, and she stood up.

"Are you game for something?"

"Of course." Utterly puzzled, he nodded.

"All right. Do you know Stokes?"

"Never saw him."

"I do. I'm asking him here to tea."

Raleigh protested. "Really, you mustn't do——"

She had vanished from the room. In a moment she returned, her eyes shining with unholy delight.

"He's coming," she announced.

Raleigh was genuinely annoyed. "Really, Miss Grayson, I suppose this is very good of you, but——"

"It is. Very. Moreover, it is going to be the most saccharine revenge ever granted. I had some contact with Reginald Stokes before. Now, please don't ask questions. Just act as if you had never received that letter. Come and play to me. Did you bring the score of 'Pelleas?'"

"No, but I know most of it." They sauntered to the piano, and while Raleigh smoked "after-tea cigarettes," as he called them, talked of opera and singers and places. They flew from place to person, and Raleigh emptied himself of his desire to talk about the things he loved. The fire dropped together, and the gloom outside turned from dark gray to black. Finally he sat at the piano.

She settled into a chair where she could watch, and Raleigh struck the first six notes that are the flute call of the *Faune*, and lead like irregular silver stepping-stones, into the luminous shadows and haunted glades of Debussy's exquisite prelude. As usual, all else fell from him like garments, and he floated out into the transparent iridescence of the music.

When he finished—"That's so lovely," came appreciatively from Eleanor, but he instantly sensed a lack of fundamental "feeling with," and swift disappointment fell like a light shadow over the mood of the music. But Eleanor was going on, her light, beautifully modulated voice softened.

"Don't you always think of fairy horns muted for the death of the court jester, in those five last chords?" she asked.

Raleigh nodded. That was exquisite—perfect intellectual appreciation. Yet—it was the mind that spoke, not the deeper thing, which rarely spoke at all, never in the clever costuming of phrase that she gave.

He felt cheated. He was a supersensitive fool about that sort of thing, he decided an instant later. It was just that he so wanted her to understand—

"Yes, it's a lovely thing—and that's a fine description," he found himself saying.

She asked him to play the "Gardens Under the Rain," and through the music that followed, music that brought the splash and tinkle of rain that slanted over bending bluebells and myriad-hued flowers, music that trilled with the last few drops falling steadily from shining leaves after the sun had burst apart the clouds, she sat watching him with keen, interested eyes. Almost at the end, came the sound of a distant bell in the house; a door opened and closed.

Then an assured, full voice plowed determinedly through the delicate final fabric of the music, like a bull through a cobweb, with "Ah, Miss Grayson, this is indeed a pleasure."

Raleigh jumped, and swung from the piano. Eleanor went swiftly forward. She introduced them. Evidently the name meant nothing to Stokes at the moment, and candlelight throws a strange glamour over even intimately familiar faces. Stokes beamed on him.

"Don't let me interrupt your music, Mr. Raleigh. What a talent it is, to be sure. I suppose that it is a hobby with you."

Raleigh lit a cigarette and answered very quietly. "Yes, a hobby."

Eleanor had again become the center decoration of the tip table. She smiled sweetly at Stokes, who pulled a chair close beside her, talking pompously with a fatuous undercurrent of flattery. Raleigh studied him. He was very smooth. His grayed, dark hair lay sleek from his forehead, his clothes fitted him sleekly; his face held the smooth linelessness of the man of forty who has been concerned with small things. Raleigh reluctantly admitted it was a handsome face. The gray eyes were clear enough. Yet he felt a soft-padded, feline quality, without enough force to make that quality either dangerous or interesting.

Eleanor was speaking.

"I've seen nothing of you since the days of the war camp community. How you helped us, when we all fell into work like kittens into a tub, and floundered, and scratched each other a little."

He held up a deprecating hand. "I merely did what I could."

She offered the cake tray. "I don't think I've really seen you at all," she murmured in a tone subtly regretful, "until this morning," she added slowly.

Something in the tone caused Raleigh to look up suddenly at her. Mr. Stokes' bland smile dissolved under some mental chemistry of his own, and he flushed very quickly. "This morning?" he asked.

"Yes—I just caught a glimpse of you downtown."

"Oh!" The relief was too evident. Raleigh began to burn with curiosity.

"Strange you haven't met Mr. Raleigh before," went on Eleanor. "But I suppose there are so many young men living there that you never see half of them."

Stokes put down his cup and stared at Raleigh.

"Are you living at the Y?"

Eleanor cut in. "Yes, indeed, and he's doing some interesting work there. Surely you must have heard of his chorus of men from the Hydraulic?"

Suddenly Stokes went scarlet, and spluttered in his mustache.

"Oh—er—ah—yes, of course. I didn't place you as the Mr. Raleigh who—er—yes, to be sure."

He stopped, and they saw him all but ask whether Raleigh had received the letter dismissing him from the building. Eleanor turned to Raleigh gravely.

"Are you taking any part in the religious activities of the Y, Mr. Raleigh?" she asked. Raleigh for a moment was deceived by her gravity. Then he caught her eye. He spoke as if they were alone.

"I fear my taste in religion is too naive or too sophisticated; I am not sure which." He smiled at Mr. Stokes, who struggled for restraint. Eleanor was gazing into the fire with her chin in her hands, and spoke softly. but with a distinctness that drew both men's attention at once.

"Be that as it may," she murmured, "a very intelligent friend of mine—Madame Lestrangle—has no trouble in finding great comfort in her religion."

Raleigh followed up promptly. At mention of the name Stokes had jerked round, and was staring at her.

"Who is Madame Lestrangle?" asked Raleigh, following his cue.

"The woman who does my hair." Suddenly she turned to the men, as if rousing from a deep reverie.

"Oh—I must tell you the funniest thing that happened there this morning. I was having a shampoo, in the inner room. The outer one is a manicure parlor, I might say. All of a sudden a loud voice of feminine indignation began shouting, 'You get right out of here—you ain't no gentleman!' Naturally I made one leap to the curtain and looked. There was Corinne Bangs, one of the manicure girls, standing with the expression of a most wrathful person, and the man she'd been manicuring was flying out of the door like one pursued." She laughed merrily. Raleigh, gazing at Stokes, saw a great light. He roared.

"I suppose he was some fresh young male flapper who'd been toying with the golden locks?"

"Oh, not at all. He was quite middle-aged, and looked painfully respectable. Then Corinne told her friend in a voice that would fill the Hippodrome that he had been squeezing her knee under the table."

"A quaint fancy," laughed Raleigh. "But, then, what you might expect from middle-age respectability. It's an age that lacks inventiveness, I find. I think Mr. Stokes wants some tea, Miss Grayson."

"Oh, I'm so sorry—I was interested in my story. Can't I give you some, Mr. Stokes?"

That gentleman's countenance was mottled like an Easter egg. He sat as if turned to stone for a moment, then projected himself from his chair in a manner strangely suggestive of lifting by bootstraps.

"No—sorry—didn't know—didn't really know it was so late—I'm afraid that I must go—at once." His hands ran up and down the buttons of his coat like a clarinetist playing scales.

Eleanor rose. "Must you? I'm sorry. I wanted to talk to you about some settlement work, but another time—if you're in a hurry now. You must hear one of Mr. Raleigh's rehearsals. You have them three times a week, don't you?"

"Yes." Raleigh hardly dared to speak. He extended a hand to Mr. Stokes, who

clung to it with a dank finger for a moment. "You must come down when we get a little farther on with the work. It ought to be interesting in another week—if nothing interferes with the rehearsals."

"I'm sure nothing will," said Eleanor. She gave the perspiring Stokes her hand. "Good-by—I'm so glad to have seen you—again."

With a bow and a few mumbled words, he fled, the assurance that had floated him into the room like an august balloon trailing round him like punctured shreds.

They waited without moving till the outside door had banged. Then they looked at each other. With a whoop Raleigh vaulted an ottoman and seized both Eleanor's hands.

"You marvelous person!" he cried.

## CHAPTER X.

Raleigh bent above his desk, a bath robe flung hastily round him and a small stream of water trickling from one elbow. He had been seized with a theme in the showers, and had fled dripping to jot it down. It had come suddenly and completely, and he recognized it at once as the "shop" theme for which he had been hunting. In it the rhythm of the three big presses beat like soft, gigantic hammers. He scribbled busily, then hummed what he had written. Then his brow wrinkled with surprise, and he began rummaging through manuscripts.

He drew forth a big envelope with an Indian stamp on it, and pulled out two single sheets of manuscript paper. One of them he compared to the theme he had written, and he whistled.

"Funny," he muttered to himself; "it's almost the same. I must have struck pretty close." He looked again at the paper he had drawn from the envelope. At the top of it was written in fine, small letters: "Hymn to Apollo—Hyperdorian Mode—about 450 B. C." Underneath, in smaller letters still, "The idea expressed is that of *loyalty*."

He picked up the other sheet, and looked at it curiously, with an expression very akin to dread. The top of it was covered with the same fine writing. He read it with the unbroken fascination it always held for him. It ran:

It is one of the oldest expressions of inspiring music and very rare, because it was, and in all the exclusive religious "inner circles" is still, strictly forbidden. This led to its banishment



from written music; it still existed, however, as part of the "Wisdom Music" handed down verbally from priest to priest. Hints of it are found in Phœnician, Egyptian and Maian chants, pointing to a common source—perhaps in Atlantis. This specimen is from Tibet, and, I am told, is used by the outcast sects there with terrifying results. Do not, I beg of you, employ it lightly, for such things are not for the ears of the layman, and to a sensitive mind, under the right conditions of which only vague legends remain, it might produce death. I can only guess at the forces it liberated, when used properly, but I know they were gigantic. So be careful how you give it sound.

Raleigh looked at the music and heard it mentally. It had a repeating rhythm, that made him think of the spiral coiling of a cobra.

There came a gentle knock at his door, but he was too absorbed to notice it or to see that the door opened timidly and that a figure stood in the room. He was going through the death chant again. The temptation to hear it actually, in physical sound, was too great, and, with a laugh at himself for his own superstition, but with none the less a cold tingling of the spine, he began to sing it. Doubtless his mind was stirred to expect anything, but it seemed to him that the air grew suddenly colder, and that with the coiling rhythm of the chant, boomed out in his big voice, there came a spiral twisting of invisible forces in the air about him. He was certainly cold. He finished it defiantly, loudly, then his eyes lifted from the manuscript, and he sprang to his feet. Smetana was standing in the door, looking at him in amazement, and with a strange smile.

"Great Scott!" cried Raleigh. Then he laughed, and dropped back into his chair. "You startled me," he confessed. "Didn't hear you come in at all." He remembered him by that time as the boy he had befriended in the gym. "Sit down—there on the bed." Smetana was poised as if for instant, scared flight, his eyes growing larger and larger as he looked at Raleigh. He seemed to expect the big bare figure to turn and rend him. He sat down timidly on the very edge of the bed.

Raleigh put back the manuscripts in the envelope, and threw a curious glance at Smetana. Apparently the singing had had no effect on him. Raleigh laughed heartily at himself, a little shamefaced over his mood of credulousness. And yet—

He turned to Smetana, rubbing his head violently with a towel, and talking jerkily

through it. "How have you been? I don't think I've seen you since that day in the gym. Everything going all right?"

Smetana smiled a little. "Yes, pretty good. I got better job now. I run de magnet crane—you know—" and he gestured in a way that two months before Raleigh would have interpreted as the playing of an invisible harp, but which he knew perfectly as the swing of the big crane with its pendent magnets. This crane had always fascinated him; from a huge horizontal arm hung three masses of iron like flattened, gigantic beehives, side by side, as ornaments might hang from a lady's bar pin. In action the horizontal arm swung about, descended, and the three magnets bumped gently upon girders or bars. Then they mysteriously came to life, and clapped to the iron like the suckers of an octopus, to sail swiftly off with sometimes an uncouth kite tail of magnetized pieces dangling.

Raleigh looked at Smetana's thin, frail hands, and thought of the Titan they commanded all day.

"Mighty responsible job—I'm sure I should push the wrong things, and have a cascade of girders trickling down some one's neck. Do you understand electricity?"

"Oh, yes—I study in night school here. That's why I live here." He looked round Raleigh's room wonderingly. "You have so beautiful things," he observed wistfully. Like any impulse to beauty, it warmed Raleigh.

"You must come down often. I'm over at the Hydraulic, too, you know."

Smetana nodded. "Meester McGill, he say you want me sing with you."

"Are *you* the one he meant—with the tenor voice? That's fine. I'll come and beg nightly till you promise to join us—"

He stopped suddenly, remembering McGill's words—"He's the cousin of that guy that was killed the first day you came."

He crossed quietly to him. "I—tell me how your cousin is, the sister of the man who—"

He got no farther, for Smetana had half started up. His hands had clenched, and his face had gone suddenly gray. Raleigh glanced into his eyes in amazement—they fairly smoked—and awkwardly rushed on:

"I—um—so sorry—so little I could do—I was there, you know, and—"

Smetana's hands shot out to him.

"Eet was *you*—so good—to heem! I not

know who!" He choked, and his thin fingers dug into Raleigh's arm.

Raleigh nodded, agitated by the burst of emotion. Suddenly the boy bent, and to Raleigh's intense embarrassment, kissed his hand violently. Then he lifted a torn, white face. He was almost incoherent. Raleigh, appalled by the torrent of emotion, gaped speechless. The boy suddenly hid his face and sobbed. Raleigh patted him gently.

Suddenly Smetana raised his head and looked at Raleigh with eyes glowing dully, but a face vacant of every vestige of feeling; a slate sponged out.

"I *lofed* him," he whispered in an even tone. "He was the only one—my brudders die—my mudder die—he—*ever't'ing!*" He stopped for a moment, then looked directly at Raleigh. He seemed to struggle with a large but vague thought. "You—good," he said slowly; "but they bad; they let him be kill—they want him keel!"

Again Raleigh seemed to see something stir back of the huge eyes.

"Who are they?" he said hastily, fearing another burst of hysteria, and conscious of a coldness as he looked into the boy's strange eyes.

Smetana waved his hands. Words served him ill. "De Hydraulic, de bosses—dose press—"

Raleigh smiled and slapped his shoulder gently. "Oh, come now, really," he said kindly. "It was an accident—a terrible accident—you mustn't blame them. Surely you don't think the 'bosses—'"

Smetana stopped him. "That press," he said, very low, "eet is not work right. My cousin, he tell me. De switch, he not cut off good. He report eet—eet is not fix."

Raleigh was silent, fearing he spoke the truth, looking at him with new eyes for his suffering.

A tremendous thump on the door startled them both, and without more ado McGill roared in, his eyes and cheeks glowing with the outer cold.

"Hello, Dan." He paused at sight of Smetana. "Why, I'll be damned—you found him, huh?"

From the depths of his closet Raleigh winked violently at McGill.

"We're going to take Smetana with us to the show," he said. "You'll come, won't you?" He came once more into the boy's vision. Smetana's face broke into a smile like sudden sunshine.

"Oh, yes—I come—you sure you want me?" This with a wistfulness that caught, too, the blithe McGill.

"Course we want you," he shouted. "Run an' get your coat."

Raleigh explained. "He's terribly cut up about it, and I want to keep an eye on him," he finished. McGill nodded, and Smetana rushed back, having donned a violent magenta tie and a dark overcoat. Raleigh was bubbling of his new theme to McGill. "I'll use it for an original tune. Parker said he'd like some original music, you remember." At the desk he snatched the one envelope the clerk gave him. It bore the red triangle of the Y. M. C. A. "Excuse me a minute," he said, and read eagerly. The letter ran:

DEAR MR. RALEIGH: In view of the fine work you are doing with the men of your place of work in music, and considering the value the auditorium must be for that work, we have reconsidered the question of your leaving the building, and will be glad to have you with us.  
Most sincerely,  
R. A. STOKES,  
General Secretary.

