THE BIG NATIONAL FICTION MAGAZINE
TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

FEB. 7, 1927
25 CTS.

BEST STORIES
OF THE MONTH

Painted by
COLCORD HEURLIN
ALASKA

25 Cents THE POPULAR MAGAZINE ★

A Hint Worth Taking
When the chill blasts of winter keep you inside, there is always cozy comfort with Baby Ruth around.
The whole family—grandma, dad and mother, the young folks, even the tiniest tot—enjoys this delicious candy and finds real nourishment and health-building energy in its wholesome goodness.
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Candy Makers to the American Nation
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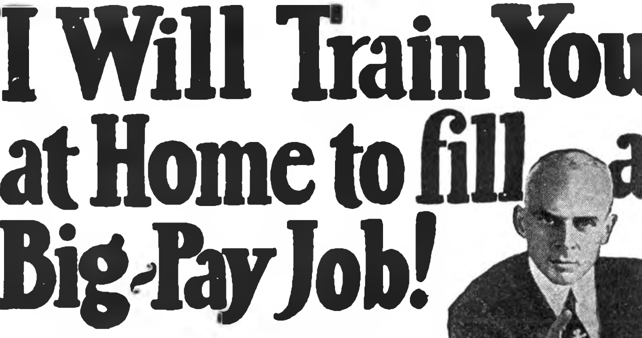
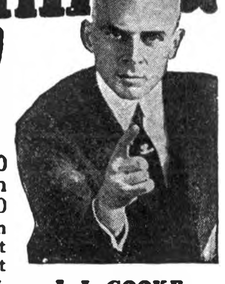
5¢





It's a shame for you to earn $15 or $20 or $30 a week, when in the same six days as an Electrical Expert you could make $70 to $200—and do it easier—not work half so hard. Why then remain in the small-pay game, in a line of work that offers no chance, no big promotion, no big income? Fit yourself for a real job in the great electrical industry. I'll show you how.

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Chief Engineer

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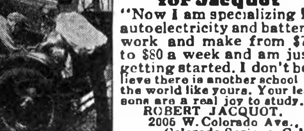
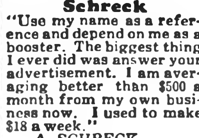


$70 to $80 a Week for Jacquot
"Now I am specializing in autoelectricity and battery work and make from $70 to $80 a week and am just getting started. I don't believe there is another school in the world like yours. Your lessons are a real joy to study."
ROBERT JACQUOT,
2005 W. Colorado Ave.,
Colorado Springs, Colo.



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"Use my name as a reference and depend on me as a booster. The biggest thing I ever did was answer your advertisement. I am averaging better than $500 a month from my own business now. I used to make $18 a week."
A. SCHRECK,
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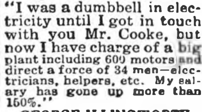

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Today even the ordinary Electrician—the "screw driver" kind—is making money—big money. But it's the trained man—the man who knows the whys and wherefores of Electricity—the Electrical Expert—who is picked out to "boss" the ordinary Electricians—to boss the Big Jobs—the jobs that pay $3,500 to $10,000 a Year. Get in line for one of these "Big Jobs." Start by enrolling now for my easily learned, quickly grasped, right-up-to-the-minute, Spare-Time Home-Study Course in Practical Electricity.

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Volume LXXXIII Number 2

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

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For You Two—What Lies Beyond Tomorrow?

HOW *the* girl has changed your outlook on life! Before you met her, there seemed not so much to work for—a place to sleep, food, clothes, a party now and then at the pace the other fellows went. With health and enough money to spend on yourself, why shouldn't you be content?

Then the sweetheart came—ready to place her youth and hope and beauty beside you for all the years. Marriage? A little frank figuring together one night detected the fallacy in Cupid's ready slogan: "Two can live more cheaply than one."

And now, for the first time perhaps, you are seriously considering where the job is taking you; just what lies beyond Tomorrow.

Awakened ambition is asking these questions: "How am I to grow and prosper as she wants me to?" "How can I find a way to lay before her all the finer things she ought to have?"

Wishing won't do it! Dreaming won't do it! Hard work alone won't do it, although it always helps. One homely little phrase that is older than you are, points the way to all success—

"To *earn* more, you must *learn* more."

Train yourself to know more about your present job and the job ahead than anyone else in your department and you never will have to worry about advancement.

For spare-time study is that vital, necessary something that makes one man succeed where a hundred fail—that raises you above the level of the crowd and makes you the kind of man employers everywhere are seeking. Knowledge is the power that will lead you on and on to bigger, finer things; to success, prosperity, happiness.

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GOOD READING

BY

CHARLES HOUSTON

Jamieson was tired. It had been a hard day at the office. Somewhere, somehow, an important letter had been lost, and one of the firm's best customers had stormed over the telephone. The Old Man had come in with a grouch and kept it all day. Jamieson's stenographer had left early, suffering from a headache.

At home that night Jamieson wandered restlessly through the living room. His nerves were on edge. He looked forward with dread to the time when he should go to his bedroom and lie with open eyes, staring at the ceiling until it was streaked with the first gray fingers of dawn.

And then his eyes fell on a book on the living-room table. Now Jamieson was no great reader. He would race through the newspapers in the morning and on his way home, flip the pages of an occasional magazine, glance hastily at some of the latest books that had to do with his business. Rarely did he sit down and read a book for the sheer pleasure of it. But to-night, with every nerve in him jigging away and a great distaste for his mode of life filling him with a profound sense of depression, anything that would take his mind off his worries was to be welcomed.

He took up the book and went over to the big, padded chair by the fire. Indifferently he opened the cloth-bound volume with its gayly colored jacket and started to read.

When Jamieson got up from that chair a few hours later, he was a very different person from that fagged-out, nerve-whipped individual who had first sat there. For Jamieson had gone on a wonderful adventure. He had stepped out of the monotony of life into a world of romance and thrill. The author of the book had reached out through the magic of printed words and transported Jamieson to a realm where anything might happen and indeed did happen with surprising swiftness. Jamieson's mind was swept clean of its morbid fears. He forgot all the petty annoyances of the day. He regained self-respect and courage by the very business of reading about the greater struggles of the characters in the book.

To-day Jamieson has the reading habit and is proud of it. He is a great booster of good fiction and has a way of dropping in on his dealer and asking for the latest Chelsea House title. He knows that books carrying the Chelsea House brand on their jackets are the sort of books that are a sure cure for the blues.

All over this country to-day, Jamiesons who have never read much before are getting the reading habit. They have discovered the "dear delights" of the good story well told and they know

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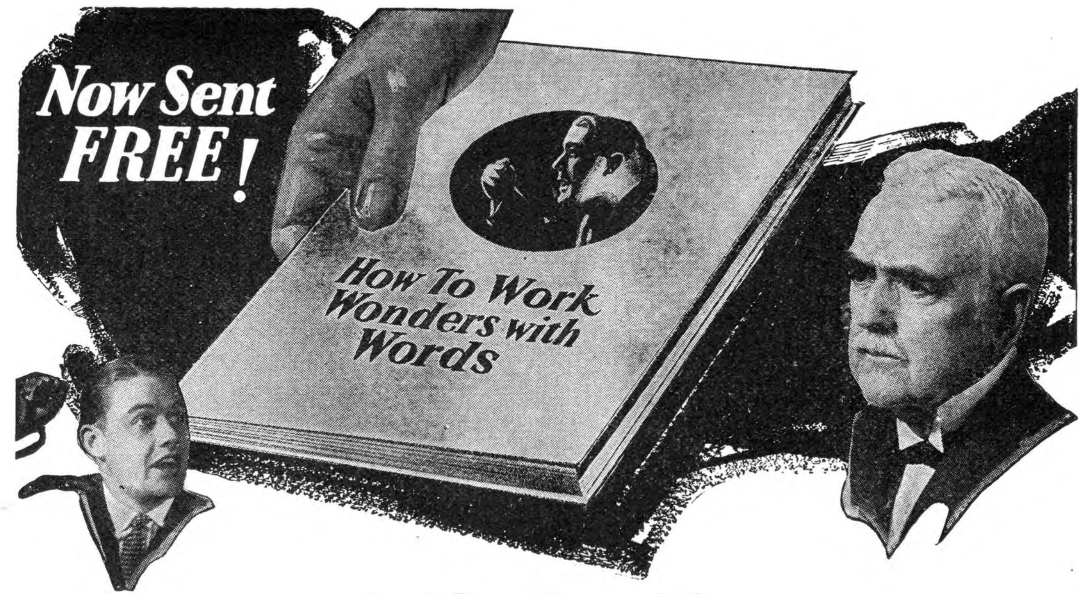

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- How to acquire a winning personality.
- How to strengthen your will-power.
- How to be the master of any situation.

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that they can have the best of Western stories, stories of love, romance, adventure and mystery at absurdly low prices when they ask for Chelsea House books. Here follow brief close-ups of some of the latest Chelsea House offerings:

THE PHANTOM ALIBI, by Henry Leverage. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75 cents.

When a man is to hang for committing murder, and to hang within three short days of the arrival on the scene of a special investigator, it doesn't seem as though that investigator could do much to prevent the execution. In fact, when Sidney Marway arrived at the little Pennsylvania town that was preparing to witness the hanging of Andrew Knight for the murder of his brother, the case against Knight looked mighty black. Indeed the governor had refused to grant a reprieve, and Marway had to act quickly.

The amazing manner in which he got at the truth about the murder, and finally put his competent hands on the real culprit, makes the sort of detective story that comes along once in a blue moon. You won't be happy until you find out who killed Knight's brother, once you have started this fascinating yarn.

TWO-GUN GERTA, by C. C. Waddell and Carroll John Daly. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75 cents.

This book has in it all the swing and go of what they call "good continuity" in the movies. It's about a movie cowboy who suddenly finds himself up against some very stern realities when he goes to work for Miss Gerta O'Beirne, likewise known as "Two-Gun Gerta." Gerta has a ranch the other side of the Mexican border and she just plumb kidnaps movie "Red" Conners to get him down there to work for her.

When Red arrived in a somewhat unconventional manner, he found all sorts of puzzles to be solved. Where was all the money coming from for the running of that ranch? Where——

But you go ahead and see if you can answer some of the many engaging mysteries that this book contains. You'll love Gerta and want to have Red for a buddy.

RAINBOW LANDING, by Frank Lillie Pollock. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75 cents.

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Well, you'll have to get this book for yourself to understand how gripping is its story. It is the sort of fiction that has made the Chelsea House titles famous wherever there are men and women who can still thrill to the call of romance.

THE LOST GALLEON, by Ellery H. Clark. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price $2.

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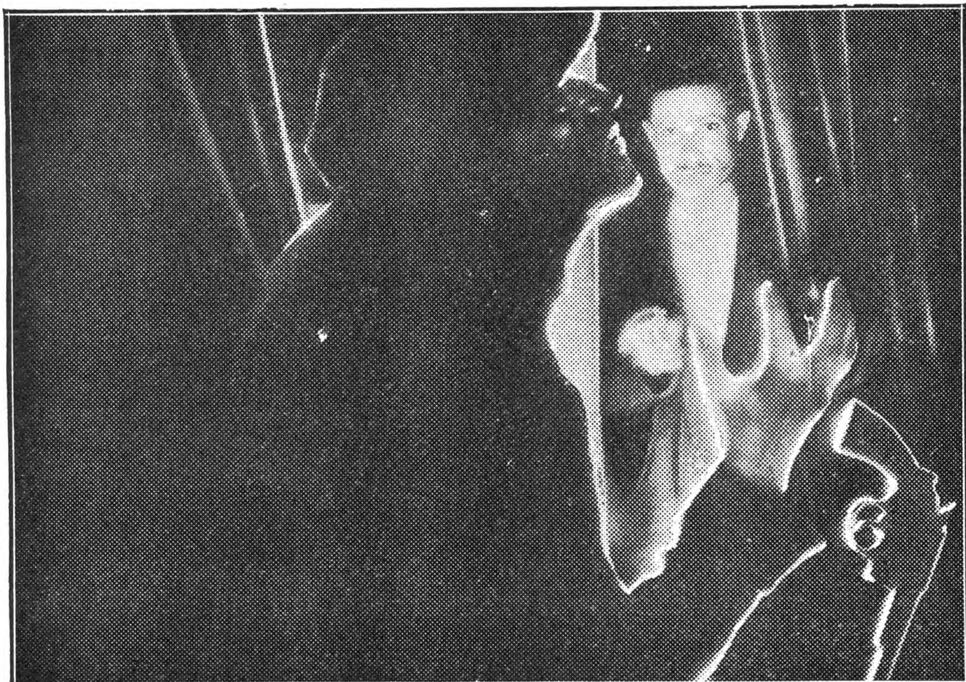

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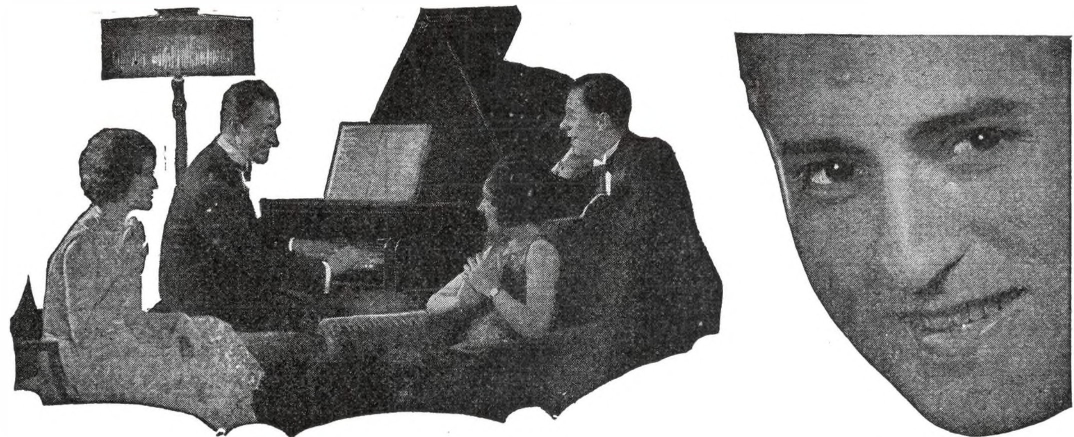

Never Lonely Now!

Since I Found This Quick Easy Way to Play The Piano—*Without a Teacher!*

LESS than a year ago I was friendless, lonely, unhappy. Then came the amazing event that changed my whole life. Suddenly I found myself with hosts of friends—the life of every party. I was popular everywhere!

Here's how it happened!

Somehow I've never had the knack of making friends. I was never noticed at a party. But I had nothing to offer! No musical ability—no gift of wit—nothing to entertain others. So I was left to dreaded solitude.

One night my spirits were at their lowest ebb. I could stand it no longer. Anything was better than that lonely room. I wandered out into the deserted streets.

Suddenly the sound of jazz and happy laughter caught my ear. Through the open window I could see the party.

Everything seemed to center around the young man playing the piano—Tom Buchanan. How I envied him! He had all the things I longed for—*but didn't have!* I was just an outsider.

All the way home I kept thinking of that scene through the window. The next evening I dropped in to see Tom. He greeted me cordially and to amuse me he played the piano. When he had finished, I said enviously:

"Tom, I would give anything to play the piano like that. I wish I had had a teacher when I was a kid—like you!"

Tom smiled and said, "Dick, I never had a teacher in my life! In fact, not so long ago, I couldn't play a note."

"Impossible," I explained. "How did you do it?"

The New Way to Learn Music

Then he told me about a wonderful new short-cut method of learning music that had been perfected by the U. S. School of Music. No teacher, no weary scales and tiresome hours of practice. You played real music from the start. When I left Tom, it was with new hope. That very night I wrote for the Free Book and Demonstration Lesson.

Three days later they arrived. I was amazed! I never dreamed that playing the piano could be so simple—even easier than Tom had pictured it.

The course was as much fun as a game. And as the lessons continued they got easier. Although I never had any "talent" I was playing my favorites—almost before I knew it. Nothing stopped me. I soon could play jazz, ballads, classical numbers, all with equal ease.

Then came the night that proved the turning point of my whole life. Once more I was going to a party, and this time I had something to offer.

What a moment that was when our hostess, apparently troubled, exclaimed:

"Isn't it a shame that Tom Buchanan can't be here. What will we do without someone to play the piano?"

Amazed at my confidence, I spoke up.

"I'll try to fill Tom's place—if you're not too critical."

Everyone seemed surprised. "Why I didn't know he played!" someone behind whispered.

Quietly I sat down and ran my fingers over the keys. As I struck the first rippling chords of Nevin's lovely "Narcissus," a hush fell over the room. I could hardly believe it, but—I was holding the party spellbound.

When I finished, you should have heard them applaud! Everyone insisted that I play more. Only too glad, I played piece after piece. I—who had been an outsider—was now the life of the party! Before the evening was over, I had been invited to three more parties. Now I never have a lonesome moment. At last I am popular. And to think it was all so easy!

* * * * * *

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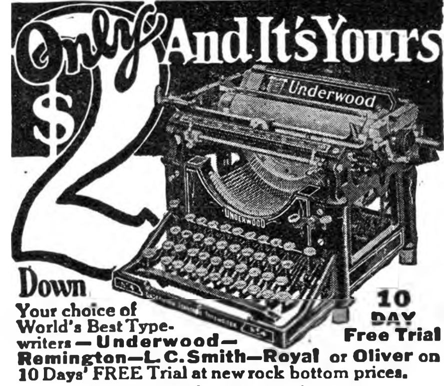

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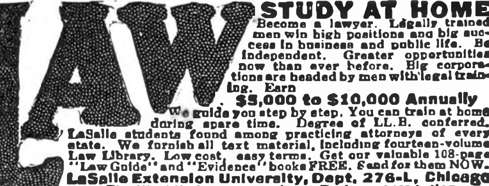

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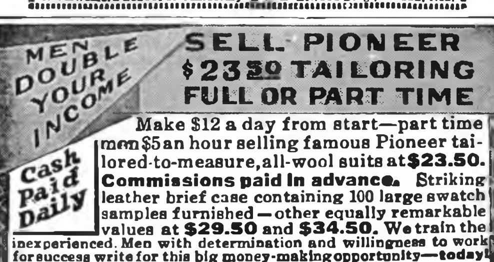

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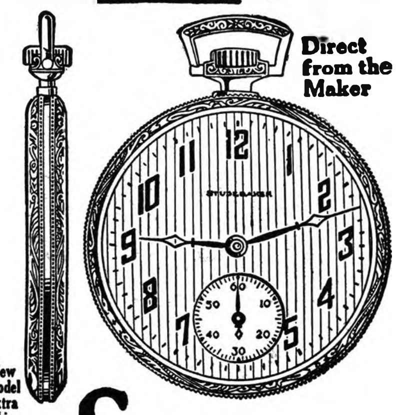

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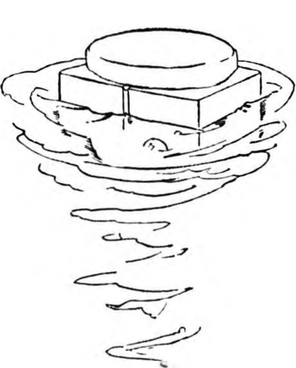
"You can't keep a good soap down!"*

THIS is a libelous portrait of a man of our acquaintance whose wife (gentle economist) tantalized him by the promise of Ivory for his bath—*as soon as he had used up his cake of sinker-soap!*

Unwilling to do further submarine searching for his leaden but elusive soap globule, yet loath to cross his smiling wife's wishes, our friend proceeded as follows:

1. Borrowed a cake of Ivory from his daughter.
2. Cemented sinker-soap to Ivory cake.
3. Placed the ill-mated pair in bath water, and proved Ivory a life-saver, as shown.



"It Floats"

At the present writing, the wedded soaps are wafer-thin—the sinker-soap from dissolution, the Ivory from lather-giving generosity; and thus one man has demonstrated the falsity of the adage that "you cannot eat your cake and have it, too."

PROCTER & GAMBLE

*In using this headline, we bow acknowledgment to hundreds of correspondents from coast to coast.

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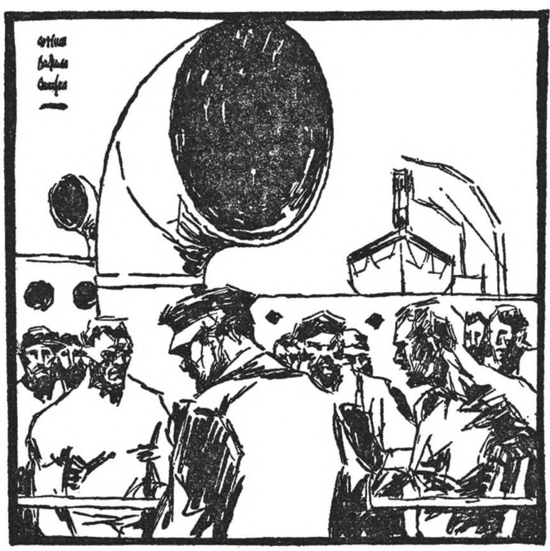


The Fighting Aristocrat

By Captain A. P. Corcoran

Author of "Getting Even," "The Set-up," Etc.

Here is the absorbing tale of a man who fought his way with brains and nerve and fists up from the baseness of city dives, through the harsh knocks of a seaman's existence in tropical ports—up, up the scale, forever striving that he might honor the family name he had disgraced.

CHAPTER I.

THE ULTIMATUM.

HIS face was unshaven. A battered hat shaded his eyes. His broad shoulders, unprotected by an overcoat against the sudden shower, curved in, as if to keep out the cold. Only his height distinguished him from the rest of the unkempt crowd huddled before the brilliantly lit doorway of the supply shop, over which a raucous loud speaker was screaming out the details of the night's fight.

He had shown no interest in the description of the business that precedes the actual combat, but had stood with head down, like an animal in the rain. Then a bell rang. The announcer cried:

"It is on—the contest which will decide whether Paul Doyle or Jack Mills is the logical contender for the heavyweight championship of the world."

At the name "Doyle" he had looked up alertly, revealing features sullenly sodden, the blurred, bitterly drawn features of a man who has sacrificed health to an appetite for alcohol.

Came the voice of the announcer:

"Doyle rushes over to Mills' corner and

begins shooting rights and lefts to the face. Jack falls into a clinch. They are parted. Mills gets through a straight left to the face, but doesn't bother Paul."

"Hah!" A harsh cackle escaped the man in the crowd, and he pushed forward, bringing protests from those beside him.

"Paul takes another left to the face, but crosses his right to Mills' jaw. Mills rushes Doyle to the ropes and sends in left, right, left to the body. Paul knows he has got them. Gong. Plainly Jack's round."

Again the man laughed.

"Might as well take one while he can. Won't last six," he confided to his neighbor.

The latter gazed disgustedly into the haggard face above him. "Bums like you know all about it, don't ye?" he remarked, as he sniffed at the other's laden breath.

But the tall one, disregarding him, only smiled to himself. During the next few rounds he addressed his remarks to the air.

"Henry, the cautious!" "Massachusetts forever!"—such were the asides to which he treated his companions occasionally.

"Say, bo," adjured one at last, "cut out that mumbling, will ye? We came to hear the fight, not your conversation."

"Go to hell!"

"Maybe I'll send you there!" The protesting listener, irritated, struck out a blow to the face, and received a smart open clap in return on the cheek. "Say," he began, but something in the mumbler's attitude cut short his objections. Discreetly he disappeared, and the tall one imperturbably turned his attention once more to the announcer who had now opened his description of the fifth round.

"Paul flicks a left to the closed eye. Jack tries to clinch, and Doyle drops him with a sweet right to the heart. The crowd are yelling for a knock-out. Paul has Jack in a very bad way."

Abruptly, energy seized the hunched form of the man in threadbare clothes. He veered around and began to force a way through the now densely packed street. Physical and vocal violence met him, but he treated both with disdain. Using elbows and feet freely, he soon found himself out of Fourteenth Street in the comparatively open spaces of Union Square. There he stopped to search feverishly through the torn pockets of his coat and trousers.

"The luck of the Lowells is in the ascendant to-night!" he muttered to himself, as he presently triumphantly produced a nickel.

Then, a sardonic smile distorting his lips, he plunged into the subway. Fellow passengers, eying him askance, wondered from what source this hobo drew his obviously secret satisfaction.