Raleigh's shout of laughter caused the others to turn inquiring faces, and Freddy was jocose.

"Love you, does she?" he grinned.

"Adores me, if one judges by what she's done. No—it's really something rare. Remember the row and my going to be kicked out of here I told you about? Well, I'm not. It's all set."

"How you pull it?"

"A gentleman had his fingers manicured." And this was all they could elicit from him.

Late that evening they sent a happy and radiant Smetana home to the Y. M. C. A., glowing in the warmth of the two men's easy kindness, and the more tangible comfort of mountainous food in which they had all indulged after the movie.

But before Smetana slept, the dark cloud of pain swept back upon him, and the spinning of his mind came clearly to him again—its slow spinning round a focus it could not find. Vague shapes, machines with cruel faces, floated round him, circling faster and faster in his mind. Finally he fell asleep and dreamed that a spinning head had attached itself to the magnet crane. It whirled and whined, and began spinning up the crane arm to him. It became luminous with the heat of its own motion—he felt it hot on his face. He awoke with a scream, in a blaze of winter sunshine falling across his

bed. But the face of his dream remained. It was the face of David Harde.

## CHAPTER XI.

It was past midnight when McGill and Raleigh walked arm in arm up One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street, singing softly, their steps crunching on the frozen sidewalk. McGill turned in, drew a key from his pocket, opened the door, and pulled Raleigh into darkness. Warmth, a lingering odor of tobacco, flowers somewhere, an integrity of knitted life, an atmosphere complete, rushed to him.

"Snff—snff—snff," went Raleigh.

"Hey"—McGill's voice was a hoarse whisper—"what's the matter? Smell smoke or somethin'?" He was fumbling for the light switch.

"No—I smell the breath of home"—a speech which Freddy, leading the way into an upper hall he had flashed into light, accepted as one of Raleigh's incomprehensibles.

Raleigh dreamed vividly that night. Golden-haired manicurists chased middle-aged gentlemen up a long incline, with a grand piano at the top, and suddenly vanished. Raleigh reached the piano to find Eleanor Grayson and Smetana looking with horror into the raised top of it. Raleigh also looked, and saw the body of the crushed workman, stark and staring of eye. He found himself playing—the workman's body muffling the strings. He thought Smetana's "they" appeared, huge scaly shapes that floated round like a crowd of jellyfish—somehow the visual representation of a corporation—a multiple expression of a unity. Raleigh played the "shop" theme that had come to him that day, and "they" vanished. The dead man dissolved, and streamed in dark ribbons out of the piano which whisked humming after them, and vanished; and suddenly the girl who had been with him at the accident was sitting a-top the piano. She tickled his nose with a long feather—

He awoke to find McGill's laughing face above him, and in his hand a lathered shaving brush with which he had been slyly dabbing Raleigh's nose.

He sat up wildly. "Good Lord!" he gasped. "I've had the maddest dream."

"I'll say you have," laughed Fred. "You woke me up hollerin', clear in my room. Breakfast is about ready."

Raleigh dressed quickly, his eye running

over the room, papered in light pink with small yellow flowers in it. On one side hung two or three pennants, on another smoke chromos. Above a desk a curious pipe rack made of elk horns, where hung four dusty pipes. Raleigh wandered to the desk—then snatched a picture from it, and stared. The inadequate photography and stiff pose could not destroy the beauty of the face. Raleigh shouted. It was the girl of the accident.

"Freddy!" he roared, in a tone to bring McGill half shaven from the bathroom. He held up the picture. "Who is this?"

McGill looked at the picture. His eyes twinkled above the lather. "Oh, that's a little friend of mine. You'll meet her soon."

"But I have! The day of the accident. When Smetana's cousin was killed. She was the girl I told you about!"

McGill chuckled. "Well, you'll meet her again. What you think of her?"

"An absolute dear—why, I thought about her eyes in the middle of that awful thing. Like a fool, I never even found out her name. What luck! Do tell me all about her. Does she live near?"

Freddie disappeared into the bathroom. "Tell you after breakfast," he mumbled through soap lather. He hastened his shaving with unheard-of zeal for Sunday morning, so that by the time Raleigh was dressed he had long since clattered down to the kitchen. To Raleigh's nostrils rose the incense of those twin Lares and Penates of the breakfast table—coffee and bacon.

When he descended, glowing and immaculate, he found a thicket young man with powerful shoulders and light hair fitting his head like a cap, seated in a froth of Sunday papers, his slippered feet comfortably planted on the polished railing of a large, round stove. His open shirt revealed a muscular white throat. At sight of Raleigh he rose quickly and smiled. He had very grave gray eyes, and a square, powerful face. He looked at Raleigh a little uncertainly. Raleigh held out his hand easily.

"I don't know which one it is," he said pleasantly. "Bill or Bob or Con—I'm Raleigh."

The other gripped his hand. "I'm Bob," he said quietly. "Fred's talked a lot about you. Sit down; Fred's in the kitchen—he'll be in directly." He drew up a chair, Raleigh did as bidden. This was the next oldest brother, then, with the very good posi-

tion at the White Motors, and the passion for reading books on all things mechanic, and the light-heavyweight boxing champion of the shops. Raleigh felt his able, grave presence, and thought of the militant guildsmen of medieval Bruges; he felt they must have exhibited the same unromantic, not unattractive power. Raleigh liked him, but felt subdued in some curious way. Here was a person before whom he could not possibly be frivolous, he thought.

"Fred told me you pulled down the White boxing championship last week," he said, looking at the other with the admiration of every artist for physical achievement. "That's splendid—I'd much rather do that than write a symphony."

Bob showed signs of embarrassment. He stirred the papers with one foot. "Oh, it doesn't amount to much," he muttered. Then he looked at some one over Raleigh's head, and smiled with a tenderness that changed his whole face. Raleigh turned and saw Fred, his face wreathed with merriment.

"Here's somebody you wanted to meet," he said, and reached behind him, where some one stood, concealed by his big body.

There emerged the girl of the accident. She faced Raleigh, in the full light, and smiled eagerly, clearly not recognizing him. She held out a hand.

"I'm mighty glad to see you, Mr. Raleigh," came the rich, remembered contralto. "Freddy's talked so much——"

Then she stopped, and her face flushed.

"Why," she cried, "you're the one who"—she stared for a moment then whirled on Fred—"he's the one at the accident!" she cried.

Fred chuckled. "Course he is. I was a nut not to know it when you told me 'bout him. When he saw your picture I knew."

Raleigh gave a little crow of delight. "Fancy finding you *here!*" he caroled joyously. "Isn't it luck? I *am* glad. Did you know I was the chap you'd seen at the accident?"

Peggy was gazing at him out of suddenly shy eyes, and smiling with the laughing look he so well remembered. No wonder McGill had seemed familiar to him. She looked down, suddenly pink.

"I—I hoped you were. Seemed as though it might be you."

This was unreasonably pleasant to him. She had seated herself on a low stool. He pulled a chair beside her.

"But why didn't you ask Fred to ask me? He never mentioned it at all."

Peggy rose to the sound of clattering dishes from the kitchen. Her voice, with its rapid rise and fall over words like a wave rolling smoothly over rocks, softening and uniting them in liquid curves, came over her shoulder as she retreated kitchenward.

"Because I was afraid you might not be—and I wanted you to awfully." She vanished. Raleigh turned on Fred and seized his shoulders.

"You shameless bandit," he cried. "Fancy concealing a sister like that——"

"Conceal yer hat," retorted Fred, grinning. "I've been trying to get you out here for a month."

"You'll be a year trying to get me away," Raleigh shot back, with a cosmic smile that included earth and sea and sky.

"I hope so," came in a resounding, pleasant voice from behind him, and he turned to see a big woman, tall and powerful, coming to him from the kitchen. Her light hair was straight, and swept back from a square forehead, and she gave Raleigh a fine hand-clasp like a man's.

"I'm very glad you could be coming out to us," she went on, with the faintest of Scotch burrs in her r's. Her voice touched the same depths as Peggy's, but by virtue of its steadiness and lack of the girl's curling intonation, seemed deeper still. Raleigh had a swift impression, of a heroic figure—the high forehead, the strong face, with wide, kind mouth, and the strength of the body—it was a creature who, in another age, might have seized the Valsung sword, and swung off in thunderous flight across the sky, to the clanging lightnings of the gods.

Instead, "Do you like buckwheat cakes?" she smiled at him. Raleigh blinked and tumbled to earth. "Yes, indeed," he answered mechanically, feeling a little as if a goddess had proffered him a gumdrop. Mrs. McGill turned again to the kitchen. "Well—'scuse me a minute—I'm makin' 'em now."

"Oh, can't I come?" said Raleigh, suddenly the small boy. "I want to. I haven't seen them get crisp, brown bubbly edges for years. I really won't break off the crisp parts and eat 'em first."

"Why, of course—come along," cried Mrs. McGill good-naturedly. "That is, if you don't mind the looks of this kitchen—the laddies all pile in on Sunday morning, and there's no getting them out at all."

"Oh, I'm sure it can't compare to my studio. I used to have the fire department come and throw me rope ladders to get out of the debris. I was really too——"

He ducked his tall head into the kitchen and vanished.

Fred laughed at the others. "That's him," he chuckled. "Now he'll ask ma all about it, and I'll find him fryin' bucks on a hot billet, about Monday." He turned to Peggy. "Like him?" he asked in an undertone.

Peggy, thus addressed, shot him a sudden strange look, then turned away toward the stairs. "Yes," she said in an unreadable voice, "he's very nice."

Her "very" curled up at the end and burred like her mother's—a sign with Peggy which Fred, with the unconsciousness of most brothers, had never learned. The strange depth of her sudden look also had missed him.

Bob it did not miss. His eyes turned grave as iron, and over his face came the curious, tender softening that had so surprised Raleigh. He sat down slowly, with the relaxed grace of the athlete, and beckoned to Freddy with his head. Freddy, out of the unconscious boyhood obedience to an older brother, came at once. Bob looked at him steadily, and his lips barely moved.

"Is this fellow straight?"

Fred looked as if his brother had struck him in the face. For a moment he was speechless. "What the hell do you mean?" he said at last.

Bob met his amazed stare steadily. "I know you like him, and all that, an' he's good looking—most too good looking to suit me—but is he straight—does he run around?"

Fred's face had tightened, and he put a heavy hand on his brother's arm. His voice was hard and rough.

"Say—lay off'n that, will you? I *know* Dan. They don't make 'em any cleaner than that kid. Why, one night we was comin' home from a show, and a couple o' cuties—good lookin' they was, too—comes along. We'd had a drink or two, down't Allendorf's, an' I was feelin' pretty manly. They give us the glad eye, an' I hauls on Raleigh's arm and we all stop. He'd been talking me blue about some old music he's keen on, and for a minute I don't think he sees 'em at all. Then he looks fussed to death. One of 'em fastens onto him, and

t'other onto me. He reaches down, real easy, an' unhooks her arm.

"I'm afraid you've picked the wrong rosebud," he says; an' cold—say, you could have froze ice cream on his voice! Then he laughs all of a sudden, and puts one finger on her cheek, quick, and rubs it, looks at it, then bows like a Frog general givin' the Crow de Gurr. He laughs again. 'No, my child,' he says, 'I'm not goin' in for exterior decoration this season,' an' pulls me along. I was all excited and talked and talked. I was a little sore, an' said I didn't see nuthin' wrong with givin' 'em a good time. He faces round at that an' says, 'Course it's not wrong—it's much worse than that—it's damn poor taste. It's like drinkin' out of a gutter.'"

Voices from the kitchen suddenly made themselves audible. "Oh, let me carry them," and, "Don't burn yourself—that plate's been where it's hot."

Fred sank his voice to a whisper and stared at his brother. "What's the matter with you, wantin' to know all Dan's past? You ain't no little snowdrift, as I ever noticed."

Bob flushed a little and his gray eyes dropped. "Oh, I just wondered," he muttered.

"Never were there so many cakes in the world," cried Raleigh, suddenly prancing in with a steaming plate. Peggy, entering at the same time, flew to him with authoritative hands. They all sat down. Two younger brothers appeared from the back yard, and were introduced, ducking sleeked heads and grinning.

"Where's pa?" asked Fred, dumping three-deck cakes on Raleigh's plate.

"Gone down to talk to Mr. Gardner. He had breakfast an hour ago," returned Mrs. McGill, seated like a statue of justice behind a huge coffeepot.

Accustomed as he was to the morning tea and toast, Raleigh ate himself into a coma. The table groaned with cakes, and crisp bacon, and crisp sausages, and fat blurbs of fresh butter. Every one talked about the great fall of snow during the night. Raleigh looked across at Peggy through the smoke of the boys' cigarettes, and smiled.

"Let's you and Fred and me go for a walk," he said. "That is, if I'm able to leave the table without the help of a crane."

"We're all goin' out coasting," returned Peggy. "Bill—that's my oldest brother—he's comin' with the Ford, and Claire and

Angus fixed the big bobsled. Bill'll pull us out to the Holburn hills, about eight miles out. There's fine skating on the pond, and the coasting is slick."

Raleigh smiled to himself to hear the boyish phrases on her lips. No wonder, he told himself, with a brigade of brothers. The table broke up, and after changing into an old sweater and trousers of Fred's, he sought Mrs. McGill, and found her in the kitchen.

"You don't know how nice it is to be out here," he said, smiling at her.

Mrs. McGill's capable hands were straightening, ordering, "cleaning up." She looked up at Raleigh in genuine pleased surprise.

"That's mighty nice of you to say that," she returned, adding a gleaming pot to the row back of the stove. "Freddy's talked about you lots. He seems to think you're about right." Her deep, strong voice vibrated among the pots and kettles.

"He's saved my life," declared Raleigh. "I'd have died of loneliness, at first, if it hadn't been for him. And—you really don't know how I love being out here," he added between shyness and impulse. "You see, I haven't had any home, really, for about six years. Dad died, when I was just a youngster, and I lost mother just before I went to college."

Mrs. McGill had stopped cleaning up, a half-wiped dish motionless in her hand.

"Didn't you have anybody else?" she asked, the big voice quieter.

"Only Uncle Da—only a bachelor uncle who didn't—who lived in another part of the country and had never thought much of me. Oh, he wasn't unkind," he added hastily; "just awfully busy, and I always took care of myself, anyhow."

"But where did ye live, laddie?" Her voice had taken on a deeper coloring of Scotch that only unwonted feeling gave it.

"Oh, I got right into the army from college. Then I lived about—in funny little studios with chaps I knew. It was rather fun, too; we used to cook all sorts of messes, but somehow they always tasted of grease paint or linseed oil, never like *home*. That's why I love this so." He spoke lightly.

Mrs. McGill stepped to him swiftly, and her big hands were gentle as they touched his coat.

"Ye need never lack a home while I'm standing, laddie," she said brusquely. Raleigh looked up to see the strong face shining

gently. He astonished her with a quick smile of delight.

"Bless your heart!" he cried softly, and hurried out.

## CHAPTER XII.

They had swung out into the open country, and the little Ford panted up the Holburn Hills with the long bobsled in its wake. Peggy had sandwiched herself between Fred, who steered in front, and Raleigh. Then came Bob, and the two younger boys. With shouts of laughter they had fled through the city, leaving stares from the churchgoing, and howls of envy from one sturdy youngster being dragged by uncompromising maturity to devotions.