He got out at Fiftieth Street on the West Side, and such was his haste in getting to Eighth Avenue and Forty-ninth that he stumbled and fell on the temporary wooden sidewalk at the corner.

"Damn the luck!" he ejaculated, straightening up, and for a moment his face lost its smile.

Brushing the mud from his clothes, he lifted a hand to smooth his collar, took his hat off, and tried to punch it into some semblance of respectability.

"Mustn't disgrace the family," he exclaimed, with a nervous, bitter laugh, and then clenched his fists tightly in an attempt to steady himself.

He was casual again, as he emerged into the brilliant glare of the Madison Square Garden lights, Seeing twenty policemen still stationed idly outside, he slowed his pace.

"Not over yet!"

His look was incredulous. But, even as he spoke, the crowd began to show at the main entrance. He almost ran forward in his eagerness.

"Who won?" he asked, grabbing the first man whom he met by the arm.

"Doyle, of course."

THE man emitted a sigh of relief and determinedly pushed his way through the outpouring host of fans. He reached the broad passageways after much jostling and pushing. The arena at last! Tired, he took a seat. He would wait until the mob had departed, and meanwhile he listened eagerly to the comments.

"Good! He's a winner. You take it

from me. I'll put my money on him now for the championship."

"Ref should have stopped it sooner, though. Gee, what a punishing Jack took!"

When the intruder at last arose, he was smiling confidently.

"Nice little roll of bills the boy takes home to-night!" he commented.

An attendant barred his road to the dressing-room entrance.

"That way out!"

Pushing him aside, the tall man proceeded, to be held up once more at the door.

"Can't come in here."

"No? I think I can, my man. This is a personal, urgent matter. I must see Paul Doyle without delay."

The attendant eyed him sarcastically, taking in slowly and intently the broken shoes, weathered hat and withered clothes.

"Get along," an arrogant voice brought the insolent gaze to the intruder's face.

A duel of glances ensued.

"Who'll I say?" inquired the official at length gruffly.

"Just tell Paul Doyle that Raymond wants to see him."

Stretched on his table, the hero of the evening was luxuriating in the services of his rubber, smiling the while at his manager's triumphant comment on the victory that had just been theirs.

"Some one calling himself Raymond wants to see Paul Doyle," called a voice from the door.

As if stung, the boxer rose to a sitting posture. For just a second he hesitated and then said:

"Show him in." His face was grim, as he turned to his manager. "Some one I'd like to see alone, Hickson. Could you two clear out for a few minutes?"

"Sure, Paul—sure. Come on, Mick."

Their complacent acquiescence was changed to astonishment, as they viewed the hobo now advancing into the room. Billy Hickson, indeed, stopped dead, as if doubtful whether it was wise to leave his precious charge in such company. But Paul Doyle's voice urged him on, and, as the door closed on the couple, he came to his feet.

"Well?" There was no welcome in the tone.

"Just thought I'd come and offer congratulations, Henry," said Raymond Lowell, helping himself to a chair. "Good fight. Just a trifle too cautious, of course. Always your outstanding fault, old boy. Disappointed me, in fact, for I'd informed a friend of mine that Mills would not last more than six rounds."

As he spoke, he removed his hat, thereby revealing a startling resemblance in profile to the man gazing angrily down at him. Had a reformer been there to point a moral on the comparative results of good and evil living, he could have found no better subject for his discourse. For here were the Lowell twins, identical in feature, in stature, in breadth of shoulder and proportion of limb, differentiated only by the debauchery so visible in one and the abstinence so obvious in the other. The same man seeing himself as he might have been!

IT was Henry Lowell, known to the ring as Paul Doyle, who presently broke a pregnant silence.

"What do you want?"

Raymond Lowell shifted uneasily in his seat, and his attitude lost some of its impudence.

"Well, I've just invested the last of my capital—to wit, one nickel—in coming to see you. I thought——"

"Guess I know what you thought, but it's no good. When I say a thing, I stick to it," his twin brother broke in furiously. "And the last time——"

"Always a man of his word, Henry," ejaculated Raymond, with a wistful air of reminiscence.

"The last time I gave you money, I warned you," continued the other, ignoring the interruption, "that I would give you no more. You know what my responsibilities are at home."

"My dear fellow, you've salted enough away already to make the mater and pater secure for the rest of their lives," pointed out Raymond, all his insolence gone now, and a real anxiety evident in his voice.

"Yes, and I mean to salt away a lot

more—to make myself secure. Do you think I want to be a boxer all my life? You know what I want to be, and I'm going to be it—a lawyer, as my father was before me. And you're not going to drag me down. I've stood quite enough from you, as it is."

There was finality in his tone, and his brother shivered slightly.

"Just this once, Henry." He was pleading now. "Just this once, old Harry. I'm cold. I've nowhere to go to-night, and it's raining. Lord, man, be human."

"You had money enough for whisky this evening. I can smell it on you. Get to hell out of here!"

Involuntarily he spoke more loudly than he intended. The door opened to admit Billy Hickson's head. Raymond Lowell, looking around, rose slowly to his feet.

"You mean that?" he demanded of his brother with a certain dignity.

"Yes."

"Good night and good-by." He didn't offer a hand, but walked haughtily to the door.

"Come in, Hickson," Paul Doyle spoke again.

As the manager entered, he glanced incredulously at the departing stranger and from him to the boxer standing grimly erect.

"Paul," he said, a note of awe in his voice, "you know that bum's just gone out—why, he——"

"Get Mick in to finish the rubdown," commanded Doyle, cutting him short.

Closing his lips in a tight line, the manager obeyed. There were times when this gentleman pugilist of his certainly got his goat.

"High-hatting again!" he said to himself. "Gosh, if he didn't pack such a wallop, I'd sure let him know what I think of his up-stage manners."

He shook his head expressively.

"Not good enough to talk to him, ain't we? I guess the kale we put in his jeans talks pretty enough, though. Hey, Mick! Lordship's waiting for you to valley him —once over, in silence."

Mick grinned broadly in understanding. There was something about Paul Doyle out of the ring that tickled his inherited Hibernian sense of humor. Nevertheless, he liked him, for Paul was strictly honorable, if not generous, in all his dealings. Moreover, Mick respected good manners.

"Wot you beefing about?" Mick would ask the highly sensitive Billy Hickson, when the latter's managerial feelings had been unintentionally hurt. "Wot if he does get up stage? Takes all kinds to make a world, don't it? You can trust him never to throw you down, can't you? He's a good scout, even if he don't act it."

Hickson had to admit that was the plain truth.

"Just a quick, quiet rub-over now, sir?" Mick asked the boxer.

"Thanks, Mick."

There was something about this soft-voiced servitor that soothed the feelings of New England Henry Lowell. Somehow, he would not care if Mick had recognized his brother. Probably he had. Mick was quick mentally—quicker than Hickson. Also Mick could be trusted to understand, whereas Hickson—Paul could not define wherein exactly he failed to trust his astute manager.

By the time the deft fingers of the American Irishman had finished with him, Henry Lowell was able to relegate his brother's plight to quite a secondary place in his thoughts. The sight of old Ray going out so shabby and yet so stately—so silent, also, about their relationship—had affected him much more than he would wish to admit even to himself. But now——

Just what Ray had coming to him. An ultimatum had to be put into effect some time. Of course, it was a lie that he had to sit out to-night on a park bench in the rain. Hadn't he, Henry, often before tested the truth of such romantically unpleasant statements on his brother's side and found that all they meant was that Ray needed another drink?

"Fine, Mick!" he commended his rubber, dismounting from his table for the second time.

Now, refreshed, he could dress and go home in comfort.

Meantime, Raymond Lowell had made

his way to a solitary seat in the chill spaces of Central Park.

"He meant it. Still I thought—— Well, it's my own fault. Don't I know it?" He shuddered, as a gust of wind-driven rain struck him, and then: "Damn him! Look at me that way! Curse his cautious carcass! It's all his fault, anyway. Talk of letting the family down, why——"

CHAPTER II.

"GENTLEMAN JIM."

THE mind of Raymond insisted on reenacting a painful scene staged in an old home in the Back Bay.

His mother was sitting in a corner of the mellow, brown library, small, frightened, and yet fierce. She had just come in from a walk, and around her throat was an old-fashioned marabou neckpiece. Oddly she suggested to Raymond a ruffed grouse, as her quick, little eyes darted bright, uncertain glances from the face of one man to the other. On the couch lay his father, a long, slim, graceful figure in his black-silk dressing gown. Pathetically helpless since the stroke that had paralyzed his left side, he reclined now with head turned to the wall, as if he wished to take no part in the discussion. Before them stood Henry, rigid, righteous, eloquently expounding the advantages of his proposition.

"The manager," he was saying, just as Raymond entered the room, "guarantees a substantial income almost immediately and something more than substantial after a short time. It will mean that I can keep you both in comfort, save the home, and later even make myself what you wanted me to be."

"What manager and for what?" inquired Raymond, good-humoredly breaking into the harangue.

"Billy Hickson—you know his name."

Incredulously Raymond gazed at him. Of course he knew the name and the man. Only three days ago Billy Hickson had come to himself with a proposition to enter the professional boxing game, and Raymond had laughed in his face. A Lowell in the ring! He had not even mentioned the offer to his family for fear of hurting their feelings. As he stood, dumfounded, Henry continued. America, it seemed, had reached the stage in its sporting career when it saw the necessity for refining the ring. It asked for gentlemen, not roughnecks.

"Of course, dear. I quite see," broke in Mrs. Lowell eagerly.

"It won't be necessary, however," went on Henry, "for me to fight under my own name. I'll assume some popular one, preferably an Irish name."

Suddenly Raymond uttered a guffaw. Didn't his brother see the humor of his attitude? Instantly his mother, scenting opposition, was on the offensive.

"Please, Raymond. Can't you see the advantage of not dragging the Lowell name into the—ah, arena?"

"Is that worse than a Lowell body?" he asked and instantly was sorry, for his quick eye had caught a convulsive movement from the prone figure on the couch.

"Don't be vulgar, Raymond," admonished his mother.

Henry added: "Don't be ridiculous. You know the jobs we've been able to get will never keep up this home, much less keep the pater and mater in comfort. Something drastic's got to be done."

Suddenly a horrible thought assailed Raymond. His mother, the daughter of a Massachusetts shoe manufacturer, was not of his father's class. Henry took after her, somehow. He saw the family divided into two camps, with his father and himself on one side.

Impulsively he moved toward the recumbent form and laid a hand on the twitching shoulder. It quieted under his touch, and his father's head turned.

"We've got to be sensible, son," came the cultured, soothing voice. "Your mother is right. Now that I'm useless, unable to keep up my profession, unable to make good those foolish investments of mine, something must be done to insure her old age. You know, even when you were boys at Harvard, the sport writers took you seriously as boxers. No doubt Henry will make quite an income."

No doubt, indeed. Raymond himself was aware of that. Something tightened in his throat, and he wanted to cry. Those old days at Harvard, when they had been known as the "Fighting Twins"

—how vividly they came back to him. Then he had always had the honors in their friendly encounters, for he had a dash that his brother lacked, even though in skill they were equal. Great fun those bouts had been. He remembered his father's pride in their prowess, pride enhanced by the comments of expert boxing writers who even then had spoken of them as material for the professional ring. They had laughed then at such an idea, just as Raymond only three days before had laughed himself, derisively and somewhat indignantly. But now!

"I see, sir," he said, outwardly calm, inwardly furious with his mother and brother.

"Of course, you see," said Mrs. Lowell cheerfully. "If your father had told me, when the doctor warned him of what was coming, I might have been able to stop him from making those foolish investments. As it is——"

"Yes, yes, mother." Raymond hastened to stem the torrent that, he knew of old, could pour from those incautious, babbling little lips. "Yes, of course, Henry is right. I—I think I'll go and wash up."

With another gentle pressure of his father's shoulder, he hurried from the room.

HE remembered it all as vividly now as if it had happened yesterday. His own dumb rage and misery, as he stood in the bathroom upstairs. Intellectually honest, he confessed the superior logic of Henry's position; the old-fashioned futility of his own. Results were what counted in this modern world. What mattered an honored, New England name?

"I've been a coward, when you come right down to it," he told himself then, and he wondered whether it was this cowardice that had also kept him silent concerning his own offer to fight some days before.

Underneath his misery was a certain wounded vanity. They all thought evidently that the professional boxing world preferred Henry to himself. Abruptly he hated his brother and his mother.

"I won't stay here after this," he decided suddenly, a vision of himself in a dull broker's office, while his twin was out in the world of fighters, presenting itself to his mind's eye. "No, I'll go to New York."

At dinner he announced his intention. His father was absent, and so he could indulge his taste for sardonic humor. In reply to his mother's startled exclamation, he had explained:

"Can't keep the little birds in the nest, mater. I'm branching out like Henry. Going into the arena—a different one. Henry was born to be a lawyer, so he gets to it through fighting. That right, Twinney? I'm going to be a doctor via Wall Street. Millionaires, old lady—both of us. How does that strike you?"

"Got your fare?" inquired Henry sarcastically, irritated by his brother's attitude.

"Little nest egg put by for a rainy day," he informed the two inaccurately.

As a matter of fact, next morning he had been obliged to borrow a couple of hundreds from an old friend. Wealth! He had had dreams of it on the train to New York, dreams inspired by the sad eyes of his father, by the suppressed pride that made him want to beat Henry in restoring the family fortunes. Wealth! So easy to envisage, so hard to realize. He had got jobs, of course, cheap jobs, which he had thrown up without regret. Yet even cheap ones, he had discovered, were not so easy to find. And then discouragement, fought off with the courage that lies in the glow of an emptied glass. Lord—what a fool he had been.

"Say, this ain't a bed but a bench, old-timer." A heavy hand fell on his shoulder. "Suppose you ree-tire?"

It was a friendly policeman, issuing a friendly warning. Raymond Lowell rose, cramped, and listlessly made his way to the exit of the park. Where was he to go? Wander all night in the open? He shuddered at the idea. Already the aftermath of alcohol was being reaped in a gnawing stomach. What would he not give now for a drink?

Down below Desbrosses Street on Ninth Avenue was a place. It would still be open to such as he. He glanced around him—Columbus Circle. Lord—

what a walk! Standing uncertainly on the corner, by the entrance to Central Park, he had his hat snatched off by a gust of wind. He ran after it, caught it. The exercise left him less numb. He began to walk south. The rain poured on him ruthlessly. Soon his thin clothes clung to his form, but he stumbled on.

It was one of those places, frowned on by the police, but quite innocent to the casual eye of the passer-by, over the door of which the word "Saloon" had been painted out and replaced by the more respectable "Restaurant." Raymond had used it as a club in the days of his downward slide. Strangely, he had found a welcome there, vociferous and superficially hearty at least, even after he had quite obviously touched rock bottom. The fact had surprised and vaguely discomposed him, for it was no habitat for a Harvard athlete, much less a Lowell.

A few tables, nominally white-clothed, were scattered about its floor. At midday meals were served on them to a clientele of sturdy truck drivers, longshoremen, and others of strong digestion, who were not averse to breaking the law to the extent of imbibing beer with boiled ham and cabbage. The old bar was still in its place, with the addition of a kitchenette at one end. A fat German, known as "Henny," acted as the presiding deity. His very corpulence afforded Lowell a sort of comfort. Not that he had revealed himself under his family name. Officially, they knew him as Raymond, but, when he finally entered after his tramp, they hailed him by their own pet pseudonym of "Gentleman Jim."

IT was a gentleman of slight build, hawkish countenance, delicate fingers, and ferret eyes who had bestowed on him that title. For some reason "Slim," as his associates called him, had attached himself to Raymond quite early in their acquaintance, as a kind of bodyguard. At first, the latter had rather avoided him, but there had come times when Slim, with uncanny foresight, had asked:

"How would a yellowback look to you to-night, old-timer?"

A first refusal had been followed by a deprecating acceptance of the same, but hitherto Raymond had always been able to return the loan. Some instinct had forewarned him about scrupulous honesty in his dealings with Slim, for invariably his loans had been succeeded by such suggestions as:

"Say, why don't you join our club? Nice gang. You'd like 'em. Always open for a new member, when he's one of us. You get me?"

Raymond had felt that he had "got" him. This was the first time he considered making a "touch" without hope of restoration.

Slim was there, as he entered now, in earnest converse with the bartender over a morning edition of a New York paper. They were inevitably discussing the night's fight.

Henny was saying: "He no beat Morrissey? You crazy!"

Slim's sole link personally with Raymond had been his keen interest in boxing. They had discussed the relative merits of many fighters over glasses of ginger ale with "something" in it. A friend, in some mysterious way, of the present heavyweight champion, Slim was familiar with all pretenders to his throne. The two had argued exhaustively about "Paul Doyle," Raymond's acquaintance with the latter's boxing tactics having earned him the name by which he was now hailed.

" 'Lo, Gentleman Jim! Seen the fight?"

"No; just listened to it. Henny, give me a stiff one."

Exhausted, soaked to the skin, he dropped down in the nearest seat.

"Sure, Gentleman! You was right about that match. I'll say you was. Put my money on your say-so. Made a bit. This is on me."

Henny continued to gabble, while he poured the drink and served it. Slim watched the broken figure with a shrewd, sidewise glance. Raymond gobbled the fiery liquid eagerly, gulping as he did so, while Slim smiled.

"Terrible poison!" he managed to ejaculate. For a moment his slender form shrank, as it coursed down his throat and into his empty stomach. "Makes you feel better, though." He

breathed a sigh of content, as his body began to react to the stimulant.

"Set 'em up again, Henny," ordered Slim. "Mine's the same. Wot's yours, Gentleman?"

"Same, too," came the answer gratefully.

After the second glass, he sank back in drowsy comfort, and Slim seated himself at Raymond's table. Followed a discussion on the form shown by Paul Doyle to-night, punctuated by Slim's calls for more drinks. An endless procession of glasses followed, and Raymond's face soon grew fatuous, as they were removed by the deft Henny and refilled.

"You think Doyle can stand up under Morrissey's attacks?" Slim would ask.

"I know it," Raymond would answer. "Do or die, Henry!" Something would flicker in his brain at the name. "Paul never quits; man of his word, Paul. Sticks to it. Don't I know it?"

HE did not know, however, that Slim's drinks were being emptied out under the table.

"Quite a bit Doyle has put away to-night," ventured Slim presently. "Must be all nice and soft now as regards kale. Wish I had his sock."

"Same here! Bulging old stocking. Knows how to guard it, too."

Raymond laughed, as one who could say much, if he would.

"Lives at some uptown apartment hotel on Seventy-fifth and Broadway, eh?"

"The Pompadour! 'After me the deluge!'" cackled the drunken descendant of the distinguished Lowells. "Deluge! No deluge for Henry! Dry, he is. Paul, I mean, of course. Canny bird, Paul. Little safe behind a picture!" He hiccuped loudly. "Don't even trust a bank with some things. Canny!" Suddenly anger seized him again. "Rotten!" he cried. "Hound! wouldn't even lend a——" A spasm seized him.

"Keeps his kale on tap, eh?" put in Slim cautiously.

"Some. If I wanted, but——"

He sank back in his seat, drowsiness overcoming him.

"Damp clothes," he muttered, "cling to you. Clammy—horrid. Oh, for a hot bath and a bed!"

Suddenly Slim rose.

"You come with me, Gentleman. Come on home. I got a nice little place—warm, cozy. I'll fit you out, all right. Come on."

With a nod to Henny, he propelled the drunken Raymond out of his chair and into the street, where Raymond shivered as the air struck him, into a taxi which purred gently, out of it again and through another cold draft to a snug apartment. Garish it was, perhaps, but Raymond was past the stage of observing such things. Helping him out of his steaming rags, Slim almost literally shoveled him into bed. He himself lay on a sitting-room couch—and lay awake.

At dawn Raymond woke up, his mouth parched and his throat dry. His first movement to search for a drink awoke Slim, a light sleeper.

"Where am I?" demanded the visitor suspiciously.

"With me, Gentleman. This is Slim. Feeling thirsty, are you? Go back to bed, and I'll give you something to put you snoring again."

Somewhat nauseated, Raymond did as he was bid. He swallowed some more fiery liquid, but, instead of dozing off, he remained starkly, terribly awake. He rehearsed as far as possible the previous night's proceedings, but could recall nothing after his entrance into Henny's. Slim had brought him home. That was evident. And Henry had refused any further assistance. Therefore, he had put himself into Slim's hands.

He groaned softly and turned over on his face.

"Must get out of this! But, Lord, how can I?"

Restlessly his brain revolved impossible solutions of his problem and finally hit on one probably feasible. Having made up his mind, he slept again and awoke refreshed, if still sick, in the morning.

Slim plied him with hot coffee and poached eggs. A slick chap, Slim, and always uncannily foreseeing.

"Can't put on those old duds," he said, pointing to Raymond's dejected clothes,

which neither had hung up to dry the preceding night. "I'll go out and fetch you some hand-me-downs from a place I know." With expert eye he measured the tall, swaying form. "Wait a bit after I'm gone for the eggs to go down, and then get yourself a bath and a shave."

In a short time Slim returned with a reasonably respectable suit, which Raymond donned gratefully.

"Make yourself at home now," he advised. "I'm going out for a spell. Back some time. Plenty grub in the ice box. Feed your face and keep off the cellar."

He grinned amiably to take the edge off this exhortation.

"In case I'm longer than I expect to be, here's twenty to be going on with." He laid the bill casually on the table, deprecating thanks with a wave of the hand. "You'll help me out some time," he added, and left Raymond with these ominous words ringing in his ears.

CHAPTER III.

A CLEAN CUT.

PALE, shaken, Raymond sat down to consider the plan thought out during the night. A clean cut! There was nothing else for it. Slim could be paid in cash, if things went right. His twitching hand reached for the telephone, and he gave the number of the "Seagull Southern Line."

"Superintendent Peabody there?"

His heart palpitated, as he waited for the well-remembered voice to reply. What would it say to him? He saw that rugged, honest, weather-bitten face again, as he had seen it in East Gloucester in his boyhood days. Then Captain Peabody had been the main attraction during vacations for the Lowell children. Stories of stirring storms! Sea trips beyond any limit, as it seemed to the twins, in search of plunging fish! His father had loved old Captain Peabody, a skipper in those days, and now a star of the line he had served so long.

"Real stock!" Raymond Lowell, Sr., used to say.

It was instinct that made Raymond turn to him now. Would he never answer?

"You want Superintendent Peabody?" asked a clipped, clerklike voice. "Who shall I say is speaking?"

Raymond choked a little and then answered clearly:

"Raymond Lowell."

" 'Lo, little Ray!" called a pleasant voice presently. Raymond had much ado not to cry.

" 'Lo, skipper!" It was the old name. And then with a plunge: "Want you to do something for me." Despite his efforts, the words were enunciated jerkily, betraying his agitation.

"Anything in reason. How are you, Ray? Long time between visits. Been hoping to see you or Paul some time. Ah!" As no answer came, the voice continued: "Great fight of Paul's last night. Hear you've not been fighting, Ray. Just letting the tide take you. Am I right?"

"Yes, skipper. That's why I called you."

"Good boy! Why don't you drop in for a chat? Glad to see you and talk things over any time."

"Don't want to come in, skipper. I—well, I'd rather see you later. I was wondering if you could give me a berth—as a common seaman. Need fresh, salt air, skipper. A bit—well——"

"I understand. We all get carried away by a current some time in our lives. Thing is to save the grit to swim back."

"That's the idea. Think I can—with a new start." He was crying openly now.

There was a sibilant silence for just a second on the telephone.

"Say, Ray," came the voice again. "Ship this afternoon, could ye? The *Nausicaa* sails to-day. We could do with a supercargo. Can you make it?"

"You bet," came the quick reply.

Then followed details of the dock, the sailing hour, the salary, the duties, the hardships, the opportunities.

"Can I count on you to be there?"

"You can, skipper." This rang out stoutly.

"Then good-by, lad, and good luck. Come to see me whenever you are in town. Know the stuff is there. Just use it, lad."

"Thanks, skipper." He was about to

hang up, when a thought occurred to him. "Do you mind, sir, if I don't use my own name—Lowell, I mean? Can we let it go at Raymond?"

"Sure, sure. I understand. Mr. Raymond, eh? That's the idea. Go as just yourself."