"Fine-looking bunch," one man had commented, gazing after them. "Did you see that girl—gad, I never saw such color."

His wife had sniffed.

The Ford stopped beside a little lake, lying like a frosted mirror on its plateau. Since leaving the city they had been gradually rising, and the country spread before them, white and lovely. The lake was dotted with a few black figures, and the whistling wind of the early morning had blown it fairly clean.

"I've got some skates for you, Dan," said Fred, as they tumbled from the bob and stretched cramped legs.

"Thanks, old thing, I don't skate. Rotten ankles, you know. You people go ahead—I'll start a track with the sled."

"Don't you skate at all?" asked Bob, looking up from lacing on a pair of hockey shoes. Raleigh felt again the critical, weighing quality of the man, and knew suddenly that to Bob he was an ornamental person of no great use and questionable trustworthiness—recognized the old distrust of the man of strong common sense for the artist. It always irritated him into doing just the things such people expected of him.

"Oh, no, not at all," he returned airily. "My athletics are limited to piano scales—I'm frequently exhausted after ripping off a long string of chords. Occasionally I practice on the organ, too; it gives the legs such development, I find." The others laughed, puzzled—Bob, with lightly veiled contempt. His antagonism came suddenly close to the surface, so that Raleigh tingled to meet it. But he only bowed over his shoes again in silence.

Peggy cast down her skates. "I'm going

coasting with Mr. Raleigh," she declared, and threw an exasperated glance at Bob. "Come on." She met Bob's suddenly lifted eyes defiantly, and seized the sled. Raleigh went to her side. She began speaking as soon as they were out of earshot.

"You mustn't mind, Bob," she said quickly. "He's really a dear laddie, but awful hard to get at. You're a new kind to him."

"He thinks I'm perfectly useless, and thoroughly superficial. You know he does. It's all right. It doesn't bother me in the least." He slipped a hand under her arm. "You don't think so, do you?" he asked naively.

She looked up frankly. "I think you're a wonder," she said with fine candor. "Of course, you're different from us—you write music, and you've traveled lots, and all that. But you're real, somehow."

Raleigh drew a deep breath of relief.

"Peggy," he said earnestly, bending down to her, "all that doesn't matter. I knew boys at school that had fine shells—good looks, a delightful way of talking, minds that could unravel yards of information about eighteenth-century poetry and the specific gravity of oils and the latest theory of government. Under it was nothing. I knew men later—in the army—that couldn't spell their own names, and yet somehow they—answered. There was something in them fine, splendid, strong, that the others didn't have—a core, an essence, an—— I wonder what it is I'm trying to say?" he finished rather lamely.

Peggy had never taken her eyes from his face. Now she smiled, and her countenance bore all the wisdom—which is not knowledge—of the ages.

"It's the heart of understanding," she said.

Raleigh stared at her. "Where did you get that?" he demanded.

"It's in an old Irish legend that my father often told me," she said. Gently, she added, "he couldn't write his own name till he was a grown man."

They had reached the top of the hill. Raleigh looked down at her.

"He didn't need to, if he knew things like that," he replied.

A little silence fell between them. It was very still—the white slopes undulated away, iridescent and gleaming. Behind and below came faint shouts from the boys, busy with hockey on the lake. Soft clouds evenly covered the sky; they scattered the light into

a soft glamour like golden moonlight, making distances deceptive.

Peggy suddenly jerked the sled forward, and Raleigh felt a conscious effort to break the soft spell that was creeping round them. She flung herself on the sled. Raleigh gave a quick push, then hopped on behind her, the guide ropes in his hands. The snow began purling past the sides of the sled, to tinkle into fine, dry spray against his face. It was a little too deep and compact for ideal coasting, but as the sled gained momentum the plumes of snow grew, and soon they were flying down the hill. The sled rocked. Raleigh's arms slipped round Peggy, sitting up in front of him, and she turned half round, and buried her face against his sweater from the snow. To him they seemed, for a moment, one, and alone, shut off from all else by a soft, whirring curtain of sound and a flying mantle of plumy white.

Then the ground flattened, and the sled slowed. They rose laughing, and shaking the snow from them, their faces crimson. Both their caps had come off, and Peggy's hair waved wildly round her face. On the long climb back they talked of many things, and Raleigh felt a growing consciousness of pleasure in her mere presence. Often his quicker mind went beyond her, but quite as often she surprised him with a quaint sagesness.

And yet he knew the thing he felt for Peggy had nothing to do with mind whatever—that it lay beyond and below any intellectual currents, sounding a deep note of its own. He felt it as a warm glow, as a delight in little things they agreed upon in past experiences shared. It was like having taken a cocktail of perpetual and cumulative effect.

"Fred's told me about your playin'," she said when they were nearing the top of the hill. "We're going over next door after dinner and hear you. We haven't a piano, as I guess you noticed; we thought a Victrola would be more fun for the boys."

"You like music, Fred says."

She did not answer at once. "I don't know whether I like it or not," she answered slowly. "It—I feel like some one was pumping me up inside. It makes me feel—I can't tell you—all choky and big and like a tree might feel—or a mountain. Sometimes it most makes me afraid."

Raleigh thought of Eleanor Grayson's deft comment on the "L'Apres-Midi d'un Faune"

—“Fairy horns, muted for the death of the court jester,” and smiled a little. At the summit they found Bob standing beside a stranger, a tall, thin man. Beside him lay a pair of skis, and he was scraping ice from a ski pole.

“Tired of skating?” asked Raleigh.

“Wanted to see this stunt,” he returned shortly, glancing at the skis. Raleigh moved the sled forward and Peggy, rather winded, dropped on it, and began doing her hair. The land fell away from the small knoll in three directions; down one side was the track they had made with the sled, another, toward which it now pointed, dropped with sudden steepness. The third led gradually back and down to the lake.

Raleigh nodded to the stranger. “It’s wonderful snow for you,” he said, “a little heavy for the sled. Which way are you going down?”

The man indicated the slope that Raleigh and Peggy had taken. “That’s about the best, I guess,” he said, walking a little way toward it. Raleigh followed him. “Ever do any skiing?”

“Not in this country,” returned Raleigh. “I spent the winter after the armistice at St. Moritz.”

The other whistled. “You ought to know how, then. I’ll lend you my skis after a bit for a go, eh?”

“Thanks, I’d love to. Why don’t you take off down that steep slope?”

“Not much! That goes to the Holburn quarry, and there’s too good a chance of getting to it before you realize, in this light. It’s a straight drop of one hundred and fifty feet from this side. You can barely see it—the snow light’s deceptive as the devil.” He raised a long arm and pointed. Raleigh after a moment’s gazing, was able to make out a dim line across the snow, and to distinguish between the snow before and behind it as divided by considerable space. They turned to the other slope. Raleigh gauged it.

“Well, no trouble about——”

A peal of laughter from Peggy turned him round. Bob had stepped behind her, and given the sled a jerk, so that it flew from under her, and she plumped down into the snow. With a shriek of laughter, she rose and made for him. Raleigh, glancing at him, saw his eyes tender in spite of their laughter, and suddenly realized how this silent, grave young man loved his sister. It

explained much to him. Peggy ran toward him—he whirled, and with a mocking “catch me, sis,” flung himself full length on the sled. The momentum carried it over the brow and down the steep slope, and with a laugh Bob sped away.

Simultaneously Raleigh and the stranger leaped forward, shouting. But already the sled was one hundred feet away. Peggy turned a laughing face to Raleigh—and the smile froze at the expression on his.

He swooped toward the skis, and almost without stopping slipped his feet into them, snatched the stick, and with a swift plunge glided away. He swayed, rocked—almost went over—sank to one knee. Then he recovered, and crouched to offer less resistance to the wind. The ground dropped, and he seemed to lift and fly.

The sled had nearly one hundred yards the start. Raleigh tried to shout, but the wind choked his words, and flung them behind him with the snow streaming in his wake. He gained. Slowly the distance between them narrowed. But, oh, so slowly, and they were both racing like shadows toward that dim line across the snow. Raleigh, his eyes blurred with water of the wind’s making saw it drawing closer and spreading out, far below. As he watched it grew closer, closer, and clearer, with the lip of the precipice standing out white from the distant, dim plain of the country beyond.

He knew Bob, flat on the sled, with the snow whirling round and the wind in his eyes, could not see, would not see, the thing that he saw drawing closer and closer. The distance between them ceased to shorten; he was not gaining fast enough. The ground had flattened, and the sled, by the force of its greater momentum, pulled away from him visibly, moment by moment. He shouted. This time Bob heard; he turned round, waved, and beckoned to Raleigh. He thought it was a race. Raleigh’s eyes closed for a moment.

Then he felt the ground steepen blessedly from under him, as the hill stooped to a steeper descent. The distance between them narrowed, narrowed, but the line of the precipice was shockingly close. Raleigh straightened, and lifted one foot almost clear of the snow, to reduce the friction surface. The distance between them closed; it was not more than one hundred feet now, and steadily diminishing; the speed was terrific.

Bob turned and looked back at him, with



interest in his eyes and respect at Raleigh's poised sureness. Raleigh shouted again.

"Stop," he cried shrilly; "stop—the quarry—the quarry!" But the wind tore it away. He knew, too, that Bob's ears were filled with the whizzing snow of his own flight.

Inch by inch the distance between them narrowed. Raleigh looked ahead, and saw that the horizon had fallen below the lip of the quarry—knew it must be very near. But he was very near, too—ten feet—five—three—two—he hunched, gathered himself like a panther, and lunged forward and sideways on top of the figure on the sled. Instantly came a blinding deluge of white as his dragging skis caught the flying surface of the snow sidewise. A hot pain shot through his ankle as the ski twisted.

His hands sought Bob's wrists, and with desperate, sudden strength, he tore Bob's hands from the sides of the sled, slid his arms round the other's chest, and jerked backward and to the side. The sled slipped from under them. He fell on his back, Bob kicking impotently on top of him. Instantly they began rolling over and over, Raleigh's skis flying like flails, and occasionally thumping one or the other of them. Raleigh felt Bob's powerful chest and arms expand, and he tightened his grip, as he dug desperately into the snow with his skis and elbows. He knew he must hold on to him, so that he could still try to stop Bob's rolling if released by him. Every moment he expected a final slide, and then the sickening emptiness of space below them.

Then they stopped. It was very sudden. Raleigh did not himself realize it till he heard Bob's voice.

"Let go of me, you damned fool—what the——"

He realized his arms were still locked in a death grip round Bob's chest, and that he had his face buried in the snow. With a sudden weakness he sank back in the snow. A red, snow-wet, and exceedingly angry face appeared, and turned toward him. The gray eyes blazed.

"Say—if that's your idea of something funny——"

He caught the look in Raleigh's face and stopped quickly. At the same moment, ap-

parently from somewhere far under them, rose a faint crash. Bob turned slowly over and got to his knees. Raleigh did likewise. Not two feet from them yawned cold space. Over the precipice's edge dropped a soft lip of snow, its curve broken to the bare rock where the point of Raleigh's ski had scooped it away in the last roll. Bob looked at it, then back to Raleigh. His face had gone suddenly gray. He flung toward him, and his hands shot out to the other's arms and gripped them. It was like the snatching of a terrified child at its mother. His mouth worked.

"You knew," he got out, "you *knew!*"

Raleigh nodded, his body sagging. "It was close," he returned through stiff lips. He slipped out of his skis. The sled's track cut clean grooves in the lip of snow and vanished, with dreadful significance, into air. Raleigh dusted off the snow with one ski, and crawled cautiously forward, looked over, and beckoned to Bob, who crawled after him. Far below, they made out the splintered fragments of the sled, scattered among giant lumps of stone dwarfed by distance to marbles. Bob's stronger but less resilient nature could not so quickly adjust. He shuddered, and drew back, looking at Raleigh with wild eyes.

"My God!" It was almost a groan. "And I thought you were a——" He flung an arm across his face as if to hide the wave of blood that mounted, red and heavy, to his white forehead.

"Oh, don't!" cried Raleigh, hastily. "It's all right." He turned away, but felt Bob's hand on his arm. The hand shook. Raleigh gripped it, and raised his eyes. Bob was past speech, but the look he gave Raleigh warmed him like wine. There were tears in the gray eyes.

Raleigh was too near collapse to permit of emotions. He took refuge behind the shield of flippancy.

"I'm glad this happened," he observed, dusting the snow from his coat and not quite achieving a conversational tone. "Otherwise we should have undoubtedly come to blows, and I would have been reduced to liquid. Have you a dry cigarette about you? Mine look like a mustard plaster and smell like anchovy paste."

# The Good Thing

By Charles Somerville

*Author of "The Yellow Bag," "The Mystery of the 'Bank Roll,'" Etc.*

Familiarity breeds trouble for the smooth Elton Chambers

HE called himself Elton Chambers. In his time he'd called himself names sufficient to fill a regimental roster. He was sitting on a broad, leather lounge in the conservative but luxuriously comfortable Hotel Woolston which is not far off Fifth Avenue. Mr. Chambers' short, fattening figure was clad in a green and brown pattern of clothing which fitted him sausage-skin-tight as decreed by Broadway top fashion of the times.

He was perturbed. He had all he could do to keep himself from biting at his finger nails. But he did. For he recognized the habit as an accepted indication of worry and indecision and he was too far behind in his bill to appear otherwise than smiling, cheerful, and comfortably disposed under the eye of the hotel desk. But secretly Mr. Chambers damned his luck without restraint.

Some three weeks before he had been forced to admit to himself that his pleasant graft of six months' duration at the Woolston was definitely and unpleasantly ended.

Mr. Chambers, with his "Wall Street interests," his snub-nosed, smooth face, decidedly boyish for his forty years, and camouflaging the excessive sharpness of his pale-blue eyes, had deftly horned into a coterie of rather elderly men who lived at the hotel and who frequently, nearly nightly, enjoyed poker sessions.

For five of the six months the short, fat man had been a regular though never a startling winner. But to win moderately in this game was highly profitable. His companions were wealthy and not averse to stiffening the stakes when the cards incited. The exchange of hundreds of dollars on a "pot" was not unusual. The cards had for weeks of themselves favored Mr. Chambers. He had been satisfied for some time to let well enough alone and content himself with legiti-

mate takings. But then the imp of Chance started making ugly faces at Mr. Chambers until he felt the absolute necessity of resorting to a manual dexterity acquired with as much study and practice as men give to honest arts and sciences.

Now, in common with his person generally, Mr. Chambers' fingers in recent years had fattened—a matter of more concern to him than his widening waistband. One night his excessively chubby digits had stumbled in the shift of an ace necessary for the three of a kind with which he meant to lay low the kings-up of Herrill, the banker. Not crudely but ever so slightly had his fingers balked. Merrill had not noticed it. Nor Carhart, Baynes, nor Hamilton. But Withrow did. Chambers was only too sure of that. There had been a glance for a fractional instant between them, but Chambers had read vividly in the keen, blue eyes of the lawyer that he was spotted and that disaster had befallen his "graft."

Withrow had said nothing. He could not, effectively. He could produce no proof. But Chambers knew Withrow to be the legal adviser of every other man in the room. His word given to them privately and Chambers realized he would be as welcome thereafter in the quiet, rich, little stud game as a polecat in a parlor.

Yet he could not relinquish the lucrative evenings without a test. There was just a chance that Withrow might have subsequently doubted his own eyes and said nothing. This slender hope had swiftly vanished. The signs of ostracism were only too manifest when a few nights later he "chanced in" on the game, arriving late as he had always affected to "chance in." His place was filled by a stranger, evidently a friend of Withrow, to whom the lawyer did not introduce

him. No voice of invitation rose. No move was made to open a place for him.