Raymond Lowell hung up the receiver, warmed by the knowledge that some one believed in him still. Nothing pleasant in the prospect before him—he quite realized that. Yet his feeling was a distinct one of relief—the relief of a strong man long off his course who finds himself in the position to steer straightly at last. He walked to one of the numerous mirrors almost involuntarily. No wonder he had not wanted the skipper to see him! This thin-nosed, puffy-eyed person with the reddened lids—was this the son of his father? An aristocrat there, if you liked, never claiming the title, simply living its significance in an American way.

"I'll be myself again," he whispered to the reflection.

Suddenly the nausea of the "morning after" seized him, and he walked toward Slim's prohibited "cellar." Should he take one more or not?

"A whisky sour would steady me, just enough to get aboard safely. If I'm sick later on, they'll put it down to the sea. Here's to the last! By George, it will be the last."

HE fixed the drink, swallowed it, and wrote a note to Slim, explaining that he had had to leave and promising payment shortly. If the bill had been divisible, he would have taken no more than half. As it was, he must have some to buy denims, some rough shirts, a few toilet accessories and a bag to hold all. After making these purchases, he made his way to the Brooklyn dock, where the *Nausicaa* still rested at anchor.

"You Raymond?" demanded the second mate, meeting him.

"Yes, sir."

"Sent by Superintendent Peabody?"

"Yes, sir."

"O. K." The officer summoned a hand who was coiling down some rope. "Show this man to his bunk," he ordered, "and then carry on."

They walked forward to the fo'c's'le in a silence broken by just one question.

"What ship you on last, matey?"

"None," was the laconic reply.

"That right?"

Raymond was shown to his bunk. The place was full of seamen settling down their berths. Some were eating. Many, it seemed, from the current conversation, had only just signed on this ship. No one took any notice of the aloof newcomer who learned incidentally that the *Nausicaa* was due to sail in less than an hour.

Presently the thrumming and throbbing of the engines was heard. The deck was called, and, seeing the others depart, Raymond followed suit. But there was no job for him in this new activity. He watched the men cast off the lines. He studied the dock laborers, as they unwound the six-inch hawsers from the bollards and cast the ends into the river, and the crew forward and aft, as they hauled them in quickly and made them into a huge coil.

He could hear the ting-ting of the engine-room bells. The *Nausicaa* cleared the wall and nosed her way down the river. The smell of salt air tickled Raymond's nostrils, and for the first time since leaving Slim's apartment he had leisure to remember his stomach. His nerves echoed its appeal for uplifting alcohol. Dejection seized him.

They cleared Sandy Hook and headed south. Again the deck was called, and the watches picked. No one paid any attention to the idler by the rail. Just why was he omitted from these rites? He began to feel like a pariah. He wished he had never shipped, if shipping was to mean but a repetition of what he had endured on land. Even the sailors looked at him askance. Outcast! Wasn't he considered fit to serve even in such inferior capacity?

He was listening to the chattering water at the *Nausicaa's* side when some one touched him on the arm.

"Captain wants to see you." It was the chief mate, speaking.

"Ah, thank you." Never before had that conventional expression of gratitude been uttered with greater sincerity.

The officer escorted him to the cabin door and there left him. A businesslike order answered his knock. He entered. A spare man, broad of forehead, bright of eye, Captain Jones at first view betrayed an aspect of severe asceticism, which later he belied by means of a humorously quirked mouth.

"Sit down, Mr. Raymond," he invited quietly, and his glance openly took in every attribute of the fellow before him.

Raymond had the sensation of being dissected mentally and physically, but, making a valiant effort, he met the other's gaze.

"Friend of the superintendent," continued the captain. "I've had a letter from him. He tells me you've never been to sea before."

"No, sir." Raymond was about to add: "Not as a worker," but suppressed this declaration of his differing status.

The skipper nodded in seeming approval.

"Well, can't offer you much this time—no more than a deck-hand's job, I'm afraid, Raymond. You know what that means? Swabbing decks, polishing brasses, coiling rope—all the dirty work of a freighter, in fact."

"Didn't expect anything else, sir."

The humorous mouth came into play, lightening the official's firm countenance.

"Rotten job between you and me, Raymond," confided the captain, "but, if you can make the grade—well, we'll talk about that later, perhaps."

"Thank you, sir. I'll do my best."

"Sure you will." The statement implied real belief, and the officer rose, dismissing the seaman. "By the way," he added, "I've a letter for you from the superintendent. He asked me to give it to you personally. Here it is. Good luck. If you get—ah—tired and want to read, tell my steward. He'll lend you whatever books I have."

Once more Raymond was on deck, cheerful, inspired to a renewal of resolutions. He slit open the envelope of his letter absently. It contained just a roll of bills, with a wrapping about them, on which he read: "Go to it, little Ray! We're rooting for you." The notes amounted to two hundred dollars.

He walked to the rail, eyelids stinging. Never had any man, he thought, more stimulus to regeneration than he. A voice called:

"Hey, Raymond, lend a hand here!"

Thrusting the roll and the note in his pocket, he hastened forward and found himself awkwardly assisting in the coiling of rope.

Many torturing days followed, when his stomach seemed to heave with every roll of the *Nausicaa*. No liner, this old lady, with luxuries at hand for the indisposed. The mere look of the coarse food almost drove him from table. He had no appetite as yet, and he lived in a numbed, weary misery. He had no intention of holding himself aloof from his fellows. Had they but known it, he saw them all as from a distance. Specters they were, menacing mostly. He hated their blatant jokes, the boisterous horseplay, with which they beguiled the tedium of their leisure hours. He was conscious of scowling now and again quite involuntarily. One big fellow, named Peck, with a bunk adjoining his own, particularly annoyed him.

"Sh-sh!" he would cry at times, when Raymond came stumbling to his rest. "Don't you roughnecks know this is a stateroom? It ain't manners to be so noisy, with gentlemen aboard."

Raymond was aware that he had become a butt for Peck's humor, but at first he didn't care. All he wanted was to be let alone, until his nausea left him—until he became acclimated to his new home and associates.

BUT Peck was not the kind of hunter who despairs at a passively resisting quarry. He continued his banter until, finally realizing that verbal taunts were ineffective, he resorted to physical demonstration of his intentions. Picking up a piece of bread from the table, he hurled it accurately at the berth, in which the half-stupefied Raymond was reclining. As he did so, he cried:

"Aw, Horace! Don't be so rough. Darling's momma mightn't like it."

The piping voice, followed by a giggle, with which he accompanied the presumptive insult, drew, however, no answering

applause from the assembled seamen. Only Raymond took any notice of the mild assault, and he sat up to say quietly:

"Amusing yourself, Peck? Don't appear to be entertaining any one else, so suppose you stop. I would, if I were you."

"All right, my lord. Anything you say goes, of course—nit. Not another word shall be uttered to disturb your slumbers, but, when I've finished with this food, perhaps you'll be good enough to step up on the fo'c's'le. Then I'll try to amuse you—you darned highbrow!"

The epithet came with an expressive snarl, and Raymond, knowing its significance, was about to comply reluctantly with the request, when an interruption occurred.

"On deck, boys!" It was the boatswain, summoning the crew. "Getting alongside pretty soon."

They had passed Old Point Comfort to starboard and were rounding the west side of the huge coaling station that stands off Norfolk. By careful handling, they drew in on the south side, with bows pointing eastward. They made fast, and the seamen were set to getting the *Nausicaa* ready for filling up next morning, for they had left New York with only enough fuel in the bunkers to carry them to the Virginia seaport.

To Raymond was assigned the post of watchman on the gangway, with instructions that he was to let no one ashore except on proven business. Only Captain Jones, however, approached him. He was clad in civilians and, as he passed, Raymond respectfully touched his cap. The captain paused.

"Everything going all right, Raymond?"

"Yes, sir. Thank you."

The bright eyes regarding him were a trifle quizzical.

"Liking your mates?" asked Jones.

"Eh—ah, yes, sir."

"I'd try to," was the laconic comment. As he spoke, the captain waved to some acquaintance on the ferryboat that was to take him to the company's offices in Norfolk. Then he asked with seeming indifference: "Expecting any mail here? No? Nothing you want?"

"I—well, if it wouldn't be too much trouble, sir, I'd like to see some New York papers."

He could see that the captain was trying to be kind, without compromising their relationship.

"Papers, eh? Well, maybe they can be had."

And he walked off, leaving Raymond sincerely thanking his stars for having shipped him with such a thoroughbred officer.

"Have to make friends with the swine, I suppose," he reflected. "Never do to create trouble aboard this ship. Mean on the old skipper—and the new." He resolved to get on better terms with his coworkers.

Next day, so busy were all hands with the job of coaling, that there was no opportunity for reapproachment of any kind. Raymond worked eagerly and was pleasantly surprised to find that for the first time since sailing he felt almost well. The cessation of the ship's movement, the absence of liquor, the enforced energy were all contributing to a restoration of physical and mental health. He was actually cheerful, when, the bunkers filled, and the tide favorable, the *Nausicaa* once more nosed her way down the Roads on a misty morning.

Followed another full day, washing decks, scrubbing the woodwork which had become grimy with coal dust. Having no night duties, he had had to work straight through with occasional help from the relieved watch. He was glad when supper time came. He was hungry and happily tired. He had just finished supper, when the captain's steward came, carrying an armful of newspapers.

"The latest news for Mr. Raymond!" he called blithely. He was a nice boy.

"Thanks!"

Raymond had almost forgotten his request, and he received the bundle gratefully.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HERO OF THE SHIP.

TAKING them to his bunk, he settled himself for a comfortable half hour or more. Then suddenly his jaw dropped, his heart throbbed, and his body grew

rigid. The first headline to catch his eye was: "Attempted Robbery of Boxer's Hotel Apartment."

The subtitle explained the identity of the fighter—Paul Doyle. The burglar, it seemed, was known to his intimates as "Slim." As Raymond read it intently, his subconscious mind was busy with a problem. He remembered his resentment against Paul; also his inability to recollect just what he had said to Slim on the night the latter had brought him home. A sickening feeling of guilt assailed him, as he read the succinct story. The facts were simple enough.

Paul Doyle, having announced his intention publicly of leaving town the day after the fight, had returned nevertheless to his apartment. There he had found the thief busy with the little tubular safe in the wall, and which was concealed by a picture. A short tussle had ensued, in which the boxer had been easily victorious. The manager of the Pompadour in an interview had added to the tale. He had come up to visit Mr. Doyle, had found the door open, seen the smaller man in the other's merciless grip, and heard the former plead:

"Aw, let me go, Mr. Doyle. It's my first offense. Let me off, and I'll go straight."

Then the boxer had caught sight of the manager and simply said:

"Will you please fetch the police?"

While the three waited for the officers, the burglar had spent the time alternately pleading and threatening. Paul Doyle, it seemed, had said absolutely nothing, simply holding the man securely. When finally he was led away—this the policeman corroborated—Slim had said:

"By God, I'll get even with you for this. Send me up the river, will you? Take care I don't send you down a different river."

Cursing loudly, he had been bundled into a wagon. Paul Doyle, still imperturbable, had accompanied them to the hotel door. No, he told the reporters, he knew of no one except the manager—and, ah, a relative—who was aware of the existence of that safe. Yes, he kept some money in it and some negotiable securities. Of course he would prosecute.

Raymond Lowell leaned back in his bunk. Ethically, he was certain, he was an accomplice in this intended robbery. He bent his head on his hands and then roused himself to take up the next day's paper which would probably contain the record of the court proceedings. Would Paul reveal the identity of the relative? So like him to admit the full truth. Raymond never doubted for a second that in Paul's mind he would be associated with the crime. His hand was shaking and his soul was sick, as he leaned over the next news sheet.

"Here, matey, take a shot and be yourself."

A rough hand thrust a flask before his face, and Peck's laden breath assailed his nostrils. So absorbed was Raymond in his reading that at first he did no more than push the bottle away. Again it was proffered, and this time he glanced at the big seaman. The latter's eyes were shining hazily, and his features flushed. Indignation, as much as himself and his past as at the intruder, seized Raymond.

"Go to hell!" he said fiercely.

"Me?" It took a full second for the order to penetrate Peck's dulled brain. "Me—go to hell? And I was just trying to——"

With sudden fury he tore the paper from Raymond's hand, slitting it in two, and hurled it to the ground. There was an instant's silence, during which the other seamen watched the pair with thrilled anticipation. Then Raymond's voice rang out arrogantly:

"Pick that up and hand it to me."

Peck who weighed two hundred and ten pounds, glanced with maudlin appraisement at the slim form; then he threw his head back and laughed loudly and derisively.

"Hear him, mates? Hear him, did ye? The white-faced, tape-spined son of a gun tells me to pick up his—litrachoor. Sure, I'll pick it up. Sure I will." The drunken voice had become ominously calm. "Betcha yer life I'll pick it up."

He stooped unsteadily, secured it, twisted it into a stout roll, and with this slapped Raymond soundly across the face. Had the men been of the same caliber, Raymond would now undoubt-

edly have jumped from his bunk and torn wildly into his assailant. As it was, however, he simply clenched his fists, fighting with livid face for self-control. Peck waited, contemptuous, and, seeing no reply was forthcoming, turned again to the seamen who had now formed a circle of interested spectators.

"Look at him, mates!" he roared. "Just look at him! Green in the gills and yellow right to the marrow. Momma's pet!"

Some of the watch giggled appreciately at this sally. Others, inclined to Raymond in this duel and yet disappointed, stood silent, somewhat disgusted at his failure to show any metal. And then, as Peck was about to follow up his advantage with some more colorful gibes at the other's antecedents, Raymond spoke quietly:

"A few days ago, Peck, you offered to amuse me on the fo'c's'le. Still feel like obliging me with the entertainment?"

THERE was that in the voice that brought a grunt of approval from some of the men, but Peck was too swollen with his seeming victory to deflate easily. He laughed boisterously again, to cover up a dim sense of disappointment.

"Lead him to the slaughter, boys! Just lead him out and let me punch the stuffing out of this bag!"

The two were escorted to the improvised arena, while rumor, swifter at sea even than on land, spread the news that a fight was to take place. It spread aft, of course.

"Go!" said the appointed referee, and the pair were about to mix it nastily, when a stern voice rang out:

"What's all this about?"

The crowd, shamefaced, dissolved, and into the ring strode Captain Jones followed by the second officer. "Fighting, eh?" went on the skipper. "Peck, you know the rules of this ship. All fighting must be done with gloves on."

"Aw, sir, sure I know. But this highbrow—too up stage he is. Just thought—well, just thought I'd teach him manners. You get me?"

"Sure you can?" queried the captain blandly.

"Can I?" Peck appealed to the common sense of all within earshot. Wasn't it evident he could?

"How about you, Raymond? What's your idea in tackling a man Peck's size?"

"We had an argument, sir. He hit me, and no one can hit—a—ah—can hit me and get away with it."

He was still angry, and he spoke more stiffly than he intended.

But the mariner's eyes merely sparkled with amusement.

"All right," he said, and, turning to a seaman, he issued an order.

"Tell the steward to fetch the gloves from my cabin."

While they were being brought, Raymond Lowell's mind recalled the last ring he had fought in and the last opponent. Old Harry at Harvard! Nice contrast between the present and the past. He hated Peck at that moment, for wasn't Peck symbolical of the degraded surroundings into which he, Raymond, had slipped? The thought of his twin brought a choking feeling in his throat. If only he could make good the past with his brother! If he were not at sea, he would have run now to confess his unconscious, but effective part, nevertheless, in that attempted robbery.

Meanwhile, he heard Captain Jones instruct the mate to act as referee. The bos'n was told to bring up a length of rope and make a ring by tying it from the rails to the rigging, to a locker and back to the rails. Open rails formed the fourth side of the square.

Mate Brown, proud of his boxing knowledge, important therefore in his present capacity, lent the amateur squabble a formal air. He called the principals to the center, saying:

"Three-minute rounds. No clinching—no low hitting."

They retired to their corners, Raymond slightly smiling. Somehow the crudity of the affair tickled his sense of comedy. Meantime, Peck was scowling like a professional "killer."

"Thinks he'll rattle me," thought Raymond, amused. "I'll break his heart before I finish with him."

He had a sudden vision of himself as the gentlemanly exponent of scientific

tactics against the cave-man brutality of his debauched antagonist.

The gong, a marline spike struck on the bulkhead, sounded. Peck, rising, looked almost twice his opponent's size, and Captain Jones' face took on an expression of worry. What would the superintendent think if his protégé was beaten up by the biggest bully aboard the *Nausicaa*, and in his, the skipper's, presence?

"I'll stop it if it gets too bad," he decided. "Probably not do the fellow any harm, anyway."

Peck bullocked straight to Raymond, who stepped aside easily, leaving the other to continue of his own momentum to the ropes. The deck hand made no attempt to hit, but, as Peck floundered over the hemp, he said:

"Now, you bully, I'm going to punish you."

"Thasso?"

THE huge seaman rushed again, and now Raymond made no attempt to get out of his way. He stopped the mad charge with a straight left to the right eye. As the glove landed, he screwed his wrist. Instantly the tender skin was broken, and a crimson stain began to run down the sailor's face.

The crew roared. Peck was not popular, and such adherents as he seemed to have were rather the fair-weather friends of a bully, for whose downfall they are forced to wait at another's hands. The shout heartened his enemy. Raymond had already begun to perspire, for undoubtedly he was not in condition. But he had measured his man; the fellow was tough, perhaps, but vulnerable. Peck simply had no skill. He could be baffled by brain more easily than by brawn.

Raymond decided to get busy. The only thing that would save himself was quick, deft action entailing a swift finish. He could not last; he was sure of that.

He got on his toes and feinted Peck into knots. The clumsy seaman was like a child at a three-ring circus, uncertain where to look. Raymond followed this display up by shooting rights and lefts to the jaw, causing Peck's head to rock from side to side. Abruptly he shifted his attack to the stomach, further confusing his opponent. He pounded away at this plump surface with short-arm jabs which brought resonant puffs from the puzzled plug-ugly.

Murmurs of admiration were audible from the crew. They were fairly familiar with the ordinary sea scrap, but they had seen none aboard ship quite like this. Captain Jones was smiling again.

"Might have known Peabody wouldn't send me muck!" he admonished himself for his earlier fears.

When the round ended, he said:

"Mr. Mate, this fight must go on until one man quits."

"Aye, aye, sir." The mate was only too eager himself. This Raymond could box by the book, and he studied the book.

"All in," Raymond was telling himself in his corner. "Quick or quit! Lord, I've got to punish him. If I don't——" He was thinking not so much of what Peck might do to him in the way of annoyance, as of his own private morale.

Skill against frightfulness—that was the issue in his mind.

"If you win this," his brain was saying, "you're on the road back. If you don't you're——"

All his faculties were alert for the next round. So far Peck had not landed even once on him, but nevertheless Raymond was a bit winded from his own exertions.

This time Peck came out more slowly. A straight left landed on the bulbous nose of his opponent; a snappy cross with the right put him on his back. He was down for eight.

The spectators were now silent.

Then Peck was on his feet again, but groggy. Raymond's own eyes were becoming blurred, but he managed a right to the short ribs and a left hook to the jaw. Again Peck flopped. He was counted out.

"Is it to go on, sir?" asked the mate of the captain, hoping for an affirmative answer.

"Wait until he comes around and then ask him."

Peck's flickering lids announced his consciousness. He glanced about.

"Want to go on?" inquired the mate.

The bully slowly shook his head, hardly aware of the significance of the question or his own tacit answer.

"Right!" Captain Jones was rather relieved at the decision. "A couple of you men help him aft. I'll fix that eye up." He turned away, calling over his shoulder: "See you later, Raymond."

"Yes, sir."

In a kind of fog he made his way to the fo'c's'le ladder, the men clearing a path for him. He was untouched, but his head was whirling. He was glad that the men did no more than pat him on the back. He couldn't have spoken, and he was ashamed of his showing. But he had won. That idea was uppermost in his mind. At the same time he was sorry for poor Peck.

"Just doesn't know the game. Can't box," he excused the vanquished man, as an enthusiastic fireman pushed his way forward with congratulations on the skill Raymond had displayed.

He felt apologetic at having knocked out a regular member of the *Nausicaa* crew, unaware of the admiration his own display had earned him.

ONCE below, he was glad to tumble into his bunk, but no sooner had he done so than recollection disturbed him. That damned paper! He groped for it, got it. Through a haze he saw the details of the court proceedings. No mention of himself. Old Harry was still riding his high horse, prosecuting vigorously with the aid of a lawyer and obviously on the road to secure a verdict—a harsh one.

That threat of Slim's, as he had been handed over to the law, rang ominously in Raymond's brain.

"Can't do anything," he reflected; but still he remembered his own misgivings about Slim's "club" and its supposedly congenial associates.

When the crew had talked themselves tired above, they descended to find Raymond apparently asleep. He was still revolving hazily the danger to his twin and his own share in having brought about the position threatening it.

"Gwan," a voice interrupted his thoughts. "Highbrow, he? Ever seen a highbrow box like that? You can't tell me. I've seen the big uns in Madison Square, I have. Highbrows in the ring!" The speaker scoffed at the idea. "Real un this one. Look at his form! Notice the way he——" The conversation trailed off into expert detail of his tactics.

"Yea," broke in another. "Heard his accent, didn't ye? The way he talked to the captain, too. Up stage he is—Clawrrse!" He attempted a British pronunciation of this seamanly despised status.

Raymond sat up in his bunk.

"I'm not," he announced stonily.

They turned to him in embarrassed amazement, never guessing that he might have heard. Calmly he slipped out of his berth and approached the now huddled group.

"I'm not up stage," he declared—"at least, I don't mean to be. If I seem so, it's unintentional."

They were still nonplused and uneasy in consequence, so he knew he had to take a different note, if he was to carry out that resolution of a couple of days ago.

"See here, boys," he continued, "I've got troubles of my own. Nothing that would interest you. But I'm one of the crew—just a deck hand, of course." He smiled at his presumption in claiming their superior status—smiled deprecatingly. "Honest, I want to be friends."

They gazed at him awkwardly, not knowing what to say, sensing his difference despite his declaration. It was one Paddy Casey who stepped forward finally, his sensitiveness telling him of the other's quandary. Raymond looked haggard, all in. He must be soothed and put to bed again. So thought Paddy, as he put out a hand.

"Shure ye do," he said heartily. "Put it there, lad. Don't the boys know you're a good scout? A fellah that can fight like you did is welcome in any crowd."

"Sure, sure!" They backed up Paddy now, relieved.

"That's the stuff," went on the little Hibernian. "Friends all round, and shure I've got a dhrop in the locker to seal the bond."

Eagerly he produced a bottle of syn-

thetic gin, filled every available receptacle, and handed around the fiery stuff. Raymond looked at it; longed for it. And yet, if he took it once with these chaps —well, that meant starting again on the road he had hoped to leave to-night.

"I say," he said finally, embarrassed in his turn, as he held a cup, "would you mind if I drank only water? Willing to do anything in reason, but you see——" He broke off in time to stop a confession, flushing painfully as he did so.

"Water's mine, too," a seaman came to his rescue.

They all drank, with much smacking of lips on the part of some seasoned possessors of stout stomachs.

"What are we standin' for?" demanded Casey.

They squatted about the table, and immediately Raymond found himself a target for inquisitive questions.

WHERE had he learned to fight? What was a boxer like him doing in the fo'c's'le? The aforementioned expert was the most eager to know how such an exponent of the manly art came to be shipping as a supercargo. Again Raymond had to sidestep, mentally, not physically now. It was almost with relief that he saw Peck enter, his eye adorned with a huge piece of plaster.

A silence fell over the gathering, amid which Peck, the dejected, walked wordlessly to his bunk. Raymond knew it was a crisis for him personally. If he could only make the right gesture—say the right word!

He stood up and strode toward the ex-bully, hand extended.

"Will you shake, Peck? No hard feelings, I hope. I've been explaining as well as I can to the boys how I came to be so—up stage—unintentionally, of course. All right now, if you say so."

He had to make quite a speech, for Peck was eying him suspiciously, ignoring the proffered hand.

"Might have told us you were a professional boxer," he growled.

"But I'm not. Never been in a public ring in my life."

"Gwan! How come then that you could hop around so fast I couldn't see you until you was in another place? How come all I could do was take a wallop on the jaw?"

Raymond laughed and swung round, directing the rejected hand toward Paddy.

"How d'you feel, Peck?" he inquired at the same time.

"Rotten," came surlily from the defeated bully.

"Paddy, that glass you were offering? Where is it?"