For the superficial saving of his face he had contrived to encounter Carhart in the hotel corridor the next night and in the course of casual greeting remark he'd have to be out of the game for some weeks to come.

"Relatives from the West—staying up at the Astor, thank the Lord—but I'll have to give up my evenings to 'em, I suppose."

Carhart had received the announcement with a mild expression of regret—very mild.

When he first put up at the Woolston, Mr. Chambers' bank roll had been one thousand dollars strong. But he had lived luxuriously the while and, with the improvidence of his kind, what he had not spent in aiding the increase of his belt dimensions or in adding to his wardrobe, marginal gambling in Wall Street and some bad tips on the races had snapped out of his unluckily fattening fingers. So that as he sat on the lounge in the Woolston lobby Mr. Chambers, aside from a fifty-dollar note folded to the size of a postage stamp and sunk deep in the little change pocket of his trousers' band—an emergency fund, especially to be reserved in case a swift change of geographical location became imperative—aside from this single piece of money, Mr. Chambers was strapped—clean.

He'd begun to fear that his wits were getting as fat as his fingers. For days he had driven and whipped his mind for a scheme to replace the card game as a money getter. Only to find his ingenuity gone fallow. If it remained so for any length of time—Chambers but too well knew how quickly could come the transition from a luxurious hotel to a sordid, humiliating lodging house.

Bird of prey that he was, every new human face crossing his vision was habitually quickly, sharply scanned. Sitting there on the lounge, he noticed a tall, loosely jointed young man approach and seat himself at the other end of it. Mr. Chambers' eyes sought the other man's countenance—and lingered—especially as he noted that the young man himself was studiously consulting a guide book such as was offered for sale at the hotel news stand, and was therefore wholly unmindful of his observation.

Mr. Chambers saw that the object of his study was in years between twenty-five and thirty, that his straw hat, blue serge suit, and brown shoes were all spotlessly, rigidly brand-new. Also, that they were of good but not costly quality. Further, he noted

that the young man's posture suggested he was not entirely at ease in his new fixings and that his rugged, well-featured countenance was hard-bitten by strong winds and deeply colored by many seasons' exposure to the sun. The soft shadows and easy lounges of hotel corridors were obviously not his familiar haunts.

Of the South or West, Mr. Chambers adjudged him—not Middle West. A ranch or plantation of a certainty had released him for a fling in big New York—the Coney Island of America. Possibly he was on a honeymoon. Mr. Chambers hoped not. For then the young man might prove too deeply engrossed to be diverted even by an experienced confidence man's best wiles. When a full five minutes had elapsed and no bride had fluttered to the young man's side, Mr. Chambers was pleased. If it was a honeymoon she'd scarcely be away so long.

Hope lighted brightly in the bosom of Mr. Chambers. He took, in the glow of it, a swift inventory of his resources of rascality.

"The Staten Island scheme," he decided. "By all means the Staten Island scheme! Romantic and all that. Yep—the Staten Island scheme!"

The guide book in the other man's hand was propitious. It suggested that acquaintance might eventuate in a manner most to Mr. Chambers' liking in such matters—in other words, that the young man might come out of the puzzlement of the guide book, seeking firsthand information of the person nearest to him. In which case the young man would be the one to speak first.

If this should occur it would be an invaluable asset to Mr. Chambers in what was to follow. For if, later, the young man should grow in any slight degree suspicious of Mr. Chambers, recapitulation of the incidents of their acquaintance would bring forth the fact that it was he and not Mr. Chambers who had scraped or started the acquaintance.

So after, with some little difficulty, crossing one short, pudgy leg over the other and lighting a cigar, there settled on his smooth round countenance an expression of open, even beaming affability. Thus he waited.

The hoped-for happened. The tall man on the other end of the lounge looked up from his book with a frown of impatience, caught sight of Mr. Chambers with his amiable aspect turned full on, and promptly said:

"Mister, could you perhaps set a stranger right on this range? I'm wantin' to get up to the art museum. Just how might I do it from here?"

The fat man chuckled.

"The last place to find out a thing like that is a guide book."

"Ain't that true?" returned the young man with frank laughter.

"Well," said Mr. Chambers, all smiling good nature, "your worries are at an end. The museum is only about twenty minutes from here. You just go to Fifth Avenue—the corner to your right as you leave the hotel—and there take a bus marked—"

He stopped and looked at his watch.

"Why," he added, his chubby face growing brighter, "I've just put in a dull morning down in Wall Street, and my next engagement isn't till five here at the Woolston—I live here—and I'm keenly interested in such things—art, you know—and there's a new collection of"—Mr. Chambers stopped and coughed slightly, having floated into unknown waters—"er—Italian masters," he said, recovering with a neat stroke. "So, by George, if it's all the same to you, we'll go up together."

"Well, now that's mighty kind of you."

"Why, not at all. Glad you suggested the museum. I was just sitting here with a few hours to spare and hadn't thought of that new collection which I very much want to see!"

"Well, it's friendly just the same," said the young man, putting out his hand. "And kind of unexpected. Everybody at home reckoned I'd find New Yorkers uppish and distant with stranger folks."

The plump hand of Mr. Chambers did its best to meet with equal force the grip of the other's long, lean, muscular fingers.

"Lord, boy," he said; "if you only knew how much good it does a hardened old New Yorker like me to meet a chap like you with the tan of the sun on your face and an open, friendly eye! Here we get pale from being cooped up in offices and shifty-eyed from watching the other fellow's moves in the battle of business—yes, and the social battle too that our wives drive us into. I've been West off and on. The people out there—well, I've always been sorry to come away!"

"Ever been to Wyoming?"

"No," said Mr. Chambers promptly. "Wyoming—no I was never there. You traveling alone?"

"Yes."

"I don't take it you're an artist yourself?"

"A long way from that! Cattle. These'll be the first fine pictures and statues I've ever seen. But I cleaned up a cattle deal in Chicago and thought I'd just jump straight along to have a look at famous New York."

"Your deal came out all right, then?"

"'Bout eight thousand to the good. Big stuff for me."

Mr. Chambers said nothing but extracted a leather case, delved into it, and then frowned his annoyance.

"Haven't a card with me but—here—"

He held out an envelope. It was addressed to Elton Chambers at the Blackstone Hotel, Chicago. On the left-hand upper corner was engraved: "The Chambers Construction Company, No. 111 Broadway, New York." When in Chicago some months before Mr. Chambers had sent a letter to the concern making a general inquiry as to the cost of erection of a ten-story building and received their reply. He treasured the envelope thus secured.

"My concern," he said modestly.

"My name is John Garner, Mr. Chambers. I'm from out Cody way, Wyoming. I'm sure glad to have made your acquaintance, sir."

"Not at all, my boy. As I said before, it does me good to meet a man so manifestly frank, open, and wholesome as yourself after the gang of wolves a man has to play with if he plays the game in this big town. It's all right for what you particularly want of it—crowds, theaters, pretty women, skyscrapers, amusement. It's a great old circus. But living in it! No good. I'd give my right arm to be able to pull out of it all and live out in the country—way out—the real country, the real open. I keep my wife and kids out in the country, though I have to put in at least three to four days in town each week. That is, we call it country—one of those places with tailored lawns and pressed drives, bobtailed saddle horses and marble-faced flunkies—you understand."

"I reckon I saw some like it ridin' through the suburbs o' Chicago."

"Right. Well, son, suppose we go up to my room and I'll slip you a little jolt of honest-to-goodness liquor before we start for the museum."

Garner laughed heartily.

"Looks like my lucky day, Mr. Chambers."

Mr. Chambers requisitioned his very last quart, but this fact he kept to himself when generously insisting that the Wyoming man enjoy a second nip.

Their afternoon at the art museum was illuminative to both. For Mr. Chambers purchased a catalogue and by means of reading a description of one picture while they were looking at another astonished Mr. Garner by the erudition he showed in matters of art. In fact, he quite fascinated the long, tall Westerner.

On their return to the hotel Mr. Chambers proposed a third nip in his room. After that he excused himself on the plea that he must put on evening clothes in order to attend a dinner at the Bankers' Club. But, in doing so, added suddenly:

"My boy, I like you! You are just what I took you for on sight. If New York life tends to embitter a man, it also makes him a swift judge of character. How about taking breakfast with me to-morrow morning—downstairs at nine? Good! It's a go!"

They shook hands heartily.

Mr. Chambers did put on evening clothes. But it wasn't to the Bankers' Club he went. Instead it was to a hotel near Sixth Avenue in the lower Forties. The pretenses of the people who lived in it were like the imitation onyx of the pillars in the lobby and the body of the desk.

On inquiry Mr. Chambers was delighted to find that the Señorita Emilia Ricardo was in. He had been equally delighted to remember the señorita's existence in the course of his afternoon with Garner. He had tipped high-ball glasses with her at the Havana race course during the winter. He had all accidentally happened on her in Broadway four days before. He had built up since his successful cast for Garner a most romantic but necessary rôle for her to play. She was, as it were, to aid him with the net in landing the giddy fish.

Mr. Chambers' delight knew no abatement when he departed from the Flamingo Hotel about an hour later. His proposition had been welcomed. The señorita readily accepted the rôle he provided. She had shown the highest intelligence under instruction, as he had been confident she would. Moreover, she readily consented to aid in financing what Chambers had titled "the

Staten Island-Garner transaction." She had advanced to Mr. Chambers one hundred dollars for necessary expenses and told him, if imperative, she could and would go farther.

## II.

Breakfast at the Woolston ended with the men in more genial relation than ever. Mr. Chambers had eagerly led the talk to the subject of Western ranch life and then left it to Garner to do the talking. The "Wall Street man" was as enthusiastic as ever about life in the sun and the open and said that descriptions of it and anecdotes of its comedy and tragedy affected him like a tonic.

"Here," said he, "it is all slyness and intrigue. I've had to resort to such measures myself at times in self-defense—only, by Heaven, in pure self-defense, Garner, I want you to believe. Lord, what wouldn't I give if only sometimes circumstances would shape so that I could meet some of these underhanded business schemers and sharpers man to man, fist to fist, like that scrap between 'Long Cy' Evans and the cattle crook you told about."

Mr. Chambers laid down the stump of his cigar.

"Well, I'll have to break away," he said. "Big day downtown. But if you're around about five o'clock, come up to the room for a little wink at the bottle. And after, if you care about it, we'll have dinner and see a show. It'll be refreshing to have your company. That is, of course, if mine isn't boring you."

"Why, Mr. Chambers, you are treating me just royal, sir. But the dinner—that will have to be mine."

"What difference does it make?" laughed the opulent benefactor of young Mr. Garner. "But if you want it that way—all right. I'll attend to tickets for the show. But come up to the room at five and we'll take a stroll on the Avenue and up through the Park Mall, before dinner."

"I'll certainly report on time, Mr. Chambers," said young Garner; "though why in the world you can figure me worth giving all this time to I don't exactly—"

"I've given you pretty good reasons," said the short man. "Any other old dyed-in-the-wool New Yorker would understand them quick enough. Carhart, Baynes, and Merrill, those wealthy old fogies you saw me bowing to, a little while ago, bore me stiff.

My boy, you're refreshing. And I like you. I did from the moment I saw you. And without throwing any bouquets at myself, Elton Chambers has yet to find it necessary to change his first impressions of a man. So long—till five."

At half past five as the two were strolling in the Central Park Mall puffing at fine Havanas of Mr. Chambers' providing, the latter stopped suddenly.

"Oh, by George," he cried, "this is too bad!"

He whipped out his watch.

"No—no—it isn't too late yet—not if we hurry to the park entrance and get a taxi."

He made prompt reply to Garner's glance of inquiry.

"A fool piece of absent-mindedness on my part. An appointment I have at this very time. If it was a mere business appointment I wouldn't give a damn. But it concerns a young woman—a highly sensitive young woman I wouldn't appear to slight for the world. Let's hurry."

Garner would have left him at the door of the cab. But this Chambers would not have.

"By no means," said he. "Come along. In fact, I'd like to have you meet her. Hop in. I'll explain as we go along."

He thrust Garner in before him, paused to direct the driver and then got in beside the young man.

"Yes, Garner, I think it might do this girl a great deal of good to meet you—youth and youth, you know. It might help her. It is pitiful and unnatural for a girl of her beauty and years to be spending her days as she does now in absolute wretchedness and grief. Understand, my boy, this is a good as well as lovely young woman—a highly bred one. She is the Señorita Emilia Ricardo. Her father was once president of the Costa Rican Republic. He was an old and dear friend of mine. In fact, a big construction job I accomplished in Costa Rica, years back, was the foundation of my fortune.

"Ricardo was a straight, square man, and I hope he found me so. Perhaps you remember the revolution fomented by a lot of crafters down there two years ago which drove him out of his office? No? Well, at any rate, Ricardo died in exile in this city only a few months ago. And—well, after you have seen his daughter, perhaps I'll tell you the rest of his story. It is certainly a strange one. We'll be at the house in a

few minutes. It's right here in the lower Fifties."

A minute or two later the taxi stopped. Not in front of the gaudy Hotel Flamingo where Chambers had sought the señorita the night before. It was a four-story, red-brick house, a modest, almost, because of certain touches of shabbiness and the worn state of the iron-railed stone steps leading up to a portal that seemed to have sagged out of its original lines, an abashed sort of house. It gave Mr. Chambers satisfaction. The señorita had chosen cleverly the abode for the bereaved daughter in reduced circumstances of a one-time South American president.

The dowdy girl who opened the door looked indignant at being asked to toil upstairs to summon one of the lodgers, until a half dollar from Mr. Chambers evoked a smile. They were shown into a gloomy parlor and in stiff-backed chairs awaited Señorita Emilia Ricardo.

She slipped gracefully into the room. Young Garner saw a slender girl of about twenty-two or three, her figure clad in black as dead as her rich, thick hair of the same color was glossy. Her eyes were large and black, her nose delicate, her lips richly red, her throat smooth and white, her cheeks delicately pink.

As the men arose, she went straight to the little, stout man, both white, slender hands held out to him.

"Ah, my good Mister Chawmbers," she said. "It is so kind of you! And you bring me good news? I think you do!"

"Not—not yet, I'm sorry to say, my dear child, but——"

"Ah," said the girl, clasping her hands. "You must pardon. I felt sure when I saw ——" Her eyes slightly indicated the young man from Wyoming.

"To be sure," said Chambers, "a natural mistake. You thought I'd found the person—er—that we seek. No, but—well, Señorita Ricardo, allow me to present Mister John Garner, a young friend of mine—one to whom I have taken a strong liking."

"I am most pleased," she said, with easy courtesy, but palpable shyness. The hand she extended to Garner was warm and friendly.

"But, my child," spoke up Chambers, anew, "you must not permit yourself to become downcast for an instant. You have told me how your father spoke of me to you

in his last hours—told you to trust me. And you have and I'll not fail you. I have not been able to act as quickly as I would have liked, but everything is going to come out all right."

"Mr. Chawmbers, you have been so very good. And your lovely wife and children. They were all so kind to me in your beautiful mansion in the country."

"Yet you would not remain with us!"

"Ah—no! How could I inflict my grief on that household so gay and happy?"

"But, at any rate, my dear, you cannot remain indefinitely in these poor rooms, in this loneliness, with nothing to take your mind off your misfortune. I know the strictness of your country regarding the period of mourning. But, Señorita Emilia, your case is exceptional—here all alone in New York, knowing hardly a soul."

"None but yourself."

"Exactly—none but myself. To-night you must really let Mr. Garner and myself persuade you to come with us to dinner and to a theater."

"I could not think of it."

"Of course you could. Your mind and nerves really require the relaxation—the momentary forgetfulness of your loss. As a friend who dearly loved your father, señorita, I advise it."

"In a public restaurant—no, I could not. But to hear happy music, happy voices, a theater—ah, Mister Chawmbers, you tempt me very, very much."

"By all means, Miss Ricardo," interjected Garner, "accept the invitation."

She smiled slightly at him.

"If that I might sit somewhere unseen, far back, veiled——"

"It's done!" cried Chambers. "I hoped you'd listen! I've three box seats for 'Honeydew,' musical comedy, in my pocket right now. We can sit in the rear of the box where you'll be able to see all that goes on on the stage and not be observed yourself."

"And why not dinner?" urged Garner.

"I would be too sorry a companion. But the theater—veiled——"

"It's settled, my child," said Chambers. "We'll call for you at eight."

As Garner and Chambers separated in the lobby of the Woolston to dress for dinner, the little man laughed and said:

"I lied about having the tickets in my pocket."

"It was a good lie," observed Garner warmly.

"Oh, the hotel people will manage to get me the seats somehow, even on such short notice. They are used to such demands from me."

Garner grinned across the table at Chambers a little later.

"My first swaller tails. How do I get by?"

"Fine. You look a lot less like a waiter, my boy, than I do. That's a triumph some of us never achieve."

It was nearing the conclusion of the dinner before the name of Señorita Emilia Ricardo was mentioned. Strategically Mr. Chambers had patiently waited for Garner to do this first.

"Do you know," said Garner finally, "it seems to me I never saw anybody look so out of place as your friend, Miss Ricardo, in that gloomy, old boarding house."

"You mean——"

"Such a lovely, elegant girl. I think," said Garner warmly; "she is the most beautiful girl I ever saw."

"The poor little thing," said Chambers.

"She seemed in some sort of trouble."

"Yes—a curious state of affairs."

"She seemed to think when I came in with you that I was somebody going to help her."

"Yes—the poor kid was sharply disappointed. I guess you saw that."

Garner nodded.

"You said when we got into the cab to go there, you'd tell me about her later, Mr. Chambers. Of course, I don't calculate to hold you to that. Perhaps—on account of the young lady—you'd rather not talk of it."

The inner self of Mr. Chambers was wreathed in smiles. The boy was diligently rigging his own trap! Outwardly the fat man gently wagged his head.

"Son," said Mr. Chambers, "I like you and trust you well enough to tell you all about it. As I said it's a curious story, but not a complicated one. It's soon told. When the grafters down there in Costa Rica got together and fomented a revolution that deposed her father, President Ricardo, he was just barely able to get his wife and daughter safely away to some relatives in Yucatan and himself escape later on a vessel which brought him to New York. Of course, his estates were confiscated. But there remained of his fortune something over sixty thousand dollars.

"Ricardo was a man of forethought. He had figured on the contingency that came up—the bribery and corruption of his army by the grafters who were heavily supplied with money by American capitalists looking for rich concessions in the country under the crooked government they plotted to establish. So when Ricardo was finally obliged to flee he took away with him his sixty thousand dollars and more which he had managed to convert into British guineas and American eagles—gold."

Mr. Chambers lighted a cigar. He frowned and paused.

"What I'm going to tell you now," he went on, "only two other persons on this earth know about. Why, if I dared trust this secret to that moneyed gang I have to do business with downtown, I could relieve the señorita's distress in twenty minutes. But I'm damned if I know one of 'em I could be sure would be square enough not to rob an orphan. And to bare this secret to them would be to give them the chance. But I'm sure of you, Garner, sure I can trust you."

"I reckon you can, Mr. Chambers."

"Because, boy, to give you a full idea of the case I have to tell you some things regarding my own state of affairs just now—things it would be embarrassing to have the business world know generally. But I think you have a mind—a vision broad enough to understand how it can come about that a man worth, well, say half a million dollars, perhaps more, might find it difficult—worse than that—nearly impossible—to raise a matter of four thousand dollars—that is to say, temporarily. In a few months I would, of course, find no difficulty in raising fifty to one hundred thousand dollars in ready money. But the trouble is that to do Miss Ricardo any good, four thousand dollars must be raised within the next week, or else she stands to be cheated out of her legacy—that sixty thousand dollars in gold that her father managed to carry with him out of Costa Rica.

"In my own case—it's like this: The Chambers Construction Company is just now swinging ten big jobs all at once. I'll end up three to four times a millionaire when I've finished them and you bet it will be the end. Out of that mean, scheming game of business for me forever after that! I'll probably be out your way looking to buy a big ranch and settle down among whole-

some, honest, open people. But to swing these ten big contracts, son—three down South, six in South America, and one as far off as India—I've had to sew up every dollar I've got and then mortgage that up to the hilt with the banks.

"There's a big cash pay roll to meet every week, and it takes just everything I can do to carry it. I'm even letting my bills for household expenses and such things run up meanwhile. So that, although I'm a rich man, I could as well spare my right arm as I could four thousand dollars in cash at this time. I wonder if you can see that?"

"Why, yes, sir," responded Garner promptly. "I was sewed up just like that myself, swinging my ranch before the returns started—in a whole lot smaller way, of course. But I calculate the circumstances are about similar."

"There," smiled Mr. Chambers, "of course, you can understand. But, to return to the case of the beautiful, troubled girl you met this afternoon. When her father came to New York, he leased a small house on Staten Island for himself and a few stanch friends who gathered around him. He did not send for his wife and daughter because he was by no means reconciled to exile. It's a pity that he did not accept the situation, but he schemed and plotted for his return. Influential Americans became interested, but before he would accept their financial support, Ricardo decided that he must be able to guarantee them success absolutely. To determine if he could do this, he felt that he must somehow make his way back into Costa Rica and secretly but surely assay the prospects—whether his old popularity and leadership, with sufficient financial sinews, could be rewon.

"It was mighty risky. But he tried it. And failed. He was captured, and was tried and sentenced to be shot. But he was still loved by the people. They raised such a clamor that the government had to content itself with imprisoning him for life. And, in addition to the torture of that condition was Ricardo's knowledge that his wife and daughter were penniless in Yucatan, dependent on the charity of friends—penniless, when all the time, buried in the cellar of the Staten Island house he had leased, was the sixty thousand dollars in gold he contrived to bring from Costa Rica on his first flight!

"The espionage on him in New York and



upon his family in Yucatan had been so close that he had not dared to impart in a letter the secret to his wife and child of the treasure he had buried. And, of course, the letters that he sent from prison he knew were all carefully scanned and most of them not forwarded at all. To have attempted to convey the knowledge and whereabouts of his nest egg of wealth to his family would have been to have made a present of it to some one of his jailers.

"Under the mental strain, as well as the imprisonment, Ricardo's health broke down completely. News of this got out of the prison. A popular petition for his release was circulated. It got so many thousands of signatures that the government as a matter of policy granted it. Ricardo was released, but exiled. He made his way to New York with only in reality a few weeks left to live. It was only when his daughter arrived in New York that he learned that his wife had died in poverty, stricken in the belief that she was never to see his face again.

"Meanwhile, the year's lease he had taken on the Staten Island house had, of course, expired. Ricardo feared that legal complications might arise if he demanded a right to dig into the cellar of the house and recover his gold. It was a large sum and might tempt the property owners to put up a fight against his title to the buried money. The house and grounds he had leased in Staten Island are valued at about twelve thousand dollars. His plan, a very sensible one, was to raise sufficient money to purchase the property—a perfectly good investment—take possession and thus, without any red tape, hitch, or trouble, recover his money. He found that the house and grounds could be purchased with a cash payment of four thousand dollars, mortgages accepted for the rest.

"Ricardo confided this matter to only one person—his daughter. But he knew death was near and told her in case anything happened to him she was to come to me and could trust me absolutely with her secret. Ricardo died two weeks ago—more suddenly than he had imagined probable—and Miss Ricardo came to me. Came to me," said Chambers bitterly, "and found me helpless. For in her case the only plan—the only safe way—is to follow her father's idea. She has no writing from him to prove her title to the money. If she sought relief in the courts to get a permit to dig up the sixty thousand

dollars from the cellar of the Staten Island house, the Costa Rican consulate must hear of it and you know what those harpies would do—they'd smear the money all over with claims by the government—claims that the buried gold was embezzled from the public funds and grab it off for themselves."

"What—against a girl?" demanded young Garner hotly.

"Against their own mothers—that crew! I guess you can't imagine it possible. But, my boy"—Chambers waved his hand—"that gang—good Lord!"

"And all that stands between this girl and her rights, and saving her from poverty is four thousand dollars?"

"Yes, and I know a thousand men who could spare it as easily as perhaps you could a ten-dollar note. But I'm damned if there's one of them I'm sure of—one of them that I wouldn't fear, if I bared the secret to him, might be tempted to go grab off that property and money for himself, and let the girl go hang! If it was my own case, of course, I'd—well, pick out say one out of about four men I know and take the chance. But I don't feel I have a right to in the case of a girl like this. I haven't the nerve to take any chances. Of course, I've promised her I would find somebody and——"

"She thought when I came in with you today, I was maybe the man?"

"I suppose so. But you haven't heard yet what makes the case desperate. Why, in about three months, I could swing the deal twenty times over. But I've had inquiry made into the property and it appears a corporation has been formed for putting up bungalows by the wholesale over in Staten Island along where this house and grounds are. That would mean the tearing down of the house and the excavation of the grounds so that, unless I can close the deal mighty damned—how is it you so say in the West?—pronto, there'll be no other way open but to go into the courts with the girl's case with the absolute certainty that a lot of Costa Rican grafters and not Señorita Ricardo will get her father's gold—her fortune—the only thing that stands between her and a youth of poverty and distress. By gum, son, it's tough!"

"No, by gum, it isn't, Mr. Chambers! I mean it isn't going to be. I mean I got enough money right by me now—right out in that hotel desk—to see Miss Ricardo

through on that little deal. If she'll let me, I'll do it! Mr. Chambers, you've just got to see that she lets me!"

"Nonsense, boy! You're a young fellow just coming to the top in your game—you probably couldn't afford it. It might set you back seriously. Good Lord, I didn't tell you this story to rope you into it! Hadn't such a thought in my head, son. It was only that—well, you're a man I feel free to talk to and it did me good."

"But, Mr. Chambers, I'm dead in earnest about that offer!"

"Not so fast. Better think it over a while. Not that there is the slightest risk. And, of course, as Miss Ricardo's adviser I should insist that any person who came to the front for her should receive at least one thousand dollars as a reward for the service. It would be well worth it. But——"

"Mr. Chambers," said young Garner sternly, "I thought you said you liked Western folks. Do you suppose a young, husky man like me, comfortably off—or even if I was dead broke, when it comes to that—would take a cent for doing a girl like Miss Ricardo such a favor? That's damn close to being insultin'! What the devil! As you say, I'm taking no risk at all. In an hour after Miss Ricardo gets the deed to her house I get my money back! Why, of course, I'm game to step in and do that! You can have the money right in your hand now—soon as I can romp to the hotel desk and get it out of the safe!"

"Easy, boy, easy," Chambers cautioned. "You generous kid! We'd better be romping along as you say to keep our engagement with Miss Ricardo. Then, if you're sure your mind's made up, you can tell her yourself."

"Lord, no!" said young Garner. "But I'm there to do it just the same. All you need do, is lift your finger."

Mr. Chambers thrust a plump, impulsive hand across the table. Young Garner's steel fingers made pulp of it.

### III.

In the dim, gas-lit parlor of the rooming house, the Señorita Emilia Ricardo reappeared before them. Again the gown she wore was dead black but it was cut low, revealing to the full her smooth, milk-white throat and partially her delicately molded shoulders. Hands and throat were bare of

jewelry. Over her shining black hair was thrown the fascinating black-lace mantilla of Spain. She was a creature of beauty and witchery.

After the three had ridden a short while in the taxi, theaterward, Chambers said:

"Shall I tell Miss Ricardo, Garner?"

"Yes," replied the young man eagerly.

"Well, my dear child," beamed Mr. Chambers. "I've the best of news for you."

"Señor!"

"The best of news. After all, Mr. Garner was the one you at first supposed him to be—this afternoon, you know."

"You mean?"

"He has offered to finance the recovery of your fortune."

The girl clasped her hands.

"Most generously, my dear girl," continued Chambers. "He will supply the money necessary and refuses to be compensated in the slightest way for the service. He treats such a suggestion as an insult."

Señorita Emilia Ricardo turned her great, glowing, black eyes on Garner. Suddenly she seized his lean, toughly fibered hand and before he could prevent her, had raised it to her lips and kissed it.

"You are a noble gentleman," she said. "I—I—cannot express my gratitude! Mister Chawmbers—Mister Garner——"

She could no longer hold back her tears.

Entering the theater and even while sitting well back in the box, she kept her features constantly veiled with her mantilla. Only, once in a while, she drew the lacery away to turn her eyes upon young Garner and flash him from her large, eloquent eyes expressions of her gratitude. At the end of the first act, she begged to be taken home.

"The good news—it has so unsettled me!" she pleaded tearfully to Mr. Chambers, with tender half glances toward Garner. "Tomorrow—in some quiet restaurant—if then Mr. Garner and you arrange to meet me, ah—I shall welcome you, indeed, my kind, my generous friends."

The pressure of her fingers on Garner's as they parted at the rooming house was fervent.

The men returned to the theater. On their way home afoot, after the performance, Garner looked up at a Turkish-bath sign emblazoned in electrics.

"There's something I've got to try out while I'm in New York."

"A Turkish bath—never been in one?"

"No—heard the darnedest stories of how they bake you and cook you and scrub you and pound you and all."

It was no part of Mr. Chambers' purpose to part with Garner for an instant now.

"Come on, let's go in and have one," he said. "I often go to 'em for a boiling out. Do me no end of good."

Garner noticed that when Chambers emerged from his dressing room an attendant had strapped a wet towel tightly and securely about his head.

"Have to get an ice-water wrap for my bean," laughed the short, fat man. "Apoplectic, you know."

The tall, lank young Westerner showed all the rollicking delight that a schoolboy might in the processes of the bath. It was after two o'clock in the morning when they returned to the Woolston.

"Not too late for a nip in my room," suggested Chambers.

"Wait," said Garner, as Chambers was fervently hoping he would, "till I get my money envelope out o' the hotel safe. I'm going to do that thing to-night. Couldn't sleep easy if I didn't."

"Well, boy, if you've made up your mind fully, I'll say it's a fine, generous thing you're doing. It makes me proud to know you, son."

"I want you to feel that way about me, Mr. Chambers. But perhaps it would be safer to leave the money in the hotel vault."

"No," said Mr. Chambers—but not urgently. "You can pass it to me and then I'll bring it down and put it in a special strong box I have in the hotel vault. That will make it safer than ever. Besides I will want to draw you up a receipt on my own stationery."

"All right," assented Garner, and hastened to the night clerk. Mr. Chambers' heart swelled at sight of the passing of a thick yellow envelope between the men.

When the elevator stopped at his floor he led Garner out with an affectionate, paternal hand on the young man's arm. As the door of Chambers' room closed, the short, fat man said unctuously:

"Now, boy, for a nifty, little nightcap!"

Then something between a shout and a squeal was jolted, startled out of him. Fin-

12B P

gers of steel had caught him around the throat and a power he was absolutely helpless to resist slammed him into a chair. Before he could get his breath to cry out again his hands were wrenched together and manacled. Mr. Chambers' first realization was that the steel bands were painfully tight upon his fat wrists.