It was given to Raymond who presented it to Peck. The latter, too, was longing for a pick-me-up. He took it, gulped it. Then he drew a long breath.

"Thanks, old high hat," he muttered and thrust out a large paw.

They shook amid cheers.

"Let's take a turn," suggested Raymond. "Need some air myself."

The others let them go. The mate, finding the erstwhile enemies parading the deck some minutes later, had to keep himself from running to the skipper with the news. The old man had retired for night, however, and was not to be disturbed. In the morning he reported duly, and Captain Jones' eyes twinkled.

"Nothing like sweating out bad feeling. Boxing's a noble art, Mr. Brown." He knew his assistant's leanings, and a more discerning man would have noticed the quivering of the humorous lips.

"Certainly is, sir," the mate replied seriously.

"Pity we can't include it in the day's discipline!"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Brown, departing, bethought himself of a plan by which he might translate this seemingly sincere desire into reality. He sought out Raymond later on and said casually:

"Whenever you want to train, Raymond, don't hesitate to use the fo'c's'le. By the way, I wonder if you ever saw Morrissey in action?"

Morrissey was the mate's sole claim to acquaintance with real exponents of ring tactics, for he had seen him fight once.

"No, sir. Familiar with his style, though."

They then fell into a discussion, which

Raymond illustrated as best he could. He could see Peck off duty, eying them from a distance, and soon, when the mate had to go, Raymond called out:

"Want a little exercise, Peck?"

"Still aching," was the gruff answer. Peck was unpleasantly conscious of a lost position among his fellows.

"Then you need the exercise, just as I do, to unloosen the joints. Come on."

They sparred, with Raymond in the position of instructor. Soon the fat fellow had entered into the spirit of the friendly bout. Others, eager for knowledge, joined them.

CHAPTER V.

NOSTALGIA.

IN a short time Raymond skipping rope in the evening, Raymond punching the sandbag put up by the captain's leave at the mate's suggestion, Raymond taking on novices for training, became a feature of the ship's entertainment. The crew enjoyed it, Peck in particular. His surliness had given place to admiration for this man, so much lighter than he, who could punish him so effectively and so easily.

So the *Nausicaa,* at peace with herself and the world at large, slipped south. Brazen skies succeeded the cold blue heavens of the north. As they passed through Capricorn, it seemed to Raymond that even the ocean took on a copper color. He suffered from the heat, but already he had been hardened. He did his duties unthinkingly, his new confidence in himself disturbed only at times by thoughts of his brother.

Slim—how had he ever tolerated such an associate? Could Slim hurt old Harry? He ached for news, but did not dare ask any more favors in the shape of papers. Captain Jones held himself aloof now, merely nodding kindly, whenever their paths crossed. Their ultimate port was Buenos Aires, and, already out of Rio, he could hear the men whetting their appetites for the pleasures the city had in store for them.

"B. A.? Never been there, ain't ye? Gee, wish I was seeing it for the first time. Wait till you——" Raymond listened to varied itemized lists of its charms, each colored by the particular leaning of the man who gave them.

By the time they finally sighted the low-lying Uruguayan coast, his imagination, always vivid, was straining toward the gay city that holds such a queenly place in the Southern seas. It was morning, when they altered course to head up the Rio Plata. They left the white buildings of Montevideo shining on their right. Past the lightships, painted in huge lettering "Intermedio," they plowed slowly up a river as dirty as the old Tiber. Yellow, indeed! Came a town on the Argentine side, whose designation he did not need. From gossip he already knew it as La Plata, rival in odor and industry of the Chicago stockyards. Then the river swerved away from them. They came to docks and locks. Several of the latter, successfully surmounted, landed them in a large basin. Grain elevators, suggestive of a world's appetite for wheat, lined it. Finally they entered the "Dar-Sud," as the seamen called it.

It was another day when the harbor officials boarded the *Nausicaa,* accompanied by a representative of the line. Arrived, Raymond lost much of his confidence. Just what was life before him to be? He had made no definite plan of action, intent only on the process of giving his body a chance to recover energy. It was Captain Jones' summons to see him that drove him finally to a decision.

"Well, Raymond!" The lean face was again severe. "Here we are, and we stay here for five days. Going back with us, are you? Just want to know."

Raymond Lowell saw New York again and what it meant. No, he had figured once on making a clean cut. Just how he had not planned at the time. Here was his chance to snap the cable, to try his luck in a new country, where the name of Lowell was unknown, and he would have to stand on his own feet. His voice was sober, as he replied:

"Think I'll remain, sir, and try this place out. I'm told there are opportunities." He waited breathlessly, despite his seeming ease, for the captain's comment.

"Yes, there are opportunities. You're

right. Then I'll pay you off now. Thirty-eight dollars—a dollar a day for our trip." He counted out the bills meticulously. That done, he looked up, smiling. "You've earned it, Raymond, I must say that. That boxing of yours—the men liked it. Good for them." He pushed a paper toward his deck hand. "Sign here."

"Thank you, sir."

As Raymond signed, he had the sickening feeling of cutting himself off from all contact with his own people; of crossing the Rubicon. Would he be able to fight the forces opposed to him? He had hoped subconsciously, as he knew now, that the captain would advise him otherwise; would point out the difficulties of beginning life again without backing in a new land; would hold out hopes of advancement aboard his ship. He suppressed his disappointment, seeing it for what it was—weakness. Did he want to become another Peck? The hero of the fo'c's'le, but the failure in actual fact?

"That's it," said the captain, recovering the signed paper. His tone was genial. "Now you're no longer under me, so suppose we have a bite together and a chat? This is my dinner hour."

"Like to, sir."

Nothing serious was mentioned during the meal. They were taking their coffee and a smoke, when the captain said casually:

"Just had a letter from the superintendent. He inquired for you. Tell him you're fine, eh? Said he had written to the company's offices here about you, in case you decided to stay, you see."

Raymond's brain registered the fact that both skippers had expected his announced intention. He was pleased and yet perturbed.

"I'm informing them about you, too, in case you should need a berth again."

"I won't, sir."

Captain Jones met his eye with an approving smile.

"No, of course; but you never can tell. New country; different language for business purposes. Difficult, you see. No harm in taking the address. Here it is. Easy to find." The mariner's face broke into a broad smile. "We do take passengers at times, you know—privileged persons. Our rates are cheap. Might try us, if you want a leisurely trip home some day. Well, good-by and good luck. Glad to have met you."

"Lucky I met you, sir."

"Shucks! Nothing I did! Ought to see the difference between yourself now and when you came aboard. Take care of yourself."

They gripped hands, and the captain simulated pain at the other's clasp.

ELATED, if somewhat nervous, Raymond Lowell went ashore. He had contemplated taking along such belongings as were his, but there was a taint of Slim on them, he felt. He wished he had been able to send Slim that money before he had landed in jail. No use now. Mailing it to an associate would mean simply losing it.

He walked along the docks until he came to a turning, when he mounted a cobbled street.

"Calle 25 de Majo," said the sign.

A clothing store caught his eye, and he spent therein thirty pesos on a suit. To this purchase he added collars, shirts, socks, and a hat. Sixty pesos altogether, but he had to have them. His bundles under his arm, he turned into the Calle Cordova, with no destination in mind. Still he had to find some place where he could change out of his seaman's outfit into his landsman's gear.

"The English Bookshop!"

The quaint lettering, reminiscent of Boston, attracted him, as did the mental provender offered for sale. Through the plate glass he observed an old man with carelessly barbered white beard, humped shoulders and shortsighted eyes, which seemed more intent on scanning a new addition to his stock than on hunting a new customer for the same.

"Try him," decided Raymond and entered.

A loud doorbell, evidently fashioned in the interests of the deaf, awakened the bookshop salesman from his perusal.

"Yes?" he asked, blinking and cocking an ear, as Raymond, stuttering, tried to explain just what he wanted. A place to change his clothes.

"You see I'm in——"

"Dear me!" The venerable gentleman, with right ear cupped in his hand, was evidently listening. "Dear me! American, of course. Yes, Cambridge unmistakably." He smiled vacuously at his own accuracy in guessing the accent. "Accident! Most irregular, of course, but there's a room behind. Deserter, did you say?"

"No, no, sir."

"Naturally not. Just behind here." He ushered Raymond into a dimly lit back room that had the musty odor of old books. "Sorry I have no better accommodation. Harvard—must help. Most unusual. You'll excuse the—ah——"

He departed, and Raymond Lowell hastily doffed his deck-hand outfit for more conventional city clothing. The feel of the clean, white shirt, the grip of the hat after the loose cap, gave him a new feeling of confidence. He emerged, a different man, another bundle under his arm. Again the old gentleman blinked and then smiled.

"Yes, of course!" It was as though he saw Raymond now as he had expected him to be. "You want to get rid of this?" he asked, as the intruder extended the package. "Just outside—round the shop to the rear. You'll find a big garbage pail. Just—ah—dump it." He was pleased with this colloquialism. "Anything else I can do for you? Yes, yes, any time. Glad to have you look over our stock. Good-by. Yes, good-by."

Raymond, relieved of the evidence of his former state, suddenly recollected an omission in his outfit. Gloves and a cane! He procured them and soon found himself swaggering in his old style along the fashionable Avenida de Majo, the Fifth Avenue of B. A., as he had been informed by the seamen. It reminded him of an enlarged edition of the Champs Elysées. Crowded sidewalks with gay, open-air cafés, with formal trees; and flaming gardens cutting the wide thoroughfare in two. Motors, carrying languid-eyed, gracefully reclining women, flashed by on both sides. Color everywhere. Nerve in the very atmosphere! Wealth unafraid of displaying its power to compel beauty. Luxury restrained by refinement.

He felt intoxicated. He had still two hundred dollars in his pocket. He was clear-eyed, and a feeling of health and strength made him gay. He had come by accident to the right place.

Though late, it was still daylight. He decided to eat; not so much because he was hungry as because he wanted to mingle with the seemingly enchanted throng around him. On a corner was a café, whence issued the sound of sophisticated music. Round the tables outside were gathered couples or quartets, equally divided as regards sex. He strode past them into the interior, conscious pleasantly of the fact that sidelong, feminine eyes marked his alert, eager progress.

GLOSSY linen once more; sparkling glass; elaborate menu. He did not recognize what many of the dishes meant. Must learn Spanish. Always sensitive to his surroundings, however, he plunged, financially speaking; ate avidly of strange food and rose satisfied. It was night when he came out, but only the heavens were black. No darkness impeded progress on this avenue. Of course, he must economize, he thought, considering the cost of that meal. He found a taxi driver and had himself driven to a moderate-priced hotel.

"The Continental!"

Of course, it would be called that. Wasn't there a "Continental" in every city of each hemisphere? He disliked the dinginess of the street, but, the glow of his meal still lasting, disregarded it. The desk clerk brought him upstanding with a jerk. As the señor had no baggage, he must pay in advance. Raymond went to his room, thoughtful. Buenos Aires was beautiful, but not cheap.

He awoke to a recognition of an urgent need for action.

"Don't know the lingo. Must look up the place where the Anglo-Saxons congregate."

One of the seamen had mentioned Balgrano and Hurlingham as housing most of his colinguists. After a Spanish breakfast of coffee and rolls, he inquired the

way and was driven out in a most modern bus. He had no idea where he wanted to alight, so made up his mind suddenly on seeing a pleasant, secluded park. Somehow he had visualized this English-speaking section as being efficient in the matter of business. Instead, he found that it disconcertingly resembled Washington. Fine homes, set back in spacious, tended gardens. Stately vistas of white roads seen through parallelograms of trees. Restful, settled, cultured —all that one could desire, in fact, if seeking a residence, but not suggestive of jobs for a man with almost no money in his pockets!

"Guess again," said Raymond grimly to himself, taking a place on a park bench.

The sun was intolerable by this time. It glared down on him, conjuring a heat haze before his eyes. He glanced about for shelter and on an adjacent seat saw an aquiline-nosed, elderly gentleman of austere aspect calmly reading a book.

"Sunproof!" ejaculated Raymond, with respectful irreverence, as his gaze sought further for some shade.

Behind his bench was an iron foot rail, such as one sees in London public parks, and beyond that cultivated grass, heat-scorched but interspersed with many oases of trees. Seeing no prohibitive sign, he stepped over it and was presently squatting in comparative comfort beneath an odoriferous eucalyptus. Undecided about his next move and drowsy, he was beginning to dream, when some footsteps on the graveled pathway and whining voices drew his attention to the spot he had just left.

Two beggars, both male, were accosting the stately, elderly student who, Raymond could see, flung them disdainfully a peso apiece, returning instantly to his reading. They strolled off, conferred, circuited about a scarlet flower bed, came back to the old gentleman and quietly surrounded his seat. So absorbed was he that he didn't lift a head, as they again approached him.

Raymond watched them; saw them glance about cautiously. Evidently the inhabitants of Hurlingham thought themselves safe in this park, for no policeman was in sight. Had there been one, he, the ex-associate of such people as Slim, would have summoned him on suspicion. He was not surprised when one supposed beggar, moving forward, placed a hand over the aquiline-nosed man's mouth, at the same time winding an arm about his shoulders. The second thug promptly proceeded to go through the pockets of the individual thus held in a vise.

"Damn!" cried the sleepy ex-deck hand, jumping to his feet. He was in no mood to tackle two thugs.

HE made an effort, nevertheless. Running forward noiselessly over the grass, he landed a terrific right-hand, dropping punch to the nape of the neck, bringing a squeal and a retreat from the first assailant. He followed this up with a right slam to the cheek of the searcher who went sprawling on his back. Picking up the prime casualty he placed him atop the second, and sat on both. Then he addressed the man on the bench.

"If you call the *vigilantes*," he announced, proud of his knowledge of the local term, "I'll hold them."

The old gentleman looked at him in unfeigned surprise. Then he looked at the prone couple.

"Ah, thank you. Nasty hole you've rescued me from. Never mind about them." The voice was courteous, cultured, a trifle hoarse. "I'm unhurt, fortunately. From the noise caused by those two blows, I should judge these men have been punished sufficiently." He gasped, still dazed. "Forgive me! I haven't thanked you. Most timely interference." He extended a hand.

"Oh! that's all right," said Raymond a trifle gruffly, taking it.

"My card," went on the old man, as, with a shaking hand, he produced one highly engraved. "If I ever can do anything to show my gratitude, please don't hesitate to call on me. Think I'll go home now."

"Shall I help you or——"

"Quite unnecessary, I assure you. Quite!" he toddled off.

Raymond's eyes followed the retreating figure quizzically. He was still most comically sitting atop the defeated

crooks. With a half laugh, half sigh, he rose. So much for acting the modern Galahad. He wondered, if, in the event of his being hurt, the old gentleman would still have hurried away, and concluded he would. He glanced at the card, which read: "Alan Begg Hamilton!"

There was an address—Calle Ayacucho—which meant nothing whatsoever to Raymond. With some mental remarks about descendants of Scotch ancestors, Raymond ruefully made his way from the groaning, squirming couple toward the bus line. He had nowhere to go but his hotel, and he was hungry. The old fool might have at least offered him a meal.

He ate economically, but tastily at the first cheap café he saw. What a fall, my countrymen, from his last night's elation! He was confronted with a dwindling pocketbook, an incomplete knowledge of the town, a quite complete ignorance of what business line he was fitted for, and a reticence about giving any New York firm, for which he had worked, as a reference in case of necessity. They always wanted references here, he had learned, and the better your ancestry, the better your opportunity. Might as well have been in Europe! Still, he refused to acknowledge the name of Lowell, and without that or even a "character," where was he to land?

He spent a couple of days roaming the city, learning its layout and nothing else. A clean cut! What a catch phrase that was, anyway? What did it mean? He had never debated its exact connotation before. Surely, the braver and better man was he who stuck to the old environment and made good. As usual, his imaginative sensitiveness worked against him. He saw only the odds against him. He was suffering from nostalgia, too—an illness that is scoffed at, but which is, nevertheless, as enervating as any mentioned in a medical textbook.

Eventually it drove him back to the *Nausicaa.* He told himself he only wanted to see his old mates before they sailed. They would be going at dawn probably. He knew the tides now. He sought the captain first, paid him his compliments, declared himself keen for the new life, looked his part in his new outfit, and sent a message to the superintendent.

"Guess I'll look up the chaps forward," he declared, in saying farewell.

They rose with a shout at beholding him in his new togs. They wanted to ask him to supper only he looked so—well, you know.

"Not the style you're accustomed to, Gentleman Jim!" It was Casey, of course, who supplied the title that made him squirm.

"I'm hungry, as a matter of fact," he announced truthfully.

"Nobility obliges," commented Paddy knowingly. "Well, fellahs, he's eaten it before. Maybe he hasn't forgotten how. Seems he hasn't, or he wouldn't have come down here."

They gave him a plateful of the usual, over which he smacked his lips loudly to amuse them and hearten himself. When time came for departing, it developed that Peck was going ashore.

"Good!" cried Raymond heartily.

Peck took his obvious sincerity as a personal compliment and preened himself at the prospect of such distinguished companionship.

The seaman had a date at the Café Albion, he said. Of course, Mr. Raymond wouldn't want to go there.

"Why not?" asked Raymond, noting the new title.

"Well, it's—sort of cheesy, you know. Won't be there long, of course, but promised a mate. If you could wait——"

"I'd like to wait."

Peck was delighted. Raymond, the boxer, had won his human admiration as a man superior to himself, but Raymond, dolled up—well, there was a chap! Peck swaggered, as they approached the café.

CHAPTER VI.

PACK HORSES.

IT was an ordinary sidewalk affair with a large room inside. They could hear a jumbled jazz band, as they came near. A passageway at the end of the main dining room led into an enormous billiard saloon. The greater number of the tables were of the huge English size, with a

sprinkling of the American variety and some rather deprecating specimens of French persuasion. It was a brilliantly lighted café, busy with waiters who dashed hither and thither in response to raucous commands. Above the racket rang always the click of the balls.

"Cannon off the red!" giggled Peck's friend who was waiting for them, directing the seaman's attention to an evidently well-known lady who had just been invited to sit at the table of a newcomer.

Peck turned as purple as her flower, as he growled a response and glanced at Raymond. Instantly the other took the cue. The conversation henceforth became strictly technical. There was a big match going on to-night for the championship of the English colony. Wouldn't they like to see it?

They were willing, and under expert escort were seated in the chairs that lined the brilliantly lighted scene of the billiard encounter.

"How about drinks?" inquired Peck's friend.

"Maté for mine," said Raymond, quickly naming the South American version of tea. There was something about this slick, sleek individual that unpleasantly recalled Slim. Taking alcohol in his company would have an ominous suggestion, even if he, Raymond, had not already sworn off the stuff.

"Yeh, good stuff, that," broke in Peck, backing him up, "for them as likes it. Dry, Raymond is. But you know me, matey."

The beverages were brought and imbibed in silence. Though neither of the Americans knew much about English billiards, the vast size of the table and smallness of the pockets fascinated them. Another round was ordered and then a third. Raymond insisted on paying for both, acting as host for Peck.

"Last night with an old pal," he explained, evading the sailor's endeavors to pay his share. It was Casey's comment ringing in his brain. "Noblesse oblige!"

Though he clung to Peck as a link with the past, yet he had the definite sensation now of being in company with an inferior. Raymond waved a negligent hand, when Peck, with apologies, conferred with his café friend in secret. He was absorbed in the game and did not heed them. It was with reluctance that he heard the summons:

"Got to be going, pal. Boat sails early. Due back before midnight."

"Sure—sure."

He nodded casually to the café denizen, and they departed. When they were out in the Calle Corrientes, headed for the dock, loneliness assailed him again.

"Going to miss you fellows, Peck—damnably. Have to hunch myself now and get a job."

Peck, walking stolidly in silence, stopped to look at him.

"Garn!" he said. "High-hatting again! Gosh, if I had your boxing talent I wouldn't be short of kale. No, sir. Loads of money in it, specially down here, with all these wild bulls wanting to break into the American game. Say!" He spoke loudly, seriously. "You know, fella, if you wanted to, you could lick them all—lick 'em—lay 'em out in rows! Why, with what you learned me, I've a mind to take a shot at it myself, when I get back to Brooklyn."

Raymond laughed.

"See me as professional, do you, Peck? Not much! My fight's going to be a different kind."

"Sure, I know." Peck was not as obtuse as he seemed to be. "Guys like you never know when they've got a chance. If it was me——"

THEY were passing along the dock through a blackness that was blurred by the far-spaced street lights. Suddenly something seemed to explode in Raymond's brain. There came a dullness, broken by a confused jumble of voices, among which he thought he recognized Peck's, raised in remonstration. He awoke to daylight and a horrible ache in his head. He was lying on something soft; but where? With an effort he raised himself on his elbow and saw what looked like a large, square loft, at the far end of which were piled sacks. Sacks filled with what? He didn't care. He tried to turn his head and heard a gruff voice asking:

"How's it go, matey?"

It was Peck lying beside him—Peck slightly disfigured as to face, evidently angry and yet solicitous.

"Thought you had to be on your ship," muttered Raymond presently, struggling to reënact the night's proceedings. "Sailing to-day, weren't you?"

"Yeh—no. Got hurt, you did. Better get out of here. Grain storage place. They won't care for transients." He laughed bitterly. "Think you can walk now, matey?"

"Of course." Raymond struggled to his feet, felt dizzy, bit his lower lip, clenched his fists, and moved forward.

A ladder led to the dock, and he drew back at sight of it. He could never make that grade.

"Me first!" mumbled Peck and led the way. "Lean on me, if you like, but better try to come down backward. I'll watch out for you."

They reached the ground, to be intercepted by a dock hand demanding what they had been doing up above. Raymond, staggering, instinctively reached for his pocket. Nothing like coin to soothe the irate. He fumbled long and feverishly. Not a cent could he find.

"It's all right," he heard Peck say. "Come on."

Unquestioning, he proceeded.

"Coffee," said Peck presently. "We can go to that, but not much more, matey. Gee! I feel horrible."

"What happened to us, Peck?"

"Thugs, of course," was the reply.

"But I—you're all cut up. I'm just woozy—not all there!" He giggled stupidly.

"Hot coffee will set you right."

They got to a dock café and ordered their meager stimulant. Finished, they continued on their way to the *Nausicaa*. So Peck said, anyway. Raymond had no idea where they were going, though already the drink had relieved his headache. The dock was empty. No *Nausicaa* in sight.

"Sure it's the right one?" queried Raymond, himself uncertain.

"Sure's as eggs make omelets," was the reply.

Abruptly Raymond sat down on the ground and began to laugh.

"You and I, Peck—both broke! Not a dime on me. I've tried."

"Stop the hystrikes!" was the other's counsel. "We're all right. Plenty jobs going in B. A. Trust me. Feeling all right?"

"Fine!" It was half the truth, and Raymond uttered it soberly.

"Thass good."

"But, Peck, about last night, what was——"

"Aw, forget it! How should I know what happened?" The tone was gruff, resentful.

Raymond respected it, preserving silence, but he wondered. Peck seemed to know more than he was willing to admit.

He had no idea where the seaman was leading him until they came up shortly before the façade of the Albion Café again. The outside seats were empty now, and Peck said, almost unpleasantly:

"You wait here. I'm going inside."

HE returned, still ill-tempered, with some money in his pocket, however, and announced:

"We're going to a sailor's rest I know. Get a wash up and a shave, mebbe. Then we'll feel better."

He was as good as his word, and Raymond, emerging from a shower and administered to by a barber advised by Peck to mind his business, felt decidedly more like his self of the previous day. They were about to brush him down, when Peck called:

"Never mind the fixings."

To Raymond, thereafter, taken by unfamiliar bypaths of the Southern metropolis, their way might have led through a jungle track. He waited endlessly, as it appeared to him, for Peck to reappear from dingy offices. Each time he came with a scowl. Raymond, still weak and growing increasingly weary, made no comment. He was in the seaman's hands entirely until such time as his faculties returned to him in full. But he was not ungrateful. He could see that Peck was working on his behalf as well as his own.

Finally they returned, sore of foot and surly, to the Albion again, but before the regular dinner hour. Peck ordered a *puchero* for each, and it proved to be a

savory mess of mixed beans, pork, potatoes and cabbage. Raymond reveled in it, for he was hungry, but got no answer to the compliments he paid his host in ordering such food. Presently Peck rose to confront a newcomer. They spoke in whispers, and then Raymond heard:

"Why don't you go carry grain? Always get a job at that."