"I got you," said the tall young man with a wide grin of satisfaction, "Mister Chambers, Mister Two-or-three-hundred-things—including William Bailey. Remember that name? Or is it too long ago? Pretty near ten years, ain't it? I had to make sure it was you. You've grown a lot beefier than when you had the picture taken by the police out there in Chicago. And the Bertillon report on you had it "bad teeth." An' I'll say that dentist did a good job. I had to look a long time before I was sure those nice, even ones you got now were false.

"The same for this top piece you wear on your bald head!" Garner gingerly lifted it off. "But I had to be surer than that—even if that towel trick 'round your 'apoplectic bean' did make it certain this here hair was bought stuff. That's why I had to take that Turkish bath. A mole on the stomach and another on the left shoulder blade was what I was lookin' for—and found. How do you do, William Bailey!"

"Young man, you are some damned fool of an overzealous hick detective making a damned rotten mistake. You'd better get these things off me as soon as you know how," said Mr. Chambers sneeringly, steadily, and quite calmly.

"That proves it, you skunk," said Garner. "An honest man would be up on his hind legs roaring his head off. It's the crook's idea to come the calm, superior stuff when they're landed. I guess you ain't got no memory at all of engineerin' that big cattle robbery out in—not Wyoming but Arizona, ten years ago—workin' among and corruptin' a lot o' men down there into running cattle and shipping them in to Kansas City to you? And you cheating even them and running away with all the swag—leaving them to take the jail sentences? Of course you don't remember! Well, my dad's the sheriff out that way, and I'm his deputy. And he just thought I might chance to run into you on this vacation trip o' mine. Lord, I'm taking no credit for it, man! I expected to have a lot of trouble and looking up to do. But—New York's a darn funny place! Big

as it is, I walk into this hotel first thing and sit right in your lap. Or darn near it.

"You've been tellin' me how much you long to be out of New York and spend the rest o' your days in the West—the West you love so much! Well, you're going there, all right! There's six cattle thieves out there just finishing ten-year terms that'll be glad to spill all they know about the guy that

made crooks of them and then turned yeller and crossed them!"

"I demand that a lawyer be sent for immediately."

"You'll get all that. And a judge and jury, too, out in Arizona, to fix everything up fine for you. Here, you poor, white, scared faker—here, open your face and I'll pour in a drink."

*Other stories by Mr. Somerville will appear in early issues.*



## OUR "POVERTY-STRICKEN" DIPLOMATS

**W**HEN are we going to pay our diplomatic representatives abroad what they are worth? To give a couple of instances, is it fitting, as is reported, that our minister to Jugo-Slavia should be forced to do his own typewriting of dispatches because the government cannot afford to hire stenographers, or that, at Bupapest, the diplomatic offices are cramped, wooden boxes up two flights of narrow stairs leading from a small, evil-smelling courtyard? But where our pinchpenny diplomatic policy pinches worst and most obviously, of course, is in regard to our ambassadors.

A big first step toward the remedying of this fact has been taken in the decision recently reached to supply our ambassadors abroad with homes. Of all the countries to which we have accredited full-fledged ambassadors not one has an official residence completely owned by the United States except London. In Tokyo the building, but not the land is owned—the government renting the land. For an embassy in Mexico, Congress appropriated one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, in 1914, but events have prevented the erecting of it. This last year one hundred and thirty thousand dollars was voted to build an embassy in Chile. The situation is that, of our eleven ambassadors, seven, for the present, at least, must lease, according to their personal purse, the homes which shelter them—as is also the case with twenty-eight of our foreign ministers.

It is said that John W. Davis was obliged to borrow seventy thousand dollars in order to be able to accept the ambassadorship to Great Britain in a manner conforming to the dignity of the post. It all makes one think of Joseph Choate, who, when caught out late one night in London and asked by a "bobby" why he did not go home, replied, "I am the American ambassador. I have no home." Or one is reminded of Mark Twain when he wrote, "Think of a \$17,500 ambassador! Particularly for America! It is a billionaire in a paper collar—an archangel in a tin halo!"

Seventeen thousand five hundred dollars for our ambassador in London—and for all our other ambassadors! Ten thousand dollars for our envoys who are rated as "ministers"—though a few, as in the case of China and the Netherlands, receive the munificent sum of \$12,000! And with it all, in most instances, the necessity of providing their own housing in a manner somewhere near fitting! To quote Mark Twain again: "A country which cannot afford to pay ambassadors' wages should be ashamed to have any!" Compare our niggardly policy with the general French or British system, as in Berlin, for example, where both France and Britain own splendid government buildings and pay their representatives \$33,938 and \$40,932 respectively. The lowest-paid British ambassador is the one to Japan, who receives \$25,000. The British ambassador to the United States has an allowance of \$100,000 yearly.



## Git Along, Cayuse, Git Along

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

**I** WAS top hand once for the T-Bar-T:  
Git along, cayuse, git along.  
But I took to seein' the scenery:  
Git along, cayuse, git along.

'Way out where the barb-wire fence don't grow,  
Where the hills and such ain't made for show,  
Where there ain't nobody says, "Come," or "Go"—  
Git along, cayuse, git along.

I was top hand once—but the trail for mine:  
Git along, cayuse, git along.  
So now I'm ridin' the old chuck line:  
Git along, cayuse, git along.

With a little gray hoss that steps right free,  
And a pack hoss I call Filaree;  
Just grub and no trouble in the pack for me:  
Git along, cayuse, git along.

When the ole sun sets in a big red pool:  
Git along, cayuse, git along.  
And the mesa breeze is clear and cool:  
Git along, cayuse, git along.

Then I drop my pack and I spread my roll,  
And I camp right close to the water hole,  
Where there ain't no noise to dent my soul:  
Git along, cayuse, git along.

Sometimes I figure just what I'm worth:  
Git along, cayuse, git along,  
And why the Lord He made the earth:  
Git along, cayuse, git along.

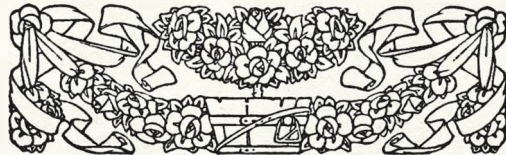
And then thinks I: "Now don't git smart,  
And whine to the Boss to take your part,  
Just rope your pack and make your start:"  
Git along, cayuse, git along.

Seems like I don't git anywhere:  
Git along, cayuse, git along.  
But I'm leavin' here and I'm goin' there:  
Git along, cayuse, git along.

There ain't no door and there ain't no gate;  
And there ain't no folks that got to wait  
Till I git there, if I'm ten years late:  
Git along, cayuse, git along.

I'm the Warblin' Kid of the fadin' West:  
Git along, cayuse, git along.  
And there ain't no linin' to my vest:  
Git along, cayuse, git along.

But I got a hoss that steps right free,  
And a pack hoss I call Filaree,  
And I'm singin' high and I'm ridin' free—  
Git along, cayuse, git along.



# Jules Dutot's Soul Agent

By Hugh Kennedy

*Author of "Number Fifteen and Jonah," "The Alcohaling Tragedy," Etc.*

Spiritualism is brought up to date

THE thing had got beyond me. Helpless where I most desired to help, I realized at last that against the growing influence of that garrulous and seemingly artless old woman I had no resource. Either I must speedily call in expert aid or permit the mischief to go beyond recall.

In a matter so baffling yet delicate I knew of no man except Pindar to whom I could turn with any hope. He consented to meet me, after my guarded hint as to the nature of my "case," in the office of the music store, and to come in the evening when we could be sure of privacy. Feathers, as a matter of course, came along with me. Soon after his master had gone, never to return, the little black cocker had deserted his old home and attached himself to me. He followed me daily to the store, made my bachelor house his home; yet his faithful heart had never ceased to mourn.

He growled now at the sound of a hand on the knob of the street door. I had been using the interval of waiting to dictate letters to the machine beside my desk and at the dog's warning interrupted my work to go down and let in my visitor.

I had never before seen him, although I had often heard of him, of the directness, originality, and essential humanness of his methods as a criminal investigator. My first impression was one of surprise at his youthfulness. In the imperfect light of the street he did not seem a day over thirty; but this was an illusion, I was later to learn, which his erect carriage, his alert expression, the spring of his movements, the engaging flash of his even white teeth in his ready smile, united to create. His real age lay in that unguessable period about forty in which some men continue for years without outward sign of the passing of time.

He followed me up the stairs to the office, which was unpartitioned, and which occu-

pied, with the soundproof room for phonograph records, the whole of the mezzanine floor. "Don't let me interrupt," he begged. "Using the dictaphone, I see. Go ahead. I'll chum up with old cocker, here."

"If you will excuse me," I apologized, "I'll finish the letter I am on. It will save picking up the threads in the morning."

He made little headway with Feathers in the brief time I required to finish my dictation; for the dog, heavy with grief for his master, had small room in his heart for new friendships.

Desisting, he turned his brisk attention to the instrument. "Don't mind if I listen?" he asked as I set the mechanism to reproduce the dictated letter. "I'm keen on mechanical things—like to understand them. The dictaphone is a contrivance I'd like to know more about."

"This is not exactly a dictaphone," I told him, "but for our purpose is quite good enough. As you see, it operates by a main-spring, like a phonograph. More modern machines use electric current."

"I follow you." He was as keen as a youngster with a new toy.

I touched the starting lever and reproduced my dictation. "Fine!" he exclaimed, with a heartiness clearly genuine. "As distinct as your own voice. Only, why did it seem to trail off that way at the end?"

"That," I explained, "is the fault of this old-style machine. The spring was running down." From force of habit I began to wind it up.

"I see!" He was quite as eager as if this were the thing he had been called in about. "As the power goes off, the speed decreases."

"Exactly; and as the speed decreases the pitch of the record becomes lower, just as it would on a phonograph record."

"Why, of course!" This with the elation of a discoverer. "Pitch being only a matter

of the number of vibrations per second that strike the ear, it follows that the faster it runs the more vibrations per second—and the higher the pitch. Quite clear."

"Of course," I began to apologize for our office equipment, "later instruments——"

"To be sure," he interrupted. "Improvements, naturally. Well, in what way can I serve you?"

I covered the instrument and placed the answered and unanswered letters before me in their proper receptacles. "It's about my partner," I said uneasily.

"Your partner!" repeated Pindar. "But he's——"

"True," I finished it for him. "He's dead—in his grave these three weeks. Yet the fact is that the conditions he left behind have been causing me more anxiety in those weeks than he ever did in all the years we were associated as friends and partners."

"Conditions? Things connected with the business?"

"In a way, yes. From his new plane of existence he still takes a hand—a mighty vexatious hand."

"I see." He froze somewhat. "You're a spiritist, then."

"Far from it. I've always been dead set against that kind of thing. It was one of the few matters we differed on during his life."

"Then who," he asked, with a patent revival of interest, "gets his messages?"

"His widow, poor thing. His sudden death overwhelmed her. She is of an artistic temperament, deeply sensitive. So was he. They used to dabble a bit in psychic experiments—mind-reading, séances, that kind of thing—and there was an understanding between them that the first to go would try to communicate with the survivor. That, in her present high-strung state, is preying on her mind. She imagines that he is constantly trying to "get" her; and she is as constantly trying to aid him. She believes, poor girl, that she has at last perfectly succeeded."

Pindar was listening with a keenness that seemed peculiarly his own. He sat quite at ease, but with an intense sort of stillness, his gaze fixed on the picture molding. "How?" he inquired. "Spirit writing?"

"No." I felt myself flush, as though it were a disloyalty to lay bare Cora Dutot's delusion. "She is a ouija addict."

Pindar grunted. "Case for the doctor, isn't it?"

"I hope not. I want to keep it from that. She is not altogether self-deceived. She is the victim, if my suspicions are well founded, of an adventuress."

He flashed me a quick glance at that. "An adventuress? What sort?"

"Slight, gray-haired, sympathetic, motherly, talkative as a parrot; and as artless seemingly."

"Just so; the regular steerer," he commented, as though recognizing a portrait.

"Exactly," I said, glad to have my suspicions confirmed. "Which means that there's a principal, or a gang of them, lurking somewhere in the background, ready to pounce."

"To pounce! On what?"

"On her fortune, such as it will be."

"Indeed!" He showed surprise. "Did Dutot die rich then?"

"Not exactly rich," I explained, "but there will be quite enough to tempt any con outfit. We built up this business of Dutot & Brent, the two of us, from small beginnings. The erection of this building taxed our resources beyond our calculations and we both, about three years ago, took out life insurance as a safeguard—a hundred thousand each. That, in case of anything happening, was to go into the business. Dutot insisted on making his policy payable directly to his wife, but instructed her, in a letter inclosed with his will, to hold as much of the money available for the business as required. He had absolute confidence that I would ask only what was needed, and just as absolute confidence that she would carry out both his wishes and mine. Well, the business, deprived suddenly of his services, will need all that capital."

"And she objects?"

"She has had fresh advice. Her experience in practical affairs has been very slight. She cares little for money, except for her children. There are two—little more than tots—a boy and a girl. What she wants—all she wants—is to do exactly what she thinks her spirit husband is directing her to do. With the wider vision, the added knowledge, of his new state, he has changed, it appears, his views. He recommends other investments for her money."

"Such as?"

"Oil stocks."

"Thought as much," grunted Pindar.



"That places them. There's a gang, all right. They're operating in other quarters, too. They're known. They're being watched."

"By the police?" My heart bounded with hope.

He nodded.

"Then they will be stopped—driven out of town?"

"If they give cause. But is that likely? Influencing susceptible persons through the ouija board is no crime. We cannot arrest any one for that."

"Sir," I cried, my fist pounding the desk, "this thing has *got* to be stopped. It isn't the business alone; there's something more important. Cora Dutot must not be stripped, left penniless. She is all unstrung, just now. She must be helped, given time to recover. I have done what I can, but my position is such that I cannot interfere; my motives would be too easily misrepresented. I might be accused of wanting the money for myself; which I do, but to use for her and her children. But there's more, I tell you, more than money at stake."

His eye was on me as I paused—the eye of one on his guard against sentiment. "You speak with feeling," he remarked.

"Feeling? My God! Why not? My business success, my loyalty to my dead partner, my duty to his fatherless children, my—my— Why hesitate? You want the full facts. Here is the chief one: I am a bachelor. Why? Cora Dutot, the perfect wife of my truest friend—she is the answer."

His eye was again on the picture molding. "So then"—he spoke with the precision of one holding firmly to the practical—"you are not insisting on the arrest or conviction of any one?"

"I want to save those I love." It put my whole case in his hands.

"I'm with you," he suddenly decided. "We'll see what can be done."

"Thank you," I said and wiped my damp forehead.

For a brief space Pindar sat motionless, mentally reviewing, perhaps, the facts already in his possession. "This adventuress," he then asked, "a simple-minded old person, is she? Been bereaved herself; found comfort in spiritism; wants others to benefit—that the kind?"

"Precisely."

"You know her address?"

"Alas, yes! She has gone lately to stay with Cora—Mrs. Dutot. She has managed her approach with uncanny skill. Cora trusts her now like a messenger from the other world. The things she gets through on that board are amazing—even to me."

"Why not? She operates it like a touch typewriter—knows her board so well she can make the pointer say anything with her eyes shut."

"It isn't only that. She is obviously a stranger here, yet the messages she gets show an amazing knowledge of Dutot's life."

"Why not? He dabbled in psychic stuff, didn't you say? Then be sure they had him looked up. Foreknowledge is their trump card. He was on their sucker list, that's all. Well, I'll have the old dame herself looked up. A steerer with her technic is pretty sure to have a record. We'll find hers."

"It won't take long?" I asked anxiously.

"A week, possibly. Why? Is the danger so pressing?"