"Nice, soft berth," jeered Peck. But, when he came back to the table, he was thoughtful. "Got any money on you at all, matey?" he asked Raymond.

"Turn my pockets out," said Raymond pleasantly.

The contents proved valueless, financially speaking, but Peck's shrewd eye picked out among the items spread before him an obviously expensive card.

"Whass this?"

Raymond explained. Old guy he had rescued from two thugs the other day. Cheap skate—handed him an engraved piece of pasteboard by way of thanks.

"Whaffor?" demanded the Socratic inquisitor.

"Glad to see you any time. Muchly grateful. The usual bunk!" Raymond explained airily.

Some instinct warned him that Peck was anxious to put this pasteboard to some use, and he deliberately minimized its importance.

"No use calling on that hard-boiled old Scotchman for a loan. He'd give you a nickel as if it were a million and have you suitably escorted to the front door."

"Swell address he's got!"

"Perhaps, but I don't see him as a source of revenue."

A vision of Peck and himself presenting themselves, destitute, to the eagle-nosed reader of the park bench was singularly distasteful to Raymond. No, grain carrying was better by a long shot than begging.

"Seaman's Rest for us to-night," announced Peck presently. "Come on. We can make it on my kale."

As they rose, a hovering waiter pushed a bill before the sailor's nose.

"Try and collect," was his threatening comment.

"But the señor——"

"All right, chalk it up to 'Blackie' in my name." He uttered a loud guffaw, before which the waiter retreated. "Got a little account with Blackie. He'll settle all right."

They made their way along the increasingly darkening docks to a neat building, over which a sign offered seafarers refreshment. There was a café with unclothed tables, through which they made their way to the proprietor. Peck conducted all negotiations with this personage. Yes, he could accommodate the newcomers for the night. He led the way upstairs to a kind of dormitory. So weary was Raymond that he did not shrink at sight of the promiscuous comfort placed before him. The beds, twenty in number at least, were just two feet apart. They seemed clean, if not luxurious in their appointments.

"All right, matey?" asked Peck.

"Sure! Glad to turn in."

THEY were asleep before their roommates came noisily and singly to share the shelter of the large room. Even an uproar would not have disturbed Raymond that night. As it was, the place was comparatively quiet.

Up early, they washed in a common lavatory and, refreshed by coffee and rolls, made their way under Peck's escort to a small office along the dock. Again the seaman was the spokesman for the pair. There was a line already ahead of them, and, as they joined it, Peck whispered:

"Don't you so much as peep, or that high-toned talk of yours may queer us."

He was still gruff and yet oddly solicitous for the other's welfare. Raymond, obeying instructions, heard him demand jobs, as a favor to the company about to employ them, apparently. A noncommittal gentleman of dark countenance inspected them and then silently presented each with a tag. Imitating the others, Peck and Raymond pinned this to their coat lapels. It bore a number. Thus relegated to the status of a human cipher, they followed the moving line and found themselves in a shed, at one side of which was a sort of platform, raised some six feet above the ground. On this were

piled sacks of grain. As each man approached it, he bent his back and had two-hundred pounds' weight of wheat dumped thereon. Raymond followed suit. He almost staggered at first, as he made his way out of the shed, across a dock, up a ship's gangway, along the deck. He positively sagged, as he heaved his burden into an open hatchway, but straightened up, as he joined the procession down another gangplank, back to the shed to receive another bag on his somewhat more receptive shoulders.

"Some job!" he managed to mutter to Peck on his second trip. "How much per load?"

Two centimos a trip, he was told. Good Lord! somewhere about one cent.

As he made each round, he noted, his number was checked. No one, he reflected humorously, wanted to cheat him of his penny apparently. He laughed, as he thought of his reckless expenditure in his first days in Buenos Aires, of the subsequent robbery that had separated him from his not inconsiderable bank roll, judged by present rates of pay.

"Think we could find the thug who cleaned us out and get ours back?" he asked Peck, as a pause came in the line. "Might lay off a year or two."

Peck glanced about with seeming suspicion.

"How should I know who robbed you?" he demanded angrily; and then more kindly, as he caught sight of the other's face: "All in, are you? Tough job, but we gotta do something."

"Sure. I'm all right," Raymond assured him hastily. "Getting better by the minute."

"Sport, ain't ye?" was Peck's comeback, and then the line advanced again.

But Raymond spoke the truth. There was a certain rhythm about the movement that made things easier. You could count on getting to a certain place in so many steps. They rarely differed in number. He tried to hasten them once or twice and bumped Peck. He was glad to stop, however, when Peck, stepping out of the line about noon, announced:

"Could do with eats, myself. How about you?"

They found a cheap restaurant, where Raymond once more indulged in a nourishing and cheap *puchero*.

"Take a hooker with it," counseled Peck. "Can't hurt you with all that exercise. Give you something to sweat out, if it comes to that. Come on! Ain't at home, where it's a crime to drink bootlegger's poison. Safe stuff here—not so strong, either."

The temptation was almost overwhelming. Raymond was considering a compromise on a glass of Spanish wine to wash down the native dish, when a drunk tumbled into the place, maudlin, muddy-eyed, confidential. Raymond remembered the fatal night on which he had accepted that invitation from Slim, and he said, grateful to the moral exhibit:

"Coffee's fine here. I'd prefer that."

"Suit yerself." Peck's voice conveyed a grudging admiration.

They lingered luxuriously over their meal, being employed on "piecework," but they were back at it, nevertheless, in less than an hour.

AND then another round of carrying and standing in line. They stood it until their backs ached and their knees threatened to give from under them. The heat began to tell on Raymond's morale. The dust got in his nostrils and caused him to sneeze, an operation that shifted his pack. It seemed to him that the men and the maize began to have an offensive odor. He walked for some time like an automaton, responding to the demands on him as a machine might—a machine that sadly needed oiling.

"Ready to quit," he told Peck, at last, after he had endured what seemed like a martyrdom.

"Same here."

They sought the office and collected their earnings. One peso, fifty centimos apiece.

"On the highroad to real wealth!" cried Raymond hysterically, translating it into its American equivalent.

"Wash'll do us good, and a meal," said Peck stoically.

Once again they put up at the Seaman's Rest. This time the promiscuity of their accommodation proved more trying to Raymond's nerves. He was as

tired, if not more tired, than on the previous evening, but his faculties were annoyingly more acute. He noted details of his companions' toilet making that disturbed him. The man in the next bed, an early retirer like himself, snored. He had never minded the sailors on shipboard, for there had always been the refuge of an open deck and a stirring breeze. Here, if he rose, what had he to look for but a dingy dock, beset with thugs? Even this crowded dormitory was a veritable haven compared to the dock.

Next day he went to work with aching eyes and limbs. The routine was identical and not less trying.

"Only difference between me and a pack horse," thought Raymond once, receiving his load, "is that I can starve if I want to by not working. If I work, I feed myself. A horse gets fed.

"Wish I were a horse!" he said once to Peck who was dourly carrying on.

"Whassat?" Peck was not favorable to reflections.

"Like some one to put on my nose bag."

"All right. Let's eat. But it's a bit early."

No hope there, if one wanted to philosophize on the situation. It might have been amusing, Raymond reflected, if shared with—— Even to himself he would not mention the name. The thought of Harry still gnawed at his subconsciousness, so much, indeed, that one evening, faking weariness, he went out and sought his erstwhile helper, the proprietor of the English bookshop.

"Keep any American papers?" he asked.

The old man blinked again, and Raymond explained his identity.

"Dear me! Of course. I've wondered about you. Not often we find—ah—Cambridge men down here. Pleasure it was to help! American papers?" The dim eyes only took in a contour of the intruder clothed in his best suit. "Yes, we get some, when ordered."

"I'd like to order one," said Raymond rashly. "Could I look at some copies?" His hand investigated his resources in the regular pocket. "Buy some, I mean, of course."

"Quite all right! Quite all right! Here's a back copy of the *New York Clarion.*"

Raymond seized it avidly. It mentioned Paul Doyle, but only in the sporting columns. The new-time hero of the New World boxing game! The Lowell failure sighed with relief. Nothing had happened to Henry as yet. Naturally, Slim's threat was just bravado.

"Can you order this for me?" he asked of the old student.

"Pleased to, but——"

The veteran's eyes blinked. He was not quite so blind as he pretended to be. He could see of what caliber this strange visitor was.

"Always have copies on hand for customers."

Raymond smiled understandingly.

"Scarcely a customer," he said.

"Ah—well, an old graduate of the old college," apologized the bookstore man. "What year were you there? I was——"

They entered into a discussion of Harvard and its traditions.

"Please, I want to pay," ventured Raymond on leaving.

"Yes, yes. What I meant to convey was that we like people to drop in. Crowds create custom, you know. Always glad to see you. I shall have the papers for you."

"Thanks."

Raymond returned to a recriminatory Peck who wanted to know just how they were ever to better their status, if they didn't keep on the job. It was the next day that, on the plea of economy, he insisted on bringing sandwiches in the morning and eating cold luncheon in company with a coworker. Raymond suspected from his choice of an associate that he had an ulterior motive in view. The man was an Englishman of Raymond's own class, long inured to the ways of South America and long disgusted evidently with his own chances.

He munched one of the Peck-bought sandwiches, orating:

"No chance here for a fellow without capital, unless he's an athlete."

Raymond listened respectfully.

"Yeh?" asked that gentleman. "How come?"

"Well, they're all keen on beating one another—the big companies, I mean. Cricket, football, boxing, tennis—— If you can win at any of them, you're made. Financial advisers! That's what they call the blighters who put them on the map athletically. Wish I'd stuck to my golf. That would have gone, but now you should see me. I slice—I pull. Damn it! don't I know I'm doing it? Give me a little practice and a good bed—good meals, of course, thrown in for good measure—and I'd lick them all. I'm not such a——"

"But who pays these four-flusher athletes?" inquired Peck.

"Anybody—the president of this company or of that. Hounds they are for nosing out winners. Delighted to have them. Even track runners! Silly country! Capital you need here—or lungs. Limbs, I mean. Perhaps I mean both of them."

Peck eyed his partner significantly.

"My pal," he volunteered, "can box. Meself, I'm just a beginner, or I'd try. By gum! I would. Nothing in grain carrying except a broken back. Wot I want is a bank roll."

The guest laughed.

"Only what we all want," he said.

Raymond listened in a stony silence He had refused Billy Hickson once for a possible try at the American championship. He was not to be entrapped by any such doubtful proposal as this. He avoided Peck's eye as he said, sarcastically:

"Does one offer oneself on the basis of being a good winner for the company's team? Or what is the formula for such a proposal?"

The Englishman was slightly perturbed by Raymond's tone.

"Nothing personal, you understand. I'm just explaining. I've lived here a long time, and I know. Rotten game, if you ask me. Could play a hand in it probably, if I wanted to, but I'd have to get a real job first. If some one took me on in a regular capacity, I wouldn't mind trying my hand at upholding the honor of the old firm, so to speak! But the other—American college stuff! I've been there, too."

"Watch out!" cautioned Peck, apparently delighted.

Raymond, irritated, was about to ask what this "blighter" meant about American universities, when the sailor interrupted:

"Time to be getting back to the old treadmill. We've chinned enough for one day."

THE trio rose and wended their way to the shed, to be again loaded with their packs. Raymond was seething inside. He was mad with Peck and with the Englishman, scenting a conspiracy between them to force him into the semiprofessional boxing game.

"Carry grain forever," he said to himself, perspiring profusely under his load.

Having rejected the ring once, in the name of the Lowell family, he had no intention of entering it under that of Raymond. Somehow it had become a point of honor with him subconsciously not to compete in this capacity with Henry.

It was the next day that Peck, declaring that he had had enough for the time being, departed on unknown purposes after lunch. Raymond asked no questions, being aware of his own defection before, but he hoped devoutly that Peck was not going on a "bust." Strangely, he felt helpless in his present surroundings without the seaman. Peck served as a kind of buffer between him and the outer world. That afternoon he carried on alone, poignantly aware of a different back before him in the line. It was with an extraordinary sense of relief that he found his friend before him at their habitat, silent, sour and yet satisfied.

"Had a good time?" he inquired.

"Great!"

"That's fine. Worked a bit later than usual. Here's the insult." He handed over his money, habit having made Peck their joint banker.

"No need for you to do that," grumbled the seaman, seeing in the receipts proof of his companion's prolonged industry.

"Nothing else to do! Didn't bother me any."

He spoke the truth. The work no longer

tired him. His abstinence from alcohol —he had never indulged in tobacco— combined with regular exercise and simple food, was making him every day more like a certain young athlete of Harvard. Once more his shoulders were set proudly and stanchly back to display a splendid breadth of chest. His shining eyes were sufficient evidence of health. His face, still lean, but no longer haggard, had lost its blurred look. Every feature stood out, sharply chiseled.

"How about eats?" he asked now, conscious of keen hunger.

"If you want 'em!"

CHAPTER VII.

A TURN IN THE TIDE.

OVER their food Raymond hoped to get some account of the other's outing, but none was forthcoming. Peck was reticent almost to the point of rudeness, and it was many months before Raymond learned the history of that afternoon. Then it was told to him by an old gentleman named Alan Begg Hamilton.

It was quite a good ride from the dock district to that section of the city in which the Calle Ayacucho stretched its luxurious and aloof magnificence. Peck sat through it stolidly, steeped in unaccustomed cogitation. He was not intimidated, in consequence, by the startled flunky who raised his eyebrows at this tramp, who requested an audience with his master.

"Never mind the name," he told the inquisitive intermediary. "Just say it's the guy who helped out the old man a couple of days ago in the park."

The haughty one departed hastily, causing Peck to smile.

"Passed the word, has he? Guessed mebbe he would. Ray ain't got no sense."

Peck was not surprised to be escorted without delay into a library lined on all sides, from ceiling to floor, with filled bookshelves. He stood still, awkwardly gazing about, unaware that he was being watched by a man concealed in the recesses of a tapestried armchair.

"Whom have I the pleasure of meeting?" inquired the latter presently, causing Peck to start.

The sailor looked around, removed his hat—a ceremony neglected so far—and smiled.

"Don't mistake me, mister," said he.

"Don't intend to," was the suave reply, "though I'll confess that, from the message delivered, I expected quite a different person."

"You betcha he's different. That's his trouble. Say!" Peck became half bold, half confidential. "Is it true you have an interest in the American-Argentine Export Company? Got a tip you had."

"I wasn't aware that it was a secret."

The old gentleman was obviously being amused, and Peck laughed to show his appreciation of this joke—if it was one.

"I'm working for it. So's he—Raymond, I mean," he announced now.

"Indeed?"

"Yeh. Carrying grain sacks we are. No kale in that, if you get me. Work like a truck horse, paid like a slave. Can't hardly break even, and that's God's truth. It's all right for me. I'll get back to a ship some time, but him! Honest, mister, it would make you cry to see how his talents is being wasted. Real guy, you see. Collidge and all that, but game! You should see how he pasted me, and in not such good trim himself, either. Now he's all to the taffy. Fit?"

Peck launched into an eloquent description of Raymond's form, Raymond's character, and Raymond's efficiency, both as a gentleman and an athlete. His audience listened in silence.

"But he's proud," he concluded bitterly. "Won't turn professional boxer, even though he could lick them all." He had a sudden inspiration. "That proud, you know, he wouldn't even come to you for work, though he's broke. Flat— flatter than a single buckwheat cake in a soup plate. And that's God's truth."

He could go no farther.

"So he carries grain sacks for a living?" There was nothing promising in the voice which uttered this. "And you, too? You hang together, of course?"

Suddenly Peck grew angry. What was this old nickel-nurser insinuating?

"Say!" he growled. "If you think I've come here to——"

"Please! Please! Not so hasty.

Let's hear what you did come for, before we lose our tempers."

COLDLY Peck outlined his proposition. He had heard on good authority that big companies in Buenos Aires kept up a constant athletic competition with their rivals and friends. He had heard that what they wanted were gentlemen sports. Was that so, or wasn't it? If it was, then Mr. Hamilton could do no better than engage Raymond on the spot.

"And you?" asked Mr. Hamilton.

Peck looked at him with an expression that said candidly: "If you weren't so old, I'd sock you."

"But why are you so anxious to help him? Done anything for you except hit you?" persisted the old man. "I'm only looking for information."

"Well, you won't get it. I'll say this, though, he got skinned one night of his roll. It wasn't my fault exactly, but I brought him to the dump. Never mind about that. Will you give him a chance or won't ye?"

Suddenly Mr. Hamilton rose from his chair and pressed a button. To a functionary responding he said:

"Bring some whisky. Mr.——"

"Peck. Yeh, I could go one after that chin. I'm dry."

As the servant departed, Mr. Hamilton said:

"Why not try a chair, Mr. Peck? No charge."

They both laughed. Over glasses they got down to business. When Peck left, they shook hands.

"You'll remember," said the seaman, "it must be accidental. Never talk to me again, he wouldn't, if he knew I came. Great scout, but crotchety. I like him. S'long."

Mr. Hamilton lay back in his chair for a long time, and then reached for the telephone. That evening his nephew and junior partner came to dine by request.

"I'll look him over, sir, in action, so to speak. Sounds right. Let you know."

Next day, as Peck and Raymond knocked off work for the noon hour, they were summoned by a nod from the noncommittal gentleman who had so casually accepted their services some days before. He wanted to know whether they would like to become warehousemen for the company on a regular weekly wage. United States citizens, weren't they? American-Argentine Export liked its employees to be divided numerically and nationally about fifty-fifty. Southern element was getting rather strong. Seeing they were steady chaps, and he had orders from Mr. Grant to look out for such, he'd like to recommend them.

It was Peck who looked doubtful.

"How many dollars less a week do we draw if we go on salary instead of piecework?" he demanded.

"You'll make two more a week, judging by your average so far—and as much more as you can make later. That's up to yourselves."

"Of course we'll take the jobs," announced Raymond haughtily. "Can't you see——"

He started to argue with Peck on the subject of hours and heightened status.

"If you want to try it, all right," said the seaman grudgingly at last.

They were told to report next morning for an interview with Mr. Grant who liked personally to supervise his employees. Neither, indeed, had any idea that Mr. Grant, carefully concealed, had already looked them both over in action. Peck had his suspicions about the swiftness of the move, of course, but he kept them to himself.

Mr. Grant was a young, shrewd, obviously intelligent executive. He appraised them coolly, but Raymond liked him, and his veiled references to the desirability of putting men in their proper place seemed to hold out some hope.

"We need above all things," he declared, "people who know how to handle human beings. Difficult to find, when you're dealing with mixed nationalities, as we have to do. For that reason we run a club, where the employees can mix. Swimming pool, tennis. Of course, at present, with the hopes of South America centered in winning the heavyweight boxing title from the North, most of them are more interested in the manly art, naturally. Neither of you know anything about it? We've got some pretty good Argentinos here.

"If you're to be popular, though, with the United States crowd," he laughed. "for Heaven's sake, don't take any of them on, unless you've got a chance to win. If you're licked, we may have a riot. Think you'd like to join the club? It's not compulsory, I need hardly say, but, from what I've heard, you've both the makings in you of something better than warehousemen. Like you to go to the place Saturday night and see what's doing, at least."

TO Raymond, sensing the comradeship of himself and this friendly executive, there was promise of promotion in every sentence uttered. Peck, obtuse, was plainly puzzled. If this fellow was under Hamilton's orders, why wasn't he praising up the amateur boxer? Discouraging him, he was, in fact. Peck scowled, and, as the two left, hired for their new posts, he voiced his sentiments quite sincerely. He saw that, if Raymond got tied up with this "uplift artist"—so Peck named Grant to himself—it would be almost impossible to pry him loose. Raymond could be as obstinate as an army mule. The sailor wished he hadn't been quite so hasty in agreeing this morning to accept the new situations. Suppose this bird didn't represent old Hamilton, after all? The shift might be disastrous for his plans.

But, as a couple of days passed, and no sign came from the wily resident of Calle Ayacucho, Peck's fears began to subside. Besides, the work was easier, and the men with whom they worked were of a higher class. They were no longer "bums," taken on as callously and much less carefully than animals. In fact, the foreman himself from Rhode Island and glad to see Americans, was already inquiring sympathetically about their living arrangements.

Did they find Buenos Aires expensive? Bet they did! Where were they? For Pete's sake! Darned good place for transients, of course, but not for real guys who liked a room of their own and fair eats. He directed them to a Spanish boarding house, where he could recommend both the landlady and the larder.

The Señora Romola proved to be unwieldly, wise-eyed, and, withal, possessed of a sense of humor. She produced a tiny husband who in turn vociferously produced a *puchero*.

"Eat!" said she, uttering her total English vocabulary.

While they set to, she watched them shrewdly, and, when they had done, announced through the lingually better-equipped spouse that she would take them into her house. But there was to be no noise in the night; this stipulation she directed at Peck. She could provide but one clean sheet a week and one towel—this was uttered for Raymond's information. It was obvious that she had already sized them up accurately and foreseen just the faults they would have to avoid, if they were to stay. Her prices were certainly provocative to the two impecunious workers, and her equipment luxurious in its comparative privacy after the Seaman's Rest. That night was the first in many acutely miserable months that Raymond Lowell felt once more master of himself. Here he was housed decently, fed adequately, in excellent health, and earning money by his own exertions.

"If I keep my head on my shoulders, no reason why I shouldn't get on with that chap, Grant. I can see he liked me." Raymond knew his fellow men. "And learning any job from the warehouse up, if you use your intelligence all the time, can't hurt your firm."

He decided to humor his employer by attending that club, and he so informed Peck next morning.

Peck snorted.

"Yeh? Well, me—I can keep fit hurling crates. Don't need no extra exercise to make my Saturday nights amusing."

"You're going to come with me and keep in trim," was the ultimatum. "Remember I'm your trainer."

Raymond spoke half jocosely, half seriously, and was touched by the delight visible in the other's unduly revealing countenance.

"Fallen for it—hook, line and sinker!" Peck was reflecting, joyously seeing a successful end to his plans.

"Good scout!" Such was Raymond's reflection. "Stuck to me when I was

down, and now he's grateful because, with chances ahead, I insist on sticking to him."

UNDER the escort of the Rhode Island man they crossed the river on the appointed night and found themselves in the Athletic Club of the American-Argentine Export Company. To Raymond, accustomed to associate gymnasiums with universities, this place was a revelation of the new attitude of the modern business man. Here was everything to suit varying types of physique and sport tastes. Moreover, here was every grade of employee enjoying himself—every one, from a warehouseman like himself to Robert Grant, who was already visible on a tennis court.

There were two of these courts, and around them a circling, cinder, running track. To the right was a large patch of green, on which devotees of the British summer sport were busy practicing in the cricket nets. To the left, a large shed, in which was visible through the open door an erection which Raymond promptly recognized as an eighteen-foot-square boxing ring. He strolled to it. Punching balls, heavy bags, Indian clubs, dumb-bells, skipping ropes—why, it was fitted for a professional pugilist's training. His eyes shone, as he took in this familiar equipment.

"Gee! Mixing it, ain't they?" asked Peck's voice, and he pointed out to the enthralled Raymond a huge, wrestling mat, on which at the far end of the shed two brawny forms were grunting and straining for a fall.

Shower baths and a rubbing table completed the furnishings.

"Some joint, I'll tell any cockeyed *gaucho* who inquires!" It was the seaman again, voicing his approval of the gymnasium to the Rhode Island man, Gilson, who was still accompanying the two.

"Wonderful! Why, it must cost a fortune to keep up this place. Don't we pay any fees for joining?" Raymond inquired somewhat anxiously.

Gilson laughed.

"Not a cent except in efficiency. Investment in morale!"

He had all the laboring man's ready and slyly depreciatory tags for any supposed beneficence on the employer's side.

"Got to say, though, they're not a bad bunch. Scotch-Americans, most of the family running this concern. Uncles and nephews and nieces and aunts—scads of 'em."

He lowered his voice, as some newcomer advanced into the shed, but there was nothing obsequious on his side or condescending on the other's in the nod exchanged now between him and Robert Grant. The latter had come in, unnoticed, and joined the trio. Again Raymond warmed to him.

"Glad to see you here. Like it?"

They assured him sincerely that they did.

"Well, you can pick your own poison, as you see," went on Grant lightly. "I go in for the popping balls myself. That in your line?"

Peck's face was sufficient answer, and Raymond laughed, so comical was the seaman's obvious alarm at being invited to assume a racket.

"No, never went in for tennis," continued the ex-Harvard athlete.

As Raymond spoke, a big fellow, who was making his way into the shed ring, caught his eye. His instantaneous interest was evident, as this tactician began shadow boxing. He appeared to know his business.

"José Gomez," Grant informed them. "Another prospective 'wild bull of the pampas' in his own estimation, anyway. Amateur, of course. Not bad, we think. In fact, one of the best coming fighters down here. Can't make our crowd spar with him, though. We've two camps here, quite friendly, as I think I told you —U. S. versus S. A. They complain he hits too hard for amusement Either of you willing to try him?"

Though he apparently addressed both Peck and Raymond, his glance was on the latter. And there was the least hint of challenge in it. Peck, too, had turned hopefully at the invitation, and Raymond recognized that the sailor, licked himself once, was waiting to see whether this apparent superior of his had the real "stuff" in him, after all. This Josie Gomie, as

Peck had already dubbed him to himself, looked the goods.

"Don't mind, if he's willing," said Raymond quietly.

"Atta baby!" commended Peck.

"I'll ask him, or will you, Gilson?" suggested Grant.

"Gosh! Don't ask me to encourage murder; I have to go back to the yard on Monday," the foreman declared.

This time Grant laughed and, departing, returned with the news that Señor Gomez would be delighted to oblige and would promise not to hurt any sparring partner valiant enough to take him on.

IT was easy enough to find Raymond the necessary togs and ring shoes. While he dressed, the news spread that some one had challenged Gomez to-night. A crowd gathered, eager to see a stranger learn the lesson taught to so many of themselves in their tyro and trying days. As Raymond came out, however, a gasp of astonishment greeted him.

"A lanky lunatic from the States," some one had described him, having seen him in his seedy working suit.

But this was a tall, deep-chested, powerful man, with beautifully rippling arms; legs that were the counterpart of the legs of the famous Frenchman, Carpentier; a quizzical smile that showed no sign of any fear. Grant's eyes shone, as he watched the athlete step into the ring.

"Two-minute rounds, and I guess three rounds will be enough," he declared, taking the watch.

Peck, swelling like a pouter pigeon, with pride in his protégé, was already officiously in Raymond's corner. Gilson was in Gomez's.

Bong! Like true amateurs the contestants shook hands warmly—no mere tipping of gloves and hitting at the same moment. They stepped back. The Argentino, rushing, was caught in mid-career in a clinch, and had his own arms wrapped around him in such a manner that he could not use them.

Raymond next pushed him away and stepped smartly in with a light flick to the face and back out again, before José realized it. Then he danced in and out, all the time stabbing his left or crossing his right. He boxed rings round the Argentino, conscious only of the fact that he was getting himself in good trim.

"Old style!" he was thinking confidently, when José's famous right connected.

It had been aimed for the jaw, and, had it reached its goal, Raymond would certainly have been lifted out of the ring and into the middle of the audience. As it was, he succeeded just in time in getting his left shoulder up. He was knocked reeling for the ropes, however.

It was at the beginning of the third and last two minutes that Grant called out:

"Keeping your word, José? You promised not to hit him."

The Argentino primed himself, though with a pretended scowl.

"Good boxer, señor," he commented, not quite sure whether Mr. Grant was applauding or mocking him. "But what you call 'powder puff.' No punch. He no hurt me. No, José not hurt."

Confidently, the champion smiled at the crowd that hitherto had always recognized him as dangerous; indeed, invincible. Its applause was interrupted by a loud guffaw. It came from Peck. Raymond looked around. He saw with his keen insight that, though Peck was gibing at these "darned foreigners," as he liked to dub them, still he had become slightly doubtful of his cocitizens. Ignoring him, the Harvard man cried out blithely:

"Thought all hurting had been barred at the beginning. Suppose we try some now for a change?"

Raymond leaped across the ring, jabbing a left to José's face. He smashed home a stiff right to the jaw that caused the Argentino's head to wabble dangerously on his shoulders. Feinting Gomez's guard down, Raymond drove a left to the Argentino's face which brought the guard up, and rammed a right home to the heart that landed José down in his corner.

Gomez was not out, and he rose slowly to his feet, extending a hand to his opponent.

"You win, señor. You please Gomez verra much, if you box with him more. You——"

Tired as he was and unable to express

his ideas adequately in English, José illustrated some blows delivered at his expense this evening.

Raymond shook his hand heartily.

"Sure. We will practice together often, if you like. Glad of the exercise," he declared.

"Well, thank you both for an evening's entertainment. Some bout, eh, José?" Grant stood between them. "Not your first time in a ring, evidently." He addressed Raymond. "Wish I could take a little punishing myself, but it's too strenuous. Besides, my wife thinks I'm ugly enough now, without taking chances of being worse."

Without further comment Grant then left, and Raymond, glowing from his exercise and with an enthralled Peck trotting at his heels, retired again across the river and slept soundly.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHALLENGE.

THERE followed months that might have been monotonous for Raymond Lowell in the old days, but now his interests, inspired by increasing health, seemed to grow keener and more absorbing. Gilson promoted him from a "crate hurler" to a checker, and he saw large cases of assorted foods from the canneries sent to far-off people unable to raise these products overseas. He developed ideas on the subject and even wrote an article for the company magazine, which surprisingly brought him a check.

"Ever seen the workings of the New York end of our business?" Grant asked him one day, and he mentioned a firm that had been vaguely familiar to Raymond, the indifferent broker.

"Met a chap named Davis once who was with them. In fact, he was about my time at——"

He stopped himself quickly, and apparently Grant did not notice the near slip. These two had become almost chums in the athletic clubrooms, where Raymond's friendly bouts with José had become a feature for Saturday evenings, and Raymond's jocose encounters with Peck, the cream of the weekly entertainments. Peck was a born comedian; when he knew he couldn't be taken seriously as a boxer, he gracefully conceded the point and asked to be accepted on his own terms. As a second he was always there, and he followed Raymond as a hen might follow a pet chicken that strikes her as being too enterprising at times.

And they both still lived at Señora Romola's, consumed the unnamed husband's edibles—and her towels. She proved more generous than her word in the matter. Every one but Raymond saw that he had become her special charge. Though other boarders were berated in terrifyingly unintelligible language when they kept their lights on late, never was he, the worst offender, called to account. Having become an habitué in his leisure hours of the bookshop that had once served as a dressing room, he always had a supply of literature on hand.

"Ah—sport!" the old proprietor, astonishingly keen-sighted at times, used to comment slyly in the beginning, as Raymond almost feverishly reached for the sheet supplying such news.

As it continued to babble of the doings of "Dude" Doyle—Henry Lowell's latest nickname—Raymond grew calmer. The old incubus of Slim had ceased now to sit on his shoulders. He could sleep without seeing that supposedly generous person slitting Paul's throat. Reason told him that the would-be burglar, in jail, could not be hurtful. But, when Slim was released, would he attempt to revenge himself on Paul?

"Cured!" Raymond decided, his imagination less active now in conjuring up horrors.

It was the bookseller who discovered the weekly magazine stories about Doyle. Raymond had stimulated the old man's interest in this wonderful exponent of an ancient and manly art. He produced them for Raymond. When the latter returned to the boarding house from these bookshop excursions, an inquisitive Peck invariably met him.

"Well, wot they got to say this time about the Dude?" he would inquire at such times.

Boxing had become Peck's sole relaxa-

tion, unless one counted occasional trips to the Café Albion.

"Ah—gee! A guy must bust loose some time, if he's human," he would retort, as an excuse for these obviously demoralizing visits. "If he's human he's got to get out. You ain't—not any more. Gosh! Any one'd think, to listen to ye and to look at ye, that ye were going to have a potshot at the boxing champ's boco, yerself. Ye could—at that."

THIS was always the start of a favorite argument, for boxing always aroused these two to eloquence, a quality lacking in their discourses on all other subjects.

"Nothing on this earth in the shape of money would induce me to enter the professional boxing ring," Raymond would announce, with impressive solemnity.

"Naw? Rather punch and be punched by this Josiegomie for yer health, would ye? Well, me I don't think it hurts any one's insides to have some kale in their pockets. 'Sides, wot about the Dude? Dude Doyle! Yee-ah! You say a gentleman won't go in the ring, and yet you say Doyle's class. How come? Riddle me that, old son."

"I didn't say any gentleman wouldn't, and I never claimed I was a gentleman."

"Sure ye ain't! Ain't that right? Can't any one see wot a thug ye are? By gum!"—Peck would here bend forward intently, for now he knew whereof he spoke—"if ye weren't that up-stage, old high hat, I'd lay ye any money ye like that old guy Grant, the uplift artist, would stake ye to a real job. May yet, of course, but ye got him scared.

"Too proud to do anything but truck-horse work. Won't box—won't push himself in the office. Garn!" Then he would emit an oath, followed by a gas attack from a villainous pipe. "Let's talk boxing. Give me the Paul Doyles, even if they're gents, when they're any good. Kid gloves, them papers says the public wants these days, and Paul gives 'em to 'em. Velvet-lined, too, I'd bet ye. That bird ain't taking no chances on a jab to his beautiful bean from Morrissey, without he's got the dough for a face—massage after."

"You don't know what you're talking about," Raymond would point out sharply, furious at the implied insult to his brother.

"Wot's Paul Doyle to him that he should get so het up?" Peck would inquire of himself privately.

But, at the shrewd glance thrown in his direction, Raymond would immediately cool down. Of course, he had to acknowledge that his conversational opponent and pal, being guided by certain writing in the New York papers, could not help reaching the conclusions he did.

Weren't the odds on Morrissey for one thing, and wasn't one noted "expert" assuring his readers every day—barely avoiding libel—that heavyweights were acts of God, so to speak, like cyclones; that they couldn't be manufactured, and, moreover, that any one coming into the ring expiring culture and inspiring hot breath had no ethical business to be there. Fire, it seemed, was what this gentleman wanted from the modern fighting. Did Paul Doyle have it? Did he in any way resemble a dragon? Yes—he did not!

"Lookut!" Peck would point, not daring to read aloud the expert's paragraphs. "Ain't he right. Didn't Morrissey——"

"I never said Morrissey hadn't been a great man in his day," Raymond would come back as pleasantly as possible. How often did he have to reiterate this statement before it would penetrate the other's head. "I only said he'd been too long out of the game, for one thing. Result is he gets rattled easily. He's got the wallop, still, I suppose, but, find his goat —and it's not far to seek—and he can be hit. Doyle can find it. He has a quick tongue, not a vulgar one, of course."

Peck would look up at such intimate descriptions of Raymond's hero qualities. Did he know Doyle, or was he just taking him for a model, studying him?

"Doyle is clever and he's young. Only twenty-six last March."

"Followed him from the cradle, haven't ye?"

No answer. Raymond would be wondering whether in his heat and zeal he had made any serious slip. Such a possibility often caused him genuine uneasi-

ness, though he was confident now of his control over himself, morally and mentally. Still, when any one mentioned old Henry—Henry who had turned him down so coldly, contemptuously, inhumanly, for the action had been inhuman despite its justice—he could not be sure that he was, colloquially, "all there."

That debt, contracted in the form of small, hardly wrung sums—never would he be happy until he had discharged that. If this job kept going on as well as it promised, he would be able to pay Henry after a time. But there was that other situation—Slim attempting to rob his twin, and the twin confessing that only a relative knew of that safe behind the picture. Remorse mingled with his indignation concerning this little affair, and he felt a certain haunting fear for Henry's safety.

For he loved his brother even while he hated him. He'd like to humiliate him, to make him, Henry, confess that Raymond's course of action was as laudable as his own had been. He'd like to beat Henry on the path to their parents' restored prosperity. He, standing in the library, receiving the family accolade and modestly declining it.

Kiddish nonsense! Then he would be brought back from such boyish dreams by Peck's voice.

"About this Morrissey," Peck would resume apologetically. This chum certainly had him guessing at times as to what he was thinking about. "Got your idea about Morrissey, of course, but if you say right about Doyle, how long d'ye think the fight can go?"

"Eh? The championship?" Raymond would retrace his steps mentally. "How can I say?"

Then he would meet Peck's inquisitive eye defiantly. How much did that old fellow guess?

"I could tell you of a famous punch he has—Doyle, I mean," he volunteered this evening.

He told it in pantomime, while his companion stared.

"Why, ye son of a gun, that's what ye handed me on the old nose."

"Was it? Well, I'm going out to the gym to practice it some more on Josie. The bets are a bunch of cauliflowers for the loser. Coming?"

"Not to-night."

MORE and more Peck had been excusing himself from trips to the gymnasium. Once a week he went there to keep Raymond in humor; but, unless there was some seconding to be done for some staged affair, Peck remained away. There was excitement of a kind then, but this training didn't interest him. He figured a guy could take all the wallops he needed, earning his living in a warehouse, without going out of his way to hunt for more. Now if the kid could forget his scruples, whatever they were, and go into a real ring—that would be another thing. There'd be a life for the two of them—"not for the kale, y'understand"—Peck would point out to other associates. It was because he believed that some day Raymond would see the light that he himself diligently studied ring tactics, the histories of title holders, and other such allied data.

It was extraordinary with what persistence his imagination had clung to this dream at first. Now it was waning, worn down by Raymond's obvious devotion to duty and equally unintelligible devotion to mere exercise for its own sake.

To-night was a sample of what revolted Peck's practical soul. Raymond had fought six fast rounds with Josie, then punched balls, pommeled sandbags, run freezing water over his head, and then danced about on his toes for sheer joy of life.

"Ah—here you are!" The voice of Robert Grant greeted Raymond, as he emerged sputtering from the shower. "Thought perhaps I'd find you here. Have a favor to ask."

He looked his employee up and down admiringly, while Raymond questioned him with his eyes.

"Got a favor to ask of you. Hope you won't mind. The fact is——"

He launched, rather embarrassed, into a story about an Englishman, just arrived, member of Grant's club over Belgrano and Hurlingham way. Fancied himself as a boxer. Had said insulting things about Americans—half in fun, half

in earnest, of course. Only professionals could fight in the United States—this among other things. He himself would take on any amateur they'd put up against him.

It seemed that several of the club members had been exasperated by the ridiculous challenge. Why, the colleges were full of such men, they had declared. The Englishman had retorted that it was a pity they didn't export some of these treasures, just to show the rest of the world. And then the Londoner had laughed.

"This got my goat," confessed Grant, still uncomfortable under Raymond's level, muted gaze. "I undertook to produce such a boxer. Meant you, of course. To-morrow night."

"Bet on it?" asked Raymond quietly.

"Naturally, but the stakes are——" A gesture of the hand dismissed them. "It's just the fellow being so sure of himself and his damned gentlemanly aristocrats, that got my goat. You'd think every he-man we had at home was a thug, to hear him talk. Damn his sleek hide! I——"

Though Raymond's face showed no sign of it, his heart was throbbing within him. Grant had picked him, first, because he was a gentleman and, second, because he was a fighter.

"I'll come, if you really want me to," he announced simply.

"Thanks. He riled me, and you scared me. Thought I'd hurt your feelings, perhaps. Ah, by the way, he's Cambridge—a boxing blue. Hefty guy and no mistake." Grant was talking fast now, for fear of making any faux pas. "Our club—the English-American—is a good way out. Hard to find. I'll drive you there. Better come to dinner, hadn't you?"

"Guess not. Thanks. My meals before fighting are rather early and meager. Besides, Peck must come as my second." Raymond slightly stiffened his tone at this, as if delivering an ultimatum about his workman's status.

"Peck? Of course! Forgotten his name. By all means; I was going to ask you to bring him along. Well, thanks so much. Got me out of a corner, I can assure you. Sending the car for you, however. Better take it. Where will I have the chauffeur call for you both?"

For the first time Raymond smiled; his sense of humor was conquering his pride at last.

"Suppose we say the works?"

Grant laughed and held out his hand.

"You're the doctor," he cried cheerfully. "Good night."

As Raymond walked home, elation and depression were fighting for the upper hand in his temper. How he'd love to swagger out in his old colors and wipe the Englishman on the floor! Something in what the chap said, though. Didn't Raymond know it? Well, he'd show him.

"In these trousers—what?" This old English tag, remembered from boyhood days, came back to him. He looked down at his own.

"Won't see me until I enter the ring," he decided, adding to himself: "Get some decent ring togs to-morrow."

He hurried to Peck's room, but no Peck was there. The fellow must be hitting it up again. Lucky it was not on his humpy shoulders that the honor of the U. S. A. was resting. Raymond resolved to speak to him seriously in the morning. But at breakfast Peck was scarcely approachable.

"Want to see you at lunch," said Raymond. "Job on to-night."

"Yeh? Want to see you, too. Through with jobs I am—mebbe."

Peck grinned nastily, conscious of Raymond's disapproving eye. But he met his pal as ordered. He was sullen at first sight, being slightly sick, but he brightened, as the position was explained to him.

"Beating up a 'limey,' is it? And the uplift artist himself asked ye? Well, mebbe I'm hasty now. Hasty's wot ye might call it. That's always been old Bill Peck—hasty."

"When you've finished with your soliloquy, perhaps you will talk sense," he was sternly told. "Can you, or can you not, come into the ring to-night as my second?"

"Sure, I can. Who said I couldn't? Who said I wouldn't be on hand?" Peck

was apparently alarmed at some leakage of illegal information.

"The only information I got was from your own face. If I had a mirror I would let it talk to you."

Contrary to his usual procedure, when such remonstrances were being administered, Peck grew angry instead of placatory.

"And if I do look like the end of a long, hard road, wot about it? Ain't I trailed one in your company? Can ye blame me, if I'd like a little refreshment and take a look around for a free ride?"

Raymond waited, while the seaman emitted a torrent of metaphorical eloquence about his sufferings. He was trying to sift just what lay beneath this flood. It seemed to carry, amid much surface mud of resentful self-pity, a certain residue that might indicate a future course. Peck, the sluggish stream, was evidently thinking of diverting his current into more fertile pastures.

"And how do you hope to get out of your present rut?" the boxer inquired presently, with unexpected acuteness. "Some one left you a fortune suddenly? Going to a rich grandmother's funeral?"

Peck looked at him with a certain relief and yet still with defiance.

"Yes, they have," he declared. "Some one told me, anyway, where old granny's stocking can be found, and it's in your friend, Paul Doyle—leastway, in the fact that he can't fight."

He looked frightened, as he hurled this thunderbolt against his chum's god.

"What do you mean?" Raymond's voice and gaze were level.

"I mean the Dude ain't got the goods to meet a real champ. He's going to lie down or fade away. Ain't any difference to me, which." Peck was triumphant now. "There's a wad of money in it, old kid. Come in. Water's going to be nice and cushy."

Raymond Lowell drew a deep breath before replying.

"You're a liar," he said. "No, you're a fool. Who's been telling you such tales?"

But Peck was on the defensive and quite sober. If he mentioned the Café Albion, Raymond would just laugh and make remarks about the reliability of anything coming from there. And, while he could cheerfully have knocked Raymond for a row of marline spikes at the moment, he wanted the kid to share in this kale. Good kid, even if he was irritating at times, like old Grant.

"It's the goods," he assured the threatening figure looming before him. "Think I'm not old enough to know a tip when I see one? Didn't I always tell you this Doyle dude was a set-up—a tailor's dummy, a collar-ad guy? It takes the girls, of course. I don't blame the promoters, but gobs like me—we don't fall for pretty faces, not in the ring, anyway. My money goes on Morrissey—all I can raise, beg, or borrow."

"You'd better go home and go to bed," counseled Raymond, his own emotion showing in nothing but his blazing eyes. "Go home and go to bed," he almost shouted, as the other hesitated. "Are you coming with me to-night, or are you quitting—like Doyle?"

Peck met Raymond's glance for a second.

"I ain't no quitter," he said solemnly. "You know I ain't. Mebbe get fed up with fancy fooling about dumb-bells. Life's what I ask. Fed up with this show. Fed up with it, I tell ye! Awright! I ain't going to make a noise. Don't worry. I'll go home and—bawthe, if you think it necessary. I'll be there to-night, even if I've sense enough to put my roll on Morrissey."

CHAPTER IX.

A NEW DEAL.

WHEN Raymond went back to work, he was surprised at his own calmness. He checked crates and packages and canvas bags, quite confident that he was doing his work as usual.

"Hey! Look at this!"

Gilson was shouting over a sheet that had been passed to him, obviously not in order.

"Invitation to fight with gentlemen gone to your head?"

"What did you say?" inquired Raymond.

"I said: Tend to your work and forget athletics. Aw, don't get ritzy now. Don't

mean nothing, but this sheet—I happened to look at it."

"All right, Mr. Gilson. Give it back."

Somehow he was aware now of his fingers tingling. It wasn't Gilson's throat they wanted to clutch—nor Peck's. Henry Lowell lying down to a damned pug—a rotten pug, a lousy pug, a pug that wouldn't punch until he had to!

"It's a lie," said some one inside him, but some one else replied: "Wouldn't that be like Henry? Anxious to enter the boxing game in the name of uplift and yet ashamed of it? That's what he'd been in the beginning."

He could hear Henry defending such a course:

"I became a professional for the money in it—for my father and mother. If I can make what I want without letting one of these disgusting lowbrows disfigure me for months, why shouldn't I?"

"Damn you! Mind where you're going!" Raymond's repressed anger broke loose against an innocently offending crate hurler who had trampled on his toes. Usually he met such accidents with a smile.

"Santa——" began the other, about to break into eloquent Spanish invective, But Raymond, already relieved by his burst of wrath, had subsided.

He was quivering and yet cool; angry and yet not excited. When Grant sought him out to confirm the night's arrangements, he replied indifferently:

"Yes, sir. Be there on time. Everything's all right."

He might have been drunk once more for all he knew of his surroundings.

"Feeling rotten. Going home," he told Gilson early.

"Understood you were knocking off short," was the surprised reply.

He ate little, dressed carefully, and woke Peck who wanted nothing but a cup of coffee. The cool air, as they drove in the beautifully appointed car, soothed him. Peck, mistaking his silence, was sullen. There was a line of cars outside the clubhouse, cluttering the fragrant, elaborate gardens. The chauffeur inquired deferentially whether they would care to await their turn or walk up. They elected to walk. A doorman, eying them insolently, brought Raymond's mind back from its lofty pedestal of sport and family honor to the shoddy present, as exemplified in his clothes.

"I wish to see Mr. Grant," he announced stiffly.

The pompous one, sniffing at the tone, held out a salver for a card.

"I have no card," shouted Raymond. Why should he at the moment be conscious of indignation against Henry?

As the attendant with uplifted brows debated this irregular procedure, the gentleman boxer made an effort to hold himself in. No scene. But there would be one in another minute, he was sure.

" 'Lo, Raymond," called a cheery voice from inside, and here was Robert Grant advancing with outstretched hand.

The doorman's obsequious "Beg pardon, I'm sure, sir," was a slight salve. Better still, the chorus of greetings, with which he was hailed by a crowd of diners now coming out into the hall to meet him.

"Atta boy! Good sport! Saved our lives. Mighty fine of you to come to our rescue in this pinch."

So heated was his brain with its own private troubles and the present revulsion of feeling at finding himself in such familiar setting, that Raymond forgot everything—Paul Doyle, Henry Lowell, Peck, his clothes, himself.

Amid a chorus of introductions that he didn't catch, he was led into a large room, cool and comfortable, in which were gathered numerous English and American members. He and his party, with Grant to the fore, stopped before a small table, at which sat a man of mildly official demeanor, flanked by two others more officious.

"Here's our man, Sir Charles. Mr. Raymond, Sir Charles Highton." Grant laughed, smilingly presenting them. "Mr. Raymond's going to twist the well-known old lion's tail to-night."

"Ah! Indeed? Sit down, Mr. Raymond. We believe the old tail's got a spike in it, but there! Just a few questions." The formality was courteous, though the kindly puzzled eyes were keen. "You were born in the United States?"

"Massachusetts, sir."

"Ever box for a—ah—monetary remuneration?"

The inquiry came with a kind of shock, making him conscious again of himself, his suit, his shoes. A spasm of angry indignation crossed his face.

"Certainly not."

The words were snipped off as with sharp scissors, but, before he could even turn a head to Grant, as if seeking the explanation of this insult, came the Oxford accent suavely:

"Of course not, but we've got to ask these impertinent questions. Ever been in a prison? That's what they ask us in your country, when we visit it. Must get our own back some time, eh?"