"I fear it is."

"How so? The money hasn't arrived? There hasn't been time to realize on the policy yet, has there?"

"Not yet. But there's another danger. Cora's shaken health demands an immediate change of scene. The messages say so. They recommend California."

He flashed me his quick smile. "Now I call that cute," he said admiringly. "They want to have her to themselves—away from your influence. Well, why exert your influence? Why not drop all opposition, become a convert?"

"Me," I gasped, "a convert!"

"Why not? You want to beat them, don't you?"

"To beat them, yes; but—"

"Then that's understood. You're a convert. Better get round to asking—humbly—a little guidance from the spook in your own business. You'll do that?"

This was no easy pill to swallow. "If you wish it," I conceded.

"I insist on it." He had a sudden change of manner, as though throwing off all seriousness. "That's that!" he pronounced dismissively and took a turn about the room, his eye roving from point to point, taking in everything.

"Got anything," he suddenly asked, "to

give me a line on Dutot? A photograph, say?"

I pointed to the framed portrait of my dead friend on the wall. His scrutiny of it was brief. "What I would like most," he persisted, "would be to hear his voice."

"His voice!" I echoed.

"Why not?" There was something peremptory in that reiterated "Why not?" of his, something sharp, impatient of noncomprehension, yet relieved of offense by the twinkle of his glance. "Did he never dictate"—he indicated the machine—"to that? You have a record of his, surely?"

"How stupid of me!" I found one of the latest of my partner's records and put it on the instrument. "You'll use the ear-phones?" I suggested.

"Oh, no," he declined. "I heard the last quite well without. Run it, please."

I touched the starting lever. A soft preliminary whirring, then Jules Dutot's voice began to sound in ghostly fashion through that room where it had so often vibrated in life. Feathers, asleep beside my desk with nose on outstretched paws, got up. He listened, trotted to the head of the stairs, listened again. Then he went to the door of the record room, scratched at it, whined.

"He recognizes it," said Pindar.

"Yes, poor old dog," I agreed. It had plucked at my own heartstrings to hear that familiar voice again.

At Pindar's signal I stopped the machine. "That about his usual speaking voice?" he asked.

"It gives a good idea of it," I said. "He sang tenor. His speaking voice was light."

"And did he lisp?"

"Lisp? No. Ah, I see what you refer to—his occasional failure with the letters 'th.' He was of French descent and sometimes, when he was preoccupied or his emotions were stirred, he would say *ze* for *the*. It was seldom noticeable."

Pindar took another turn about the room, threading his way among the desks and filing cabinets. "Interesting," he beamed, "dashed interesting. This begins to be fun. Pardon me," he corrected himself hastily; "I am not making light of your trouble. With me no problem ever gets far on toward solution till it begins to take hold like a game. My mind works best when I am enjoying myself. How about this record? Can you spare it? I'd like to take it with me."

"If it will amuse you," I said. I could not see that this kind of thing would get us very far.

He flashed me his quick glance, but said nothing. After another turn about the floor he came back. "There's another thing might amuse me," he smiled, "if you don't mind humoring me. Have you a violin handy?"

"You're in the right place for that," I said lightly, trying to meet him on his own ground, and went downstairs to get one. "You play?" I inquired, as I placed fiddle and bow in his hands.

"Not me," he grinned. "Never could learn; to my dear mother's lasting grief. My interest in things is that of the dabbler. I'm no executant—except perhaps with a cue or a shotgun. All the same, I was always keen to *know* about things. I tried hard enough with the fiddle to be a Kreisler."

All the time he was quite competently turning the pegs, tightening the bow hair, settling the instrument under his chin. "Don't be alarmed," he assured me with a mocking glint in his blue eye, "I won't inflict a rhapsody on you."

Then began a curious performance. Commencing high up on the E string he produced a series of artificial harmonics that had neither tune nor relation to one another except that they proceeded higher and higher. The man seemed absolutely rapt; the faint, shrill sounds held him in absorbed listening.

"An amazing fellow!" I marveled inwardly. But the keenness of the performer's face, his obvious alertness, his air of hard practicality, left me no room to doubt that he had some clear purpose in view.

Soon he desisted. "Nothing stirring there," he cryptically remarked. Then, as though struck by a happy thought, he raised the bow again. "Let's try this." With that he drew the bow slowly across the short length of the E string behind the bridge. The effect, of course, was excruciating. The note produced was unbearable, shrill. I put my hands to my ears. Feathers, once more disturbed, pointed his nose to the ceiling and uttered a long, low, mournful howl.

"At last!" laughed Pindar delightedly. "Got him at last. That must be his note. That pitch sets something buzzing in his doggy brain. It will get him every time. Let's try it again."

He did try; and every time he produced that eldritch note the dog would throw up

his nose and answer with his heartbroken keening.

"We're getting on," laughed Pindar again, with what seemed to me almost childish triumph. A momentary despair seized me. What trifling was this—wasting invaluable time in teasing a lonely old dog?

His crisp voice brought me up sharply. He was one of those who command absolute trust by taking it for granted. "Enough for to-night. Give me time to get the dope on your old lady, then I'll call you up again. I'll have a plan by then. As far as I can see now it looks good." He chuckled merrily. "Entertaining, too, by Jove!"

On our parting at the street door he had a word of caution. "Not a whisper of this," he enjoined, "to a soul."

"Not a syllable," I promised.

"And your conversion," he reminded me with a flash of his white teeth. "I hope it is sound. It will bear fruit?"

"Spook is my middle name," I assured him, catching something of his own light-heartedness.

"That's the spirit. Let's say you've had a manifestation at the office," he prompted; "something that has caused your change of heart."

"A manifestation?" My imagination was not equal to that kind of thing. "What kind?" I appealed to him desperately.

"Oh, something you can't explain," he grinned. "The vaguer the better." With that, his borrowed record held lightly in his hand, he was off.

For almost a week I heard nothing further from him; yet in my mind, reviewing our interview, ran a very comforting undercurrent of confidence that he was not deserting me.

For my own part I was careful not to neglect the rôle assigned to me. According to my custom, since her bereavement, I saw Cora or the children daily for such brief moments as I could snatch from the pressure of accumulated business. Even my first sign of a change of heart had its reward; or so I imagined: the ghostly adviser grew less insistent on the early removal of the family. But when I ventured to beg for direction in a wholly chimerical business difficulty, not only was a glib, if vague, solution of my problem forthcoming, but the health-giving properties of the California

climate ceased to be a matter of ghostly concern.

In my gratitude to Pindar for this initial success I even began to better his instructions by evincing a conservative interest in oil stocks. Then by appointment he met me again in the general office of the music store. From that hour my part was shorn of all vagueness. He had a plan. He seemed to have thought of everything, come prepared to the minutest detail. As soon as I had grasped what was expected of me—although with much trepidation as to my fitness for the part—we began to rehearse. He proved a very exacting coach.

At first I was numbed by the sheer daring of his idea. Then, as we progressed, I began to catch his own confident spirit. I recalled his promise that it would be entertaining. Far better, I grew to believe that it would succeed. I threw myself into it with my whole heart.

In the meantime, it had been my cue, whenever I saw Cora or her elderly friend, to appear distraught, absorbed. Something, I let it vaguely be known, had occurred in one of my evenings of enforced work at the office, something it was beyond me to explain. Yes, I finally admitted, it had to do with Jules. Perhaps it was only my overwrought nerves. Some evening, if the thing occurred again, I would ask them to come down to the office. I needed their help.

Pindar, to whom I reported my progress, soon decided on action. "Make the appointment," he instructed. "Get her down here—the steerer, too. We're ready for them now."

The outcome was that on an evening in late September, within two weeks of my first meeting with Pindar, he and I, with Feathers again dozing at the end of my desk, awaited the arrival of expected guests. They had made the appointment for eight-thirty, but kept us waiting—in such suspense as I had never before known—until a few minutes of nine. Then the dog growled. The knob of the street door had turned. I went down to let in my visitors; but Pindar silently disappeared into the utterly dark, soundproof room, the door of which he left carefully ajar.

In her widow's weeds Cora was an apparition to wring my heart. It was the first time she had entered the store since her husband had been its guiding spirit. Every dimly outlined fixture, every covered instrument, every well-known angle of the place, spoke to

her of him who now only too rarely left her thoughts. Under her veil she silently pressed a handkerchief to her lips. Feathers, recognizing her, claimed his expected caress, diverting her to still another reminder of his departed master.

Her companion, quick of movement, slight, alertly curious, intensified the strain of her silence with calculated chatter. She was all sympathy, all tact—and all watchfulness, yet with an uncanny expert sort of cunning that held her victim's interest close to the subject of her grief, like a sob-loving preacher recounting in the hearing of the bereaved the virtues of the departed. I loathed her. To the verge of murder I loathed her.

"So this," she prattled, "is where he spent his working hours, your poor, dear husband, before he passed beyond. Dear, dear! How mysterious are the ways of Providence! Yet is it not *wonderful*, my dear, how it all works out for our own best good, once we begin to see it in the true light?" She had a way of blinking whenever she hopped, as it were, in her exclamatory style, on some impressive word. "I know; for I've been through it all myself. We, who have learned to keep our loved ones near us, do not mourn as others who have no comfort."

So, as we mounted the stairs to the office, she chattered on, playing on her victim's sensibilities, maintaining her hold, you might think, against some adverse influence that she subtly sensed to be threatening it; or, perhaps, just relying on her well-conned professional patter. "Perhaps even now," she kept it up, "he is with us here—here where he used to have so many of his dearest earthly interests."

The brief ascent of the stairs, fortunately, tested her elderly breathing. "That," said I solemnly in her pause, "is what we are to see."

"Yes?" she chirruped, her head on one side, birdlike, watchful. "See what?"

"If Jules is with us," I pronounced.

That took her breath. But a gasp "Oh!" from Cora brought her back swiftly to her rôle of comforter. "Of course," she recovered herself, "he is always with us when we think of him. *We* know that, do we not, my dear?"

Yet my own course demanded that I be no less cruel than she. A tense emotional atmosphere was the first condition for the effects I sought. I turned them about at

the head of the stairs. "The lower floor," I said, sweeping my hand out over it, "was his department."

An eerie department, in the flickering street lights which were its sole illumination, it now looked. The long counter, paralleled by shelves of music, led the eye into the farther obscurities. The shapeless bulk of the spaced pianos, swathed pall-like for the night in their dust covers, hid depths of gloom in the recesses behind them. In the office above only one shaded light was burning, and in its dim glow the remoter desks and cabinets took blurred and phantom shapes.

"There," said I, pointing, "was his office desk; that was his chair. No one has ever used them—since. This instrument"—I laid a hand on the dictating machine—"was once his special pride. Better inventions have long made it obsolete, but he would never part with it. To him it was an animate thing. With his vivid imagination he saw in it I know not what possibilities. When he happened to be here alone in the evening he used, I think, to—to experiment with it."

An involuntary gasp from Cora interrupted. "It is true," she whispered. "He once mentioned it to me."

Poor lady, so amenable to any suggestion that fed her present hunger for the abnormal! Jules Dutot had been no such visionary in life, but it suited my book still further to malign him. I seated my guests in chairs carefully placed before my desk, their backs squarely to the door of the record room.

"The theory of sound," I mendaciously continued, "was a hobby of his. Vibrations, as you know, above a certain rate per second do not affect our ears at all. Yet some animals undoubtedly hear them. Certain insects probably communicate by some such means. A whole language might be spoken all about us by ethereal beings, their tones no less real than our own, but quite inaudible to us. You follow this line of thought?"

"Yes, yes," in Cora's tense contralto; "go on."

"How *veh-ry* interestin'!" in the steerer's gushing, if more puzzled, accents.

"It was here that the dictaphone entered his speculations. It can record sound at any speed, to any pitch. By retarding the mechanism any audible sound can be lowered in reproduction. Why not an inaudible one? Why could not such a sound—if there is

such a thing—be thus brought within the range of human ears? That, I believe, was the way his fancy ran. He could never discuss it with me—perhaps with any one. I scoffed at all such abstractions.

"Yet one of his arguments has clung in my memory—a quotation, he said it was, from Sir Oliver Lodge: 'Matter in any form is able to act as agent to the soul.' Alas! my only reply at the time was a laugh."

"How true!" broke in the steerer, trying desperately to retain her domination. "How *be-yoo-tifully* true! Dear Sir Oliver, he expresses the truth so well. How *perfectly* that applies to the ouija board, does it not, my dear?"

"Ah, yes," sighed Cora, like a tired child exhausted by long-continued emotional stress. My heart ached for her.

"You still wonder," I said, "why I have asked you to meet me here to-night. To explain it all would take too long. Let me simply show you."

I placed a record on the machine, held up my hand for silence, touched the starting lever. In the remote, ventriloquistic voice of the instrument when heard without the ear phones came my own tones in the opening phrases of a business letter: "Your favor of the tenth has been unavoidably neglected for the sad reason already known to you, no doubt, through the press. My partner, in whose department this matter——"

I stopped the mechanism. "There follows a blank here," I explained, "a blank which means that I had neglectfully paused, my head on my hands. I was thinking of that partner, absently letting the machine run on. Presently I resumed my dictation. This, when I came to reproduce what I had dictated, is the way it sounded."

I touched the starting lever again. The clocklike works whirred softly into motion. A wailing note, incredibly high and thin, assailed our ears as from an infinite remoteness. Maintaining the same shrill pitch, it broke into accented groups of sound resembling the rhythm of speech.

Suddenly out of the gloom broke a howl, long-drawn, inexpressibly mournful. It was Feathers, unseen and forgotten in the shadows, rising to vent his heartbroken cry.

"Oh!" gasped the steerer, half starting from her chair. "What was that?"

"Poor little fellow!" soothed Cora, her hand reaching out for the tortured head.

"Listen," I warned. "Lose nothing. The

spring, as it happened, began to run down here. The cylinder revolved more slowly. I am now, with identical effect, retarding it with my thumb as a brake. Listen!"

The painful acuteness of the intermittent screeching became modified. The dog's cry ceased. Not a sound but that threadlike voice, lower, lower, struggling into intelligibility. A single word became distinguishable: "Slower!" There was positive agony in the intensity of that pleading wail. "Slower," it came again. Then some broken splutterings of sound unrecognizable as human speech, ending in a final ascending shrill of "Slow-er!"—a cry of all but unbearable poignancy, broken into by the ordinary tones of my own voice continuing the dictation of my letter. I silenced the machine.

"Now," I said, "you perhaps begin to understand why I have been troubled."

The little steerer's garrulity failed her. "Well," she feebly gasped, "did you ever! 'Slower!' it said. It might have been a child—a child in pain. And the dog, he heard it, too. Well, I never!" Coherence had departed from her.

Far different the effect on Cora. She leaned forward in the clutch of her interest, trembling, but with her eyes shining through her veil. "What else?" she asked. "Surely there was something else?"

"Yes, later, there *was* something else. It took me days to work it out. For days I pondered it. Then all at once it flashed on me, like a thought thrust into my brain from without. It was Jules—Jules trying to use a medium familiar to us both, Jules trying in all the agony of gross, impeding obstacles to communicate."

"He? That voice?" The protest was the steerer's. "It was the voice of a child."

"Possibly," I temporized. "The only good explanation is the one that fits all the facts." I took the record from the machine. "There are other facts."

On Cora in her highly emotional state the effect was more to my purpose; her belief was wholly ensnared. "Yes, yes!" she cried. "You said there was something else."

I slipped another record on the cylinder.