A general laugh at the sally of this evening's chairman relieved the tension.

"My antagonist, I believe," said a handsome, though stocky youth, advancing with outstretched hand.

Raymond turned to take it.

"So I believe."

"I'm Cholmondeley, pronounced 'Cheese' for short. You're Raymond, eh? Lucky fellow! Never get guyed in *Punch,* do you?"

They shook hands, and the Cambridge man, remarking, "Here goes for the jolly old ropes!" led the way out. Grant escorted Raymond to his dressing room and said:

"Can't tell you how decent it was of you to come. Remember, any time I can do anything in return, I'll be glad to do it."

"Perhaps you can!"

A sudden resolution had formed in Raymond's mind.

"Nervous?" asked Grant, anxiously scanning the other's face.

"Perhaps!"

"Nothing to worry you, I know."

"You mean in—— What's his name? Lord, no! Short arms and legs. Why doesn't he wrestle instead of box?"

"Seen all that already?" Grant was impressed with such quickness of observation, but again Raymond's aspect was serious.

Damn all these people! Why had he come to-night, of all nights, when he wanted to be in his own room to think?

"Well, I can show them one Lowell who won't lie down," he said to himself, as he changed.

HE was grim as he entered the ring. The usual hokum—that's how he saw it. They sparred for a second. All he wanted was a quick get-away to his bed. A blow like a trip hammer crushed down on Cholmondeley's skull. Another, Raymond's best, hit him murderously on the heart.

The English champion sagged to the canvas and was counted out. Fourteen seconds! There was dead silence in the room, and through it Raymond gently carried his man to the corner. Then, gracefully and swiftly bowing to the spectators, Raymond slipped out of the ring. He was almost out of his fighting rig before Grant, breathless, reached him and cried out:

"Thought you were nervous, Raymond. You said so. Gosh! I never know where you're going to break loose next. The way that fellow went down! Thought you'd killed him, but he's beginning to ask already whether he didn't by any chance meet a tropical storm or something."

"I didn't exactly mean to cut loose. I just——"

"Gee! He's apologizing!" Grant exclaimed. "Say, can't you stay to supper and—— Hello, Peck! Forgot you in the excitement. No need for seconds in this match, eh? Got him in fine trim, you have."

"Yes. It's lucky Raymond laid him out so soon, for I have a date and want to be going early. Sometimes," added Peck viciously, remembering his earlier grievances, "he drags 'em out—when he wants to. Can you valet yerself for to-night?"

To Raymond this was plain, unfriendly rudeness, for he had not caught Peck's wink at Grant. Raymond dismissed his assistant with corresponding lack of ceremony. Peck needn't have let him down so badly in front of their employers. But Grant was already saying:

"Valeting? Who wants to be dolled up? Just a friendly, family supper. Got some relatives crazy on boxing. Notably an uncle. Can't you come?"

"Thanks," said Peck circumspectly, "but this date——"

"Another time, then, but you must come and see my uncle."

"Sure," said the democrat immediately.

It seemed to be taken for granted that Raymond was free. So overwhelming had been his emotional experience this evening that it seemed easier to acquiesce than make excuses. Two minutes later, then, he was being driven smoothly away from the club in the direction of the Calle Ayacucho.

Mr. Alan Begg Hamilton, forewarned, met them in the hall.

"Thought I recognized you to-night." He took the offensive, having been instructed as to the caliber of his man. "I did not allow my nephew to tell you, as you might think I wanted only to express gratitude. You remember that rescue in the park? I was too shocked to thank you properly at the time. No, no thanks. Uncomfortable business, being grateful. Hate it myself. I believe none of us has eaten since some unearthly hour. We'll talk at the table. No place like a table for conversation. Only savages consume food and hurry away to business. Our business shall be boxing. Ah, there's a sport! You won't believe it now, young man, but in my time I had ambitions to be a welterweight fighter. Not in your class, of course." He continued to talk, as he led the way to the dining room, shaded yet shining, comfortable and yet conventional, restful and reassuring to a tired man. Raymond was tired. If he wasn't, why was he here? So he asked himself, and let the tide of Mr. Hamilton's reminiscences sweep over him. They put delicious dishes before him, and he ate them at first unconsciously and then with pleasure. Light they were, as became a boxer's diet, and simple. The joy lay in the service and the cooking.

HE began to talk about his art, and it was Hamilton who egged him on, avid for up-to-date information on the subject. It was Grant, sitting by gravely, who made a warning sign to his uncle. Then Mr. Hamilton said in a suitable pause:

"Mr. Raymond, we don't like people of your type working in our warehouses. Yes, mine as well as my family's. I'm merely the head now, relegated to my library. But my nephew and I believe in having men in their places. Now, you are——"

"I want to leave, sir." It was the first time he uttered his resolution in plain language even to himself. Answering their look of nonplused astonishment, he added smilingly: "But only for a time. That's why I told Mr. Grant to-night I might like to ask a favor."

"And it is?"

"That I may go away for a month—two months, perhaps—with the option of coming back."

He could feel the uncle and the nephew exchanging glances over the table.

"It is not permissible, perhaps, to ask where you are going?" Mr. Hamilton was speaking.

"Why, yes, sir; my destination is New York, but my business is private."

"Naturally—naturally! And it will take some time? Believe me, I'm not being impertinent. From what I heard of you, Mr. Raymond, and have seen personally in action," he bowed with formality, "I should not dream of intruding. But I had some plans. You see, I have long wanted to go back to America, partly because I know our trade there, partly because I have old friends I want to visit. But I need a companion secretary, some one who knows America, some one who won't be missed out of the regular routine. You'll excuse me, but your present work is scarcely skilled. You could be replaced, but I can't find a reliable——"

"Companion secretary, sir?"

"Exactly."

"I'd have to have some time off to attend to some private matters," Raymond said.

"Exactly," answered Hamilton again. "And I want time off for some visits. At once, by the way, but that needn't interfere with your duties."

"I could assume no duties in New York for a while, and I want to start in two weeks."

There was a pause, and Raymond was conscious of regret at his attitude. He was acting like a dictator, to say the least

—holding a gun at a man's head. Then he softened suddenly:

"Please, don't misunderstand me. This business of mine is urgent, and——"

"I understand," said Mr. Hamilton, "and I want you. Suppose we sail in two weeks, unless you hear from me to the contrary? As regards other details, Mr. Grant will see you, in the meantime. Is that satisfactory?"

"But, Mr. Hamilton"—the swiftness of the settlement took away Raymond's breath—"you said you didn't believe in gratitude for any favors, however great. Mine was small, as you know. You mustn't——"

Mr. Hamilton had risen from his seat. "My boy, when I meet a man I want, I take him—at my risk and his price. You said you wanted to get to New York quickly. I'll get you there and give you the leave you ask—at my risk. After that, we shall see. I ask no questions about your doings in the meantime, but, when you come back to me, I'll exact service."

Grant, guffawing, interrupted another protest from the guest.

"Wait until you get to New York! Before you sail and while you sail, you'll earn salary enough for a year, but you won't get it. My uncle was born in Scotland, but reared in America. Thank the Lord, I've other American strains in my make-up."

"No one should eat what he doesna earn!" broke in the old man in half dialect.

"Go back to your books, you old skinflint!" cried the nephew.

It was on such a note that Raymond left. They would have sent him in the car, but he refused. He honestly wanted to walk as far as possible. There were things requiring immediate consideration—his different status, his decision to go home.

"I'll make Henry go into the ring—I will! Why did I say that I would sail in two weeks?"

He calculated rapidly the speed of a liner and computed it would give him plenty of time. He was throbbing with excitement at the thought of going home with money, a certain position, a certain right to dictate to his brother. Quit, would Henry? By Heaven! He wouldn't. He, Raymond, would drive Henry into the ring.

It was only when he came to the door of Señora Romola's house that he remembered Peck. The lady was still up. She had heard the news evidently of his fight and was eager for details, which he supplied in his broken Spanish. She patted him gently, as he told them.

"The other? Didn't the señor know? He had gone to-night and taken away his things."

Raymond thought he had misunderstood her and rushed upstairs. Yes, Peck's room had been ransacked for such things as a man might like to carry away. He ran out now to the Café Albion, pushed his way among the tables, and called for the proprietor, who received him with unintelligent eyes. He asked for one Blackie, the word biting his tongue. He wasn't there. Peck was evidently a puzzle. Disconcerted, he went home again. He felt as if he had betrayed Peck. But, of course, the fellow would certainly turn up for his job tomorrow.

He didn't; but Raymond had no time to hunt him, for he was summoned early to Mr. Grant's private office. He was given new duties, and, when he explained to his new superior his perturbation about his old chum, Grant was kindly. He would see what could be done, but he knew these seamen. Having extracted from Raymond the story of their recent relationship, he could with some reason point out that Peck had already been following the ways of such seamen.

"But we can comb the regular places for him, if you think it's worth the trouble," he offered.

"He lost a ship to save me once, when I was blackjacked."

"He was with you and escaped himself?"

"He was hurt, though not so badly as I was."

"We'll search for him," said Mr. Grant gravely.

Raymond himself aided in this chase for the next two weeks, as far as his now strictly limited leisure would permit.

But there was no trace of Peck, and his memory began to be submerged in new associations.

CHAPTER X.

THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE.

THE man now to be seen in the private offices of the American-Argentine Export Company was a very different Raymond. Robert Grant knew whereof he spoke. Old Mr. Hamilton himself outlined the course of study for his future secretary. There were endless reports to be read of trade conditions; endless summaries of necessary data to be made up for his new chief. Had he had that survey of the Argentine grain situation carefully checked up by official statistics? His head ached; his mind ached. But in the welter of the new work and its interest he forgot his private troubles shortly.

When at last they took the boat down the Rio Plata to Montevideo, once more Raymond had a moment to think. The contrast between Mr. Raymond, supercargo, arriving months before, and Raymond Lowell, secretary, departing, gave him a genuine thrill of pride. He had made good, not so much in business—the test there was still to come—but in his inner life. He had mastered himself, and he could look at the world around him in a new light—a light made roseate by confident ambition.

A little white steamer, slim as a whippet, was waiting for them off dazzling Montevideo. Lord! How good it was to walk a washed deck again without any thought of disagreeable duties below stairs. His stateroom, adjoining Mr. Hamilton's, struck him as almost luxurious. The old gentleman certainly traveled in state. Raymond wondered whether his mental discipline in trade conditions was to be continued on board, but found his duties consisted of yarning in the smoking room over Hamilton's abstemious drinks and indulgent cigars. But that was only in the evening. For the day he was free, and then his most constant associate was the instructor in the gymnasium. No lack of exercise here, and all through it the salt, healthful tang in one's nostrils. As he came swinging down the deck one day after a turn at the medicine ball, old Hamilton, sunken in his chair, hailed him.

"My boy, how much do you think I'd give to change places with you?"

"With me, sir?" Raymond was surprised.

"Ah! Go look at yourself," said the old Scotchman. "Your eyes, man! Why, the ocean never had a shine on it like you see there."

"Feeling pretty fit, sir. Thank you!"

"Lord! I need a whisky. That's the only thing gives me youth now. Come and drink your muck with me over one. Ginger ale! What the world is coming to! In my young days we weren't afraid of a wee drop, and I'll bet you won't live any longer than myself."

Glorious days! He was almost sorry when the ship put into Rio, until he remembered that he wanted to get the newspapers. There were plenty of the New York dailies, for Southern venders as well as Northern know how eagerly passengers grasp at the first signs of home. He bought a bundle of them. No news of Paul Doyle, but plenty of the arrangements being made for the "Battle of the Century," which was to be fought in Madison Square Garden.

More hardening of the muscles between there and Savannah; more oxygenizing of the blood and brightening of the skin. At the Southern seaport town Raymond bought a paper and read:

> Doyle is still maintaining his aristocratic aloofness. He sees no need for affording audience to such a common person as your correspondent. In fact, save for an occasional violent contact with the jaw or the eye or the abdomen of his sparring partners, he avoids all common people. Contact through a glove is one thing; the glove can be removed and replaced, but the kingly hand may contract defilement. We are forced, therefore, to get our facts from one "Mick." If you tell Mick that his hero is the sure-enough new champion, provided he does thus and so, Mick will all unwittingly reveal just why he can do that and more.

Here followed certain details of Paul Doyle's form. And, though the expert was obviously "razzing" the Dude, still he inclined to the belief that the gentle-

man's chances over the less cultured champion were pretty good.

Other papers disagreed, of course. Hadn't their writers seen Morrissey in action, gamboling, skipping, playing the kid? An old has-been? Forget it, if you're thinking of high finance.

Raymond wondered, with a sharp pang of fear, whether this attitude of Doyle's could be interpreted as the preliminary gesture for a "lie-down."

"They could say that he wasn't in condition, and consequently he wouldn't let the reporters see him in training."

But there was a tone about the Doyle stories that rang true to his Lowell ears. That's just what Henry would do! His actions were in character. No, Raymond would have to wait until he got to New York to learn the truth.

THEY reached it at last, with the big fight six days off. His first impulse was to rush off to his brother's training quarters and confront him with the rumors that had spread. But of what use would that be, apart from the fact that he had to visit his office and dance attendance on his boss for a day or so? He decided on letting neither his family nor his friends know of his arrival. But, as he went through the formalities of an introduction to the big downtown corporation, with which his own was allied, he was conscious of impatience. And then there was old Hamilton, demanding his attention. Hamilton was leaving town in two days and had asked for the favor of his company until then. He could hardly refuse.

So the two were installed in a suite in a hotel facing Central Park.

"I intend to retain part of this suite for my baggage, while I'm out of town," Hamilton announced. "So you'd better stay here, too."

Raymond had no wish to be so tied, but could see no excuse for refusing. About his salary he tried to be obdurate, but Hamilton beat him down.

"Half pay for leave is my rule, if the leave is requested. I treat my secretaries as I do my lawyers; I retain them for such time as I want them. I wish you to get in touch with me in a month, preferably—or at the outside six weeks from to-day."

"Yes, sir."

"Then suppose you get a car and escort me to my train?"

It was afternoon when Hamilton left, and Raymond's vague plans about his brother called for no action until the following morning. He decided that he would go down to see the old skipper—Captain Peabody—in his office. It was a reunion that almost brought the tears to his eyes. He had forgotten how long it was since he had clasped the hand of a genuine family friend.

"Not a word about seeing me yet," he warned the superintendent of the Seagull Southern Line, after their long chat.

"Sub rosa, eh? Got an ace up your sleeve?" asked the other slyly. "Well, little Ray, I don't need to ask whether it's a genuine one. Boy, you make me proud to look at you."

"Thanks to you, skipper, and Captain Jones. By the way, where is he?"

"Due back in three weeks. Funny that you should drop in to-day. A fellow who was on the trip south with you was here yesterday asking the same thing."

"Not Peck!"

"Yes, that's the name. Wants a berth, but won't take any except under his old master. He's waiting for the *Nausicaa.* Remember him? Big, burly brute, but a good seaman."

"Do I know him! Skipper, where is he? How does he look? You see, when I left——"

Here he launched into a brief account of their companionship and Peck's unaccountable disappearance.

"Why should he quit like that? Give me his address. Why, the American-Argentine Export has spent money hunting him."

"Well, I'll be darned!" was the superintendent's comment. "Address—boy? Do you think we telegraph when we want a seaman? Search me. Seaman's address! Not all o' them, of course—some have homes, but Peck's type! No, come back when the *Nausicaa* docks, and maybe he'll have turned up."

The skipper laughed at Raymond's ignorance concerning the habits of sailors,

but promised eagerly to take a note and to see that Peck got it when he came in.

"May change his mind, you see. They often do. Then he'll come hunting an earlier sailing, if he's short of cash."

Raymond, returning to a lonely, stately dinner, felt a sense of relief. Really, he had been short with Peck that night in the club at Buenos Aires and had neglected him. No wonder Peck, thinking Raymond was returning to higher haunts, had beaten it. Good scout, Peck! Well—like the famous curate's egg—perhaps not so good in parts. He wished he could set him right about Paul Doyle, and again he pondered on the problem of Peck's strange tip. Well, to-morrow would show something, anyway.

CHAPTER XI.

PECK COMES BACK.

HE was a very dapper and distinguished young man who boarded a Ninth Avenue elevated train in the chill hours of the next morning. He got out at the Battery and then bought a ticket for the ferry to Great Kills. Paul Doyle—saving as usual, Raymond thought—had his training quarters in the healthful, adjacent spaces of Staten Island. Only one thing disturbed his thoughts on the way.

"Desbrosses Street!" a conductor had yelled.

Slim came back to him, as he had last seen him, generously distributing twenty-dollar bills and intimating returns in some kind very soon. Was Slim out of jail? Should he hunt Slim up in his old haunts and try to learn his present whereabouts? His flesh recoiled at the thought of entering that restaurant again. And once he had taken comfort in Henny's plumpness!

"No wonder old Harry hated the sight of me in those days! How I must have offended his sensibilities!"

And now he was out to see that old Harry himself played the game—a different one, but one of his own choice. As he shot through the half-settled, green, engaging little island, it occurred to him that getting off at Henry's own station would be a faux pas. They must know Henry's face by now, and they would recognize his own. He dropped off at New-dorp and began to walk. The early light showed a slate-gray road before him. He reached the training camp, halfway between the towns. It was still slumbering. He walked on and turned into a wayside café, got a cup of coffee, and returned on the Perth Amboy road.

Three figures were jogging toward him. He slipped into the brush and hid behind a tree.

Paul was leading his satellites in the morning run. By chance Paul stopped almost abreast of Raymond's "reserved seat" and did some shadow boxing. Paul was like some wood elf in the dawn—light, sure, joyous! He shot off another hundred yards, then halted to allow his companions to catch up.

"Great shape he's in," thought Raymond. "That left was a trifle slow, but that was always his fault. Gee! I'd like to see him in the ring, but I can't risk poking in this face of mine." Cautiously he crept out of his thicket and returned to the railway station.

It was broad daylight now, and he saw the world again out of shadow. The vision of Doyle conscientiously and quietly training in the dawnlike twilight restored his confidence in his brother. He was not afraid to let the reporters see him! Why should he be? Never was he in better form. But, then, what had Peck meant? He told himself the tale had been all moonshine, and yet it clung about him like an incubus. He spent an idle day, killing time, taking in movie shows and meals. But, all the while at the back of his consciousness was the idea:

"I ought to go and tell him."

What, in Heaven's name, was he to tell Henry? "I hear you're going to quit in this fight."

Ludicrous but torturing, nevertheless! Once he started downtown to seek out Slim and laughed at himself for a bungling diplomat. To-morrow Paul would lay off his training. Only two days now to the fight. The tickets ought to be bought now.

HE spent a miserable and lonely night, despite his opulence, debating between a visit to Paul and a visit to his old loan agent on Desbrosses Street. His

reason, reassured by steady morning nerves, told him to do nothing. The papers gave no inkling of any intention on Paul's part to quit. The betting was still, of course, on Morrissey, for he was the champ.

A morning's walk in Central Park made earth seem a better place. Squirrels were squeaking and squabbling. He had not heard them in a long time. A couple of horses went galloping by. He wished he was astride the back of one. He raced, took shadow hurdles, skipped an imaginary rope. In a happy frame of mind he went back to his hotel. The world was a better place than people thought it. Evil was a matter of imagination and broken morale.

After breakfast he spent a morning over the office work and only awoke at noon over his papers to the problem of Paul Doyle. While he ate, the two alternatives presented themselves with new force, but he could see no reason for following up the trail suggested by either. And then, when he was about to put on his hat and go out for a stroll, the telephone rang.

"Some one to see you, sir."

"Yes; who is it?"

"Refuses to give his name, but says you knew him in Boonos Ires."

"Show him up."

Peck, hat in hand, deprecatory, doubtful of his reception, shuffled in.

"Peck, you old devil! Led me a nice dance! Where've you been?"

"Aw, sev'ral places. Down 'tha line they told me you were here. Had sommuat I wanted to tell you." He sniffled, gazing in awe about the room.

"Never mind the furniture. This is window dressing. What have you got to tell?"

Peck rubbed a red hand across a nose obviously the worse for alcoholic indulgence. This was a preliminary gesture to a tale obviously intended to be apologetic.

" 'Member my saying certain things about Paul Doyle? I told you to bet on that guy Morrissey—the champ, you know."

It seemed as if Peck, seeing Raymond in this extravagant environment, expected him to lose all recollection of such things as boxing.

"I remember," was the quiet assurance, as Raymond's heart began to beat horribly. "And you remember I told you that you were a liar."

Peck sat down heavily and said as heavily:

"I was, but not to my knowledge, you understand. He's not going to fight—same as I said. You can make money on that, if you want to. I won't." He started to light a cigarette, but stopped at sight of the rug, as he was about to throw away the match. "Always willing to make a bet and take the consequences; but I don't make 'em on—well, on——"

"Suppose," said Raymond encouragingly, "you become more explicit. Tell me what you know, in fact. Had your dinner?"

"I could do with a chaser."

Peck smiled, and Raymond, smiling also, produced a large bottle and poured out what he thought was a suitable drink for Peck.

Presently Peck, wiping his lips appreciatively, opened up. It was true, he repeated, what he had said about Paul Doyle. He was not a quitter, mind you, but he'd made enemies. In fact, Doyle was up stage and not too easy on his fellow human beings who had strayed from the straight and narrow. So——

"Slim!" ejaculated Raymond involuntarily, and he could have bitten his tongue off.

"Where d'you hear that name?"

Peck was genuinely astonished, so much so as to be struck dumb, and Raymond had to say:

"Go on. Tell your story, and I'll tell mine later."

It was Slim, or rather the gang back of him. They had a branch in Buenos Aires.

"Tend to some of them some day, I will," Peck interrupted his own narrative. "Shove their rotten dope over on me Square I am. Always have been."

"Sure! I know."

Raymond hoped to intervene in this monologue, but it was not easy. Peck was bent on making it clear that he himself had no idea of monkey tricks. In

spite of circumlocution, however, it developed that through Blackie, a member of an international crook gang, he had got his information about Paul Doyle. Since reaching New York, to which he had come in the hope of making a pile on the strength of an inside tip, he had visited Henny's on Desbrosses Street, a place associated for certain purposes with the Café Albion, and there learned just why Paul Doyle would fade out.

"Put him away—that's what they're going to do. He'll be in the ring, perhaps; but they'll have him doped. Just thought I'd tell you. You seemed bent on him, and, when I got your note to-day down 'tha office—looking for a new berth I was, seeing the tip was rotten—I just thought I'd look you up."

Raymond moistened his lips. What a fool he had been to doubt Henry!

"Knew you were real stuff," he said, squeezing Peck by the arm. "Don't ask me now what I know about Slim or Doyle, but just tell me what I can do to stop this dirt. Does Morrissey know about it?"

Peck, flattered by the affection, looked at him like a faithful dog.

"He don't—leastwise, I don't believe he does. How d'ye know in this game, anyway? As to what you can do to stop the other—there you got me. If they think you're a pal—one of themselves" —how poignantly and painfully the phrase came back to Raymond—"they'll drop hints, mebbe, but nothing you can pin onto, unless you're sworn in, as you might say. Me, I'm not. So don't ask me what they're up to. Doping of some kind, of course."

"Want anything more, Peck? Eats or drinks?"

Peck cheerfully refreshed himself once more, and then, propelled by a swift arm, he found himself out in the street and heading for the elevated. At the Battery they crossed the ferry and took a train to Great Kills, quite openly. When they reached the training camp, they saw it was closed.

"Sure! Fight to-morrow. Why should he be here?" demanded Peck. "Can't you guess better'n that?"

"Damn fool!" Raymond's folding and unfolding palms betrayed his nervousness.

Back in New York, he could barely convince his nerves that subways were more swift than taxicabs. They telephoned the Pompadour Hotel from a near-by public station, Raymond being unsure of the wisdom of showing his face.

"Paul Doyle," replied the clerk quickly, "will not be in town to-night. He is staying with friends and does not mean to arrive until after the weighing in."

He was proud of his information, as any one might hear, and quite accustomed to imparting it.

"Eh—when would that be?" Raymond stuttered in his excitement.

"The weighing in?" The clerk laughed at such a rube. "You can see that in any evening paper."

They bought one. It was to be before the New York Boxing Commission in the Flatiron Building at four o'clock next day. The commission, having for once approved every detail of this encounter was conferring its blessing by supervising the weighing in in person. Of course, said the sport writer, since the members must go home and eat early and heavily, the ceremony had to be at an unusual hour and place.