"The thought that Jules was trying to communicate gave me no rest," I said. "I tried again. Evening after evening I tried. I spent hours setting the machine in operation to record, then testing the record for any faintest impression. In vain. No matter how slow the speed at which I attempted

to reproduce, nothing came. Then, only last night, I got—this.”

I touched the starting lever. Again the whirring of the revolving wheels. With careful ostentation I placed my thumb again on the cylinder to retard its speed.

“Peace!” came the eldritch wail again. “I must have peace. They hold me back. They bind me to earth. I must go on. I must be free. Stop it. My letter tells all. Ze business, ah, ze business——”

The sounds trailed up again into a shrillness unintelligible. The jerky sentences had been punctuated throughout with sputterings, with weird mechanical raspings. The final pause might have been one of exhaustion.

I stopped the instrument. A breathless hush ensued.

“It was his voice,” breathed Cora above her clasped and upraised hands.

Her vibrant whisper echoed in the farthest spaces of the room.

Painfully, with flutterings that made me think of a wounded bird, the steerer clutched again at her vanishing influence. “It is wonderful, wonderful! But so vague, so difficult to understand. Our messages through the board have been so clear, so *comforting*. Is it not still possible that there is some mistake. Some other spirit——”

“It was his voice,” repeated the deep voice of Cora.

“Shall we put it to the test,” I suggested, “and try once more? Perhaps in this larger presence he will respond to our united thought and speak again.”

“Oh, no, no!” pleaded Cora. “He suffers. We torture him. I cannot bear it.”

“It is beyond our power to harm him,” I soothed her, “except in our thoughts or our purposes, when they run counter to his will. If his message to us is complete, he will not speak again. Yet it did not seem complete; it broke off as though from exhaustion. He may wish us to try once more. I think we ought. Shall we?”

With her pressed handkerchief she once more stilled the trembling of her lip, but nodded her assent. I adjusted a fresh record to the machine and with a prayer as earnest as my heart could hold set the mechanism again in motion. Tense silence followed, broken only by the familiar murmur of the revolving wheels.

The low ceiling of the room caught no direct ray from the single bulb with its

amber shade. But now a light, dim, bluish, elliptical, hovered on it above my head. At first the merest incandescence, it grew in luster, then faded—died, like the glow of cooling metal.

The record had run to the end. “Let us now hear if anything has been inscribed,” I said, in the manner of one pronouncing a solemn invocation.

Followed an interval of waiting. Nothing came but the faint whisper of the turning wheels. The suspense grew torturing. Then, with the record all but run out, came the high, thin wail again. “Peace!” it shrilled. “Leave me in peace. Do your part. Meager! Meager! Me-e-eager!”

On that ascending shriek the record ran out.

The steerer had hastily risen. “Oh,” she gasped, “this is dreadful! I am faint. Air—I must have air.” With quick, fluttering movements she took herself to the head of the stairs, and turned like a bird poised for flight. “No, no, my dear, don’t come.” This to Cora, who had risen on an impulse to help. “I’ll be all right in a moment. It’s nothing. I need air, that’s all. It’s stifling here. I’ll let myself out to the street. Don’t mind me; I’ll soon be back.”

Her quick steps pattered down the stairs. “Wait there for me, please,” she panted back from the floor below. The street door opened, shut. She was gone.

“She is ill. I should go to her,” said Cora in her deep, sympathetic voice, reproaching herself.

Exhausted with the emotions of the part I had played, I felt myself tremble. Yet I had one more histrionic effect to achieve. “She is scared stiff,” I harshly laughed. “She has decamped.”

Unutterably shocked, Cora turned on me. “Why, Frank Brent,” she blazed, “what an outrageous speech! What do you mean—decamped?”

“My dear Cora”—I resumed my natural tone—“I mean precisely what I say. She has had enough, has our little friend. She will never come back, if I am any prophet.”

“What folly! Never come back? Why not?”

My pent-up hatred burst bounds. “Because she is a she-devil! Playing cat’s-paw to a gang of unprincipled rogues, she has been trying to ruin you and your children; and her game is up!”

I had achieved my object in bringing Cora

sharply back from her ghostly preoccupations, but at the cost of her resentment against myself. "What does this mean?" she asked. "Have you brought me here to listen to my dead husband's voice, or to hear my friend abused?" She took a step toward departure.

"Listen, Cora," I pleaded. "For your children's sake, if not for your own, if not for mine, listen. You have *not* heard your husband's voice. You have been hoodwinked."

"Now I have been insulted. Let me pass."

"One moment—only one little moment. I can explain it all."

"Thank you; but I should not care to hear it. Good night."

"Perhaps, madam, I can make matters clear." It was Pindar's cool voice. He had stepped forth into the light.

With a startled "Oh!" Cora sank back into the steerer's vacated chair, her hand on her palpitating heart. "And who?"—she turned to me—"is this?"

It brought me to my hostly duties. "Pardon! This is Mr. Pindar, my friend."

With a frigid inclination of the head she acknowledged the introduction.

"I am inclined to agree with Mr. Brent," said Pindar soothingly. "It will be hopeless to look for your friend who has just left us."

"Indeed!" She was still indignant. "I cannot believe anything so heartless. I shall go to her at once. She must be waiting."

"Doubtless she is waiting, madam; but, if so, it will be for the next train out of town, not for you. I think we have seen the last of her—if *she* can have her way."

"What nonsense is this?" She rose. "Please cease this trifling—both of you."

"If it is trifling, madam, the issue will prove it so. If it should turn out that your friend *has* disappeared, surely you will believe us then?"

Something—the calm conviction of his voice, his assured bearing—held her. "Just what do you mean? Speak plainly, sir."

"I shall. Your friend is all that Mr. Brent has alleged—an adventuress with a crook record known to the police. It was no lack of air that sent her to the street. It was that ghostly cry of Meeger."

"Yes, yes; meager. We are getting away from that. It was my husband's voice. What did it mean? He is in distress. There

is something he lacks. Oh, if you can explain it, do!"

"If you will be seated, Mrs. Dutot, and try to be very calm, I shall be glad to make everything clear. Meeger—M-e-e-g-e-r—is the name of an unfortunate who was stripped of all he possessed, and of trust funds also which were not his own, by your elderly friend—posing then as a medium—and her gang. He hanged himself. The scandal was such that she and her confederates chose a new field of endeavor. You were to be their next victim."

"Oh, *can* such things be true! Her messages—all her wonderful messages——"

"Faked, my dear lady. She can make the board say what she likes. Her gang knew your husband's record, had accurate information about him. Their object was to strip you by worthless investments."

"Oh!" she moaned, and shuddered as though drawing back from a hideous gulf on the brink of which she had awakened.

Pindar bowed, giving her time.

She clasped her hands. "Oh, I begin to see. My dear, dead husband, watching over me, has taken this means to expose her and guard me from danger; perhaps from ruin."

I looked at him in sudden, mute appeal. Was not this enough? Could we not let it go at this? We had saved her from the steerer. Why go on to upset her faith, to torture her with fresh emotions?

Pindar merely shook his head at me. For her he laughed a light, musical laugh. "My dear lady, that is a most poetic thought; but, like much poetry, it is pure fantasy. It was none but your good friend here, Mr. Brent, who has taken this means to expose her. I trust you will continue to allow his good judgment to protect you."

"Mr. Brent—Frank, here!" She was amazed, but her smile was incredulous, a trifle superior. "He moved a lever—yes. But the voice! Ah, I know it too well, however small and ghostlike. It was my husband's."

"Madam," said Pindar impressively, "passing that for the moment, prepare yourself, I beg, for one more shock to your beliefs. You saw that glow of light that hovered on the ceiling?"

"Yes, yes. It was his presence. It was then that his voice, although our poor mortal ears could not hear it, must have spoken for the finer ear of the machine."

"Behold the very earthly source of that illumination," smiled Pindar. He held toward her an ordinary electric flash light.

"That!" She darted him a swift, searching glance. "Oh, please do not mock me. The light was bluish, mysterious; it grew, then faded. It was nothing earthly."

"This simple strip of glass, tinted from end to end in graduated depths, when passed slowly in front of the bull's-eye of the flash light"—he illustrated—"and then back again, produced the results which you actually saw. The suggestions implanted in your mind did all the rest."

His exposition failed utterly to shake her belief. Impatiently, almost scornfully, she brushed it aside. "I know nothing about all that. Tricks do not interest me. My husband's voice—I heard it. I could not be deceived in that."

"More light, Mr. Brent, if you please," requested Pindar. I touched a button and threw the room into full illumination. "Madam," he continued, reënföring the effect of his words with his hypnotic blue eye, "the voice you heard was that of a girl, a young friend of mine who is rather good at impersonations. She listened to your husband's voice, preserved in a record, then on a borrowed machine made all these messages you have heard to-night—made them according to my minute directions."

"Oh, impossible, impossible! What object can you have in all these forced and cruel explanations? The voice was his—his spirit

voice. It was utterly too high and shrill for human speech."

"True. We were careful to have it so. We took the record at a slow rate. When speeded up in reproduction, like a fast-action film, it came out as you heard it, too high and shrill for human speech. It took some experimenting, I assure you, before we got it just right; but we got it at last to sound so convincing that Mr. Brent's elaborate braking with his thumb was very little needed—except for the moral effect."

It disturbed her, I could see. She looked anxiously from one to the other of us, clinging desperately to her treasured faith. "Oh, I cannot, I must not, believe you. You have some purpose in all this too deep for me to fathom. Why, the very dog?"—she brought it out triumphantly—"the very dog, with his far finer senses, recognized his presence."

Pindar smiled. He seemed sure of her now. "You have that fiddle, Mr. Brent?"

Then to Cora's amazement he began to produce again the torturing note which had first caused Feathers to emit his low, mournful howl. After a moment it now once more had the same effect. "That screeching note," explained Pindar, "was simply played into the record. We knew by previous experiment what it would do to doggie."

With bowed head she took a moment of silence to it. Then with a little choking sob she rose.

"Frank," she implored, her hand extended toward me, "take me home."

## EXACT TESTIMONY

**J**OSEPH W. BAILEY, former United States senator from Texas, was trying a law case in which a particularly hard-headed Scotsman was an important witness. The value of his testimony turned on what he had seen as he was "going home to a meal," and there was doubt as to whether he meant the midday or the evening meal.

"Now, you understand," said Bailey, stressing his words, "that this is a vital matter. Be specific, please."

"About the meal?" the witness asked cautiously.

"Yes; about the meal."

"Well," temporized the Scot, "what about it?"

"What meal was it?" asked Bailey patiently.

"What meal was I going to, you mean?"

"Yes, what meal? Tell the jury exactly what meal it was. That's simple, isn't it? Easy, isn't it?"

"Yes; that's easy," agreed the witness placidly. "I'll tell 'em if you say so."

"Yes, I say so. Tell 'em!"

"Well, then," the canny one came to the point, "if you want to know, it was oatmeal."



## A Chat With You

A VENERABLE man, living in the saintly days of yore, a saint himself, in the days "when saints were many and sins were few," once got tired of it all and said something emphatic.

"Everywhere have I sought peace!" he exclaimed. "And found it nowhere, save in a corner with a book!"

We know just how he felt, and we can see him, in our mind's eye, sinking back in his hard chair, his feet stretched on the stone-flagged floor, heaving a deep and rather indignant sigh as he opens his book. The book is bound in leather and clasped with brass. The saint must have a wrist of iron to hold it up for any length of time, for it weighs about eight pounds. It is hard on the eyes as well, written perhaps in black-letter Latin with illuminated initials, or in crabbed Anglo Saxon. We try to read the title but we cannot catch it. Perhaps it is Aristotle or Friar Bacon, or St. Augustine or one of the fathers of the church; but we hope and trust it is something a little more romantic—Holinshed's Chronicles, or Plutarch's Lives, or tales of the knightly doings of Amadis de Gaul, and Roland, and Felixmarte of Hyrcania, or perhaps—who knows—it is a new Italian novel.

WERE the holy man alive to-day, he would find his ease, not in a book, but in a magazine. We must have books, it is true, to give more permanent

form to the things we want to keep, but nowadays practically everything worth reading comes out first in a magazine before it finds its way into cloth covers. Those who wait for the books are six months behind the times. You can find the best current literature in the world on any good news stand and a collection of it, bigger in bulk than the average book by far, can be had for the price of a good cigar. Quantity production, the thing that has brought the motor car and a thousand other luxuries, once known only to the few, within the reach of the man of ordinary means, has accomplished something that no scheme of education has ever done. It has brought a new light, a new interest, a new breadth of understanding to practically every one who has cared to reach out for it. When the rewards and honors are finally handed out, the man who started the first magazine will get a medal, and the inventor of the rotary press will get another. When we were young, solid enjoyment was represented by a book and an apple. Now it is a magazine and a pipe.

THE peace that the old saint was looking for was the peace of the adventurer who is free to go where he wishes. This particular saint, we are sure, was a two-fisted saint, a member of the church militant, who had been

*A CHAT WITH YOU—Continued.*

as he so succinctly put it, "everywhere." If he had been the quiet, meek kind, he would not have hunted for peace so energetically. He would have locked himself up in his cell and spent his days counting his beads. The peace he wanted was not the peace of quiescence, but of mental activity.



**A**FTER all, when you settle down comfortably with a copy of *THE POPULAR* in your hand, what is it that you expect to do? To go somewhere, of course, to meet interesting people, to witness absorbing scenes!

Perhaps you would like to hear the wind stir in the pine trees and the soft splash of the paddle as the canoe slips up some silent lake. Perhaps you want to canter across the desert while the moon silvers the tops of the distant, snow-clad peaks. Perhaps, if you happen to be out West at the time, you would like to see other lights twinkle up Broadway and feel the throb of the "roaring Forties."

Then maybe it is a long time since you have seen a baseball game or an inter-collegiate football match, or a horse race, and maybe, for a change, you would like to track northward across the South African veldt, or go sailing where magic atolls rise out of southern seas.

You want to get away from the petty and humdrum, into a wider sweep of things. You want to see new people,

men and girls, and hear them talk, and see them hate and love. And when, after a while, you close the magazine and stretch yourself, it is with a contented sigh. For you have been there and seen it all and come back again, and it has done you good.

A vacation once a year? There is a vacation every two weeks in *THE POPULAR*.



**W**E wish that the old saint might revisit the world in which he once wandered and that we might run into him some time. In spite of his sanctity, we fancy that there would be a twinkle in his eye and something pleasant, at once unctuous and irascible, about his voice. The sort of saint who has a laugh hidden somewhere behind his austerity and whose halo is always worn a little to one side. He would find a great many new wonders in the world, but, underneath, the same old groundwork. Human nature would be much the same and peace would be just as hard to find.

"Everywhere have I sought peace," he would begin, after greeting us, "and I have found it——"

But here we would interrupt him.

"We know what you are going to say," we would reply. "We feel just as you do. But this time it is not in a book, but in a magazine."

And we would hand him the issue of *THE POPULAR* which comes out two weeks from to-day.





## “Keep These Men”

“Brown, I’ve been putting the axe to the pay-roll. I have cut out a lot of dead wood—unskilled men we can replace tomorrow if necessary.

“But—keep these men whose names I have checked. They draw big pay but they know their work. They are the men who looked ahead and trained themselves to do some one thing better than any one else. We can’t afford to lose one of them.”

**A**RE you one of these skilled men who will be kept? Or is the Axe of Unemployment hanging over your head this very minute?

Thousands of men are idle right now for just one reason—they are unskilled! They work at any kind of job they can get, and when a slow-up comes, they are the first to be dropped.

You can climb out of the ranks of the unskilled if you really want to do so. You can get the position you want by spare time study in the evening hours you now waste. *Yes, you can!*

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