The news sent Raymond's heart to his heels. At a loss to know what to do, he had Peck telephone the hotel again and inquire where Paul Doyle might be reached.

"Mr. Doyle is spending the night quietly with friends and wants no forwarding address to be given."

Peck was then given a long-distance call to the Lowell mansion in Boston.

"Do your stuff and pretend you're a highbrow," said Raymond encouragingly at his elbow. "They're old friends of mine who know Doyle."

"We know nothing of any Mr. Doyle."

"Gee!" Peck affected to have suffered a slap in the jaw, as he repeated this answer to Raymond. "Think I'd insulted him by asking."

"He would," was the reply, as Raymond guessed from the mimicked accent that the old butler was still on hand.

"Who would?"

"Never mind just now." He must remember to be more cautious.

HE could think of no other way of locating his threatened twin, and he chafed at his helplessness. His own grievances were forgotten, and all he could visualize was Henry's sacrifice, his long training, his hatred of the task, his hopes, his parents' reliance on his promises. Were they all to be nullified, just because, he, Raymond, could not find his brother to-night?

"But surely," he turned on the dumb but willing Peck, "his manager and assistants can guard him?" He was almost angry at the sailor who had caused him such disquiet.

Peck shrugged.

"Don't ask me. Just told ye what I heard, and what I heard seemed plenty, judging by the company. Ye've tried to warn Doyle. What more could even a pal expect? Pal of yours, is he?"

"Never mind," said Raymond again, but sharply.

"Might be your brother the way ye take on," replied the injured informant.

Immediately Peck was sorry, for Raymond's lip seemed to quiver.

"Listen here," volunteered Peck. "You go back to that swell soote of yours. I'll go down to Henny's. Just you stay home and rest. You look all in—all but. If I get any dope, I'll call you."

"You will?"

Raymond had been visualizing the possibility of some such action on his own part and its probable consequences. He had no desire to encounter Slim or even the proprietor of the Desbrosses Street restaurant. That Peck should volunteer to undertake the commission seemed nothing short of providential.

"Sure I will!"

"You won't be sorry." Raymond offered a hand with what struck the other as unnecessary fervor.

"Why should I be? If I hear nothing, well, there's the weighing in at four. If he's not there, we lodge information. Me as witness to what I heard. Get me? Hell, wot do I care about that bunch? Kid, you look cheesy. Get to bed and leave this to old Peck."

Raymond did as he was bid, resting fairly easily. Without a doubt, Peck could be trusted. Next morning he received the report that there were no new developments. He arranged to meet his henchman downtown for an early luncheon. After a stroll they joined the crowd before the Flatiron Building.

First came Morrissey in his private car, acclaimed by cheers. Next the police pushed a pathway clear for a mere taxi. It was some enthusiast who recognized the occupant and yelled:

"Give's a look at ye, Paul!"

Paul Doyle obliged by standing up, and Raymond's heart gave a leap of relief. No mistaking that it was Henry in excellent condition, but so awkward. Poor old boy, it was not easy for him to play the rôle of popular idol. Turning to make some comment on his ineptitude, Raymond found Peck's eyes studying himself with some amazement. Damn! There was no mistaking the resemblance between them, he supposed.

"Guess everything's all right," he ventured weakly, conscious that explanations were in order.

"Yeh! Might as well wait until they come out," was the reply. Mercifully Peck was too kind to voice the question he so plainly looked.

So they waited in an uneasy silence until the principals of the coming fistic drama again emerged into public view.

"I'm going down to Henny's again," said Peck. "Can't trust that bunch of highwaymen. I won't be happy until I see Paul Doyle in the ring."

Raymond was deeply touched by his loyalty.

"You're a mighty fine chap, Peck. Do you know it?" he exclaimed. "When it's all over, I'll explain several things. Don't feel in the humor now."

"Aw! That's all right."

Peck was touched in his turn. There was more behind this Doyle-Raymond affair than his simple mind could fathom, and, while he was willing to trust blindly in his friend, still it was pleasant to feel he was going to be trusted in time.

"S'long, matey. Be in the soote? If you want me, you know Henny's number. I know yours."

"If I'm not home, try Doyle's flat at the Pompadour."

Raymond did not know why he said that, for he had not the least intention of going there. But Peck took it as a matter of course.

CHAPTER XII.

COMRADES IN MISERY.

WHEN Raymond reached his hotel he began to fret. Of course, Paul was all right, and yet—— He looked at his watch, walked to the window, wished the hour of the fight would come, so that he could be sure. So uncontrollable after a while became his nervousness that he took up the telephone and called the Pompadour. No, Mr. Doyle was not in, but he was expected. The order had been left, however, that he was not to be seen to-night. He wished to rest before the fight. Raymond hung up, feeling he had been foolish even to call.

"But he ought to be home now," said something inside him.

He saw by his watch that it was half past six.

Why wasn't Paul at his apartment? Panic drove him to the telephone again. This time he asked whether any of Mr. Doyle's entourage could be reached. Yes, they were waiting now in the rooms. He was connected. A certain eager quality in the voice answering him told his sensitized nerves better than any declaration that Paul's assistants were as upset as he.

"Mr. Doyle is not there? This is an old friend speaking. You expect him shortly?"

"Ought to be here now," reached him flatly.

Of course, he ought. On an impulse Raymond reached for his hat, rushed into the corridor, and descended to the street. He promised the taxi driver an extra tip for good time.

He knew the number of Henry's apartment in the Pompadour and went up without announcing himself. He had barely tapped at the door, when it was flung open by Billy Hickson, hawk-nosed, hard-visaged, indignant. He glared at Raymond.

"Well!" he said largely. "Nice time you've given us. I let you spend the last night with your high-toned friends so you can get to feeling right, and you play this dirty trick on me. Think just because you're you, you don't need no rest before the fight?" As he spoke, he backed in, his head beckoning Raymond to enter. "My God! After to-night I'm through with gentlemen. Give me a guy who treats his manager some way decent."

So overwrought was he that he continued to harangue about the hardships of training high-hatters who had no consideration for a regular scout's feelings. And, as he talked, a deathlike calmness settled on Raymond Lowell. Henry had disappeared. He was being mistaken for Henry. Should he assume his twin's identity, or should he explain?

"By gum! If Morrissey socked you in the ring to-night, it wouldn't break my heart—if I didn't have my kale on you. And I'm beginning to think I needn't have been so sure about that. Always been ashamed of us, you have. How do I know what you'll pull? Ain't you got a tongue on you?"

Hickson was wrought up to the point of frenzy by his anxiety, but his flow of language only served the further to calm Raymond. Was this the kind of brute old Harry had had to put up with all these years? He wanted to strike the chap in the mouth and shut him up.

"Suppose," he suggested insolently, "you get down to the Garden and attend to such details as are necessary?"

Hickson hesitated for just a second, longing to be impudent and yet afraid.

"Better get along," said Raymond. "I'd like to eat in peace."

He had seen the table laid for dinner, and he took a chance on playing the kind of part Henry might have played.

"Sure!" agreed Hickson surlily. "But don't be late there. It won't be me you'll have to reckon with. There's the public."

"I quite realize that," said Raymond coldly.

EVEN before Hickson took his hat, Raymond was aware of another man in the room. He was a small man, attentive, intelligent, silent and yet giving the

idea of being singularly apprehensive of every move being made in this game. Raymond turned to him and met two bright, little eyes fixed on him, not inimically but somehow doubtfully.

"I'm going, Mick," said Hickson.

"Right ye are!"

The door shut on the irate manager. Raymond felt as if he had excluded a big bull about to attack him, only to encounter a more dangerously alert dog.

"Supper ready?" he asked, feigning indifference.

"Right here, sir."

Mick produced it off a hot plate in a little pantry—a dainty repast such as might tickle without too far tempting a boxer's appetite. Raymond played with it, wondering just what his next move would be. Suppose he confessed to his identity, how would it affect Paul? Suppose he didn't, what would be the consequences? He could sense Mick watching him. Mick, he felt, was to be trusted, if once one won his affections. But to whose service was he tied? Raymond debated mentally many openings for a conversation and decided to keep his mouth shut. He had almost finished his supper, when the telephone rang, causing him to start. Mick answered it, and Raymond strained his ears.

"Yeh?" Mick showed his first sign of excitement. "The divil ye have! Hold on a minit."

He turned to Raymond and spoke breathlessly:

"Party named Peck asking for a Mr. Raymond. He says he's found Paul Doyle, and what's he to do wit' him?"

The birdlike eyes were blazing. Somehow Raymond sensed that this little bantamweight fellow could turn into a veritable tiger, if there was any foul play about Paul Doyle.

"Give me the phone." He felt the necessity of making his own share in this business clear, but his anxiety about Paul delayed explanations. "Yes? Where? Yes? Just a second."

He looked at Mick who was watching him with alert suspicion.

"You know I'm not Paul Doyle?"

"Is it a fool ye take me for? But ye're his brother."

"I am. He's been hurt. A friend of mine has found him. We were afraid, from something we'd heard, and I came here. What are we to do?" He could see the suspicion fading from Mick's face.

"Badly hurt, is it? Tcha! Tcha! I declare to God! To-night of all nights." While he wailed, he was thinking fast. "Some crook, of course. The curse of Moses on 'em! Ye haven't by any chance a place you could take him? Best not bring him here."

Raymond mentioned his hotel, and Mick's eyes opened in astonishment.

"There, then. Hurry, man."

Raymond talked into the telephone again and directed Peck to bring Paul by taxi to the Palo Hotel. Probably he'd be there as soon as they would; if not, they were to wait in the cab.

He and Mick rode down in silence, the latter straining forward, like a dog on a leash, and muttering to himself constantly. Raymond could catch strange imprecations and prayers, but his main impression was one that consoled him about Paul. Here was one loyal follower he had made in his ring career. Mick knew the ropes. Mick would know how to act. He himself clung to Mick as to a pilot in a dangerous, unknown sea.

It was Peck who grabbed them at the entrance to the hotel. He had been fidgeting on the sidewalk a few minutes.

"Mick!" Paul Doyle's face, strained, white, lighted up at sight of his second. Then he saw his brother, and his expression became incredulous. "Ray! Why, how——"

"Don't talk here. Come on in and up to my rooms."

THEY got him out of the taxi in which he was sitting. Paul lurched heavily, as he emerged, and shrank as one arm collided with that of a helper.

"Don't believe it's broken," Paul Doyle muttered. "Paralyzed—that's what it is."

He was just able to walk into the elevator and out of it to the suite, where he collapsed limply into a chair. It was Raymond who undressed him and administered a drink. Old Harry! If he could just lay hands on Slim, he'd squeeze his

little throat until he choked. It must have been Slim. While Raymond helped Paul, he could hear Peck telling the story to the fighting-mad Mick.

Peck had heard a certain party in a certain place—so he disguised details familiar to him and Raymond—saying he'd got even with Paul Doyle. Doyle was riding through Central Park in a taxi which he had picked none too carefully, it seemed.

"Say, can't he afford his own chauffeur?" put in Peck.

"Mind yer own business," snapped Mick. "If he wants to save his money, why shouldn't he?"

Peck, scratching a philosophic head, proceeded. Anyway, the taxi driver was in cahoots with the certain party aforementioned. He had stopped because of "tire trouble," and invited his fare out to hail another cab, since his could not proceed. As Doyle emerged, some one had hit out at him. Paul Doyle had raised an arm to ward off the blow and got it fair above the elbow.

"Some time before he fights again, matey," Peck pointed out.

"Oh, Lord!" exclaimed Mick and sat down and wept.

"They must have given him a whiff of something to keep him quiet in the bushes, where they pitched him," continued Peck. "Thought me a pal, they did, so I got the place out of 'em, as best I could, and beat it uptown. Doyle was staggering about on the main roadway, when I found him. Couldn't miss his mug, you know. Living image of——" He stopped. This was none of Mick's affair.

Very important Peck felt over the part he had played. Peck did not realize, until he saw his principal's face, how disastrous the accident was even from Raymond's point of view.

"Paul wants to talk to you," said Raymond, coming from the bedroom and putting a kindly hand on Mick's bowed shoulder.

Heavily the little second arose and shuffled away.

"Yer brother wants ye," Mick reported presently, sticking a head through the door.

"Brother!" ejaculated Peck and administered a sound slap to his own head. "Think even a blind man might see they're brothers!"

Somewhat revived, sitting up, Henry Lowell looked at his twin, his eyes openly taking in the difference in the appearance and expression of Raymond. A different Ray since their last meeting.

"Got a favor to ask of you, old boy," he said, motioning the other to sit on the bed. "I've just been telling Mick about it."

"He has that, and I think he's crazy."

"Sh!" It was Paul Doyle. "Let me speak first. Ray, I want you to take my place in the ring."

"Your——" Utterly astonished, Raymond looked from Paul to Mick, asking the latter tacitly whether he thought Doyle was wandering.

Then he laughed and leaned forward to pat Paul's limp hand tenderly.

"My dear boy, it's impossible for many reasons. In the first place, as you know, I couldn't substitute for you without being found out. In the second, I wouldn't. You remember how I feel about professional fighting. In the third and last place——"

"In the first and the last," Mick broke in heatedly, "you couldn't. Is it after all his training and teaching and working and——" Mick's eloquence failed him. "Box for Paul Doyle!" He uttered a little hysterical guffaw of ridicule. "Box yer grandmother!"

"What the hell do you know about him?" Peck's bull-like face, blazing with indignation, was thrust between the three. "I've followed Paul Doyle's form, and, what's more, I've seen Morrissey in action, and if my pal here couldn't whip that ham my name ain't Peck. Gee! You ever seen him hit out?"

"I have!" Paul Doyle spoke up from the bed. "And he could lick me any time. Haven't I told you?" He addressed Mick.

"Yeh, years ago, when you were both boys, but you've been in the ring, man. Can't ye talk sensible?"

"And hasn't he?" Peck bellowed. "Hasn't he——" He was about to launch into a recital of Raymond's South

American feat, when that individual himself held up a hand for silence.

"We're wasting time arguing. I have no intention of taking Doyle's place—my brother's, I mean. I will not become a professional boxer under false pretenses." There was no doubting his decisiveness.

Paul Doyle leaned back wearily, shutting his eyes.

"Will you two," he asked courteously, "leave me alone with my brother? There is something I want to say to him."

Overawed, Peck and Mick departed from the room.

"Ray," said Henry, alias Paul Doyle, making an effort to sit up again, "I'm not asking this just for myself. My reputation means little to me. As for money—I need to-night's purse, of course, but can manage without it. It's Hickson. You know him—his type. He's often threatened, when we've had differences, to tell the world in general who I am—threatened to drag in dad and mother—and all of us. If I don't turn up to-night, he'll do it. He'll swear I managed this myself." He touched his arm, indicating his injury. "That's why I'm asking you to take my place. Win or lose—what matters? But the other!"

"The rotten swine!"

With clenched teeth and angry eyes, Raymond paced the room. Imagine him—after all his years of abstention—entering a professional boxing ring and under such circumstances! Not even as himself!

"Please, old Ray—not for me, but for them." The words came softly.

"And suppose I'm found out?" Raymond blurted indignantly, feeling himself being caught in a trap. "Nice story that will make about the Lowells!"

"Quite nice, I think myself," said Paul Doyle—"especially in comparison with what Hickson would say. You take my place so as not to disappoint the public. If you couldn't box or weren't in trim, that would be a different matter. But you are a boxer, and this man of yours out there tells me you've been fighting." The effort of talking had weakened him, and he sank back, exhausted. "Will you, Ray?"

"Oh, I suppose so." It came despairingly.

"Thanks, old boy. Wonder if you could leave Peck with me? Not quite right, you know."

Immediately Raymond was all compunction. In his absorption with his own problem he had forgotten his brother's illness.

"I ought to get a doctor and a nurse," he cried.

"No; just leave Peck and be off with Mick. Mick!" Paul Doyle raised his voice.

The little second came running.

"My brother, Mick, takes my place to-night, and I trust you to see him through as you would me."

For just a second Mick regarded him as a soldier might an officer ordering him to almost certain death.

"If ye say so—sure!" He drew a long breath. "We'd best be going."

"I'm ready," said Raymond, reaching for his hat.

"Luck, old Ray. There's a radio here. Peck, you stay with me, and we listen in."

Peck was about to protest when he met Raymond's eyes.

"Sure! If we can't see ye, we'll hear ye win. Give 'em what ye gave the limey, lad. Lord! I'd like to be there. Some fighter ye're taking with ye, Paddy!"

But Mick was not to be consoled. Grimly he departed in Raymond's trail. Their conversation in the taxi consisted of a couple of sentences.

"Give me the tip about the people I ought to know," said Raymond.

"Aye! I'll look out for ye as best I can, boy, but I don't like it."

Raymond echoed the sentiment earnestly to himself, and they arrived with a kind of link established between them. Comrades in misery—that's what they were, and their plight had allied them against the rest of the world.

"You really think people won't know the difference?" Raymond, nervously alighting from the taxicab, asked Mick in a whisper.

"If yer boxing's halfway as near as yer likeness, ye needn't worry."

CHAPTER XIII.

A DREAM FULFILLED.

THUS fortified against appearances at least, Raymond boldly walked into the dressing room. All his adventurous spirit was awake now. If it hadn't been for old Henry back there on his bed, the deception he was practicing, and the uneasiness about being found out, he might have enjoyed himself. The formalities, however, depressed him. He was used to taking off his clothes, jumping into the ring togs, fighting, coming back to a shower, and so home. But here were two white-sweatered men waiting to overhaul and maul him on a rubbing table such as he had never seen.

"Keep yer mouth shut, lad," muttered Mick, "unless you find something to grumble about. That's Paul's way."

Raymond nodded, as he mounted the table. One of the rubbers was automatically massaging his legs.

"Now, my man, away from the heart not toward it," snapped Raymond.

"Sure, Paul! What's got into ye?" Mick backed up his objection, grinning at him.

Raymond found it hard not to grin back. Evidently he had faithfully imitated his twin.

"All right, chief," was all the rubber said.

Soon Mick was summoning them to go. "Time!" Raymond found himself biting his lips and moistening them. If only the night was over! Meantime, Mick was throwing a dressing gown about his shoulders and a towel over his head.

"What's this for?" Raymond had a sudden fear that Mick was afraid of letting his features be seen.

"Doyle always enters that way," said the voice in his ear.

So much the better. He could pretend to see nobody. But, at sight of the huge arena into which he went in the wake of Mick, Raymond drew back involuntarily. He had a glimpse of heads craning on either side of the aisle, along which he walked. Before him a fighter in the preliminaries was being carried through the ropes. He shut his eyes. Would he come back that way? He didn't care about the wounds, but old Harry! What a nightmare this thing was.

He climbed through the green cords and received an enormous ovation. At first he did not realize it was for himself.

"Bow!" shrilled Mick hoarsely.

Raymond bowed. Of course, Paul, as Raymond knew from the newspapers, was immensely popular with the crowd. They could always depend on Paul to give them their money's worth. Besides, hadn't Paul an excellent chance of whipping the champion? The betting—as short as six to five—was evidence of the general feeling.

Raymond sank on the little round stool which a green-coated attendant pushed up for him. Morrissey was coming in now. More roars! Morrissey had been very popular once. His reluctance to fight had hurt him somewhat, but he was still the heavyweight ruler of the boxing world.

Raymond took a peek at him from beneath his towel, but, unimpressed, let his gaze roam to the gallery. Packed house! He could see those little upper sections of seats depending from the roof, it seemed, like hanging gardens. Black as serried rows of white-headed flowers at night, divided by paths, at the head of each of which was a light. Lights flickered across the rows—like fireflies, he thought.

"Cut out that smoking up there!"

It was the voice of Joe Johnson, hitherto enunciating names as loudly as possible.

Names, weights—Raymond heard them in a dream. Was that his weight? He hadn't the vaguest idea. He began to wish it was his own fight, so that he could make his personality felt. He hated sitting thus cowled under another pseudonym. He wanted to tell Billy Hickson, now counseling him, to go to hell. He wanted to look Morrissey's manager in the eye, when this gentleman approached to inspect his bandages. He wanted to be himself, in short, but here was Mick:

"Mind his first rush, lad. He has a wicked left hook. Box him the first few rounds, and he'll tire."

Usually Raymond liked to think out

his own strategy, but to-night he was Paul Doyle, not Raymond Lowell. He glanced over the busy arched back of the industriously rubbing Mick toward the press seats. Who of these experts had called Doyle a "high hat" and written such pleasantly polished sarcasm about him? Who among them had staked their reputations on Doyle's winning, and who on the opposite side? It would be fun to be a bone of contention between these prophets and fool them. He almost wished he was really Doyle. So far he had thought not at all about his chances. What did they matter? Win or lose—he didn't mind. His job was to substitute for his brother. He knew Paul Doyle's methods of fighting. He'd reproduce them as well as he could. Morrissey looked to him like a hairy ape. If old Harry was meeting Morrissey before this mob—say, that would be good! But there were to be no hard feelings, no matter how the fight went. No rotten prize money on either's scalp.

He was summoned to the center of the ring for final instructions, and he reflected:

"If only I could shake that fellow's paw, and say: 'T'hell with the money! Let's just box!' "

Morrissey was a chap with a close-cropped bullet head, a flattened nose, a cauliflower ear, and three days' stubble on his chin. And so square-set was his head on his shoulders that almost no neck appeared.

"With him, I'd——" Raymond was reflecting, retiring to his corner, when the gong sounded.

Morrissey came out with his usual rush. He had a well-found contempt for Doyle's left, Paul's one weak spot. When he ran into this left with one hundred and ninety-five pounds of bone and muscle behind it, he had the surprise of his life. It caught him between the eyes, and it seemed as if his head had been jerked from his shoulders.

HE rushed again and again, but that left landed. No, he hadn't made a mistake. It was a real left, not an accidental one. The writers were already discussing it.

"That's why he didn't want us to see him. Working it up. Good for Paul! Wise boy. He's got a bean on him. Gosh, it's a beaut!"

"Cross yer right, Paul," came the advice from the house.

Morrissey was clearly bewildered. It was Doyle all right, but not the Doyle he had been led to expect. They fell into a clinch, and then Morrissey scored.

Raymond, unused to the professional style of boxing, was all at sea here. Morrissey was a powerful man. He tugged and pulled and used the heel of his glove. The referee was forced to part them continually.

"Keep out of the clinches, boy," said Mick in the corner after the first round. "Box him. But ye're smart, lad. Lord! I didn't think to see the day when some one would take Paul Doyle's place. Got to win for him, laddie. But watch out. I can see ye've not been in this kind of scrap before, but ye've got the makings. Do as ye're bid."

Raymond tried to follow Mick's instructions during the second round, and just about made it even, but in the third Morrissey cleverly drew his lead. He jumped in and sunk right and left to the ribs, left to the jaw and right to the heart. Down went Raymond, but the gong saved him.

"How d'ye feel?" asked Mick before the next round.

"Fine!" said Raymond. "That won't happen again."

If he had been himself, not Paul Doyle. it wouldn't have happened now. He stepped out lightly for the fourth, the spirit of battle in his soul.

He skipped and danced with lightning speed, shooting that ubiquitous left. The spectators were delighted and Morrissey was bewildered. He thought he had learned everything about Paul Doyle, but this guy was not quite the caliber he had expected. Different somehow, and yet it seemed impossible that Doyle, even during weeks of close training, could develop a style so distinct. He complained of it to his manager, saying that some one should have got inside Doyle's training camp. Yah—that was their business. Couldn't they get secret-service men, if

necessary? Or whatever passed for that in boxing circles. He'd been misled about Doyle.

Back in the Palo Hotel two men listened in to the fifth, Major Horan announcing:

"Doyle comes out on his toes, feinting the champion. Doyle lands a left to the face, another and another. The champion is plainly puzzled. Paul has certainly developed a pippin in this mauler. He shoots it again to the champ's face. Morrissey rushes Paul to the ropes. For the first time Paul uncorks a right to the cheek. Paul is faster than ever before and more daring. Champ is blowing. Paul dances in and rips another left to the ear and a right to the breastbone. Champ sits down."

Gong!

"Not my style, Peck," said Henry Lowell weakly. "Not mine. Always more dash than I had. Do you think they can spot it?"

But Peck was only thinking about his pal, in a real ring, meeting a world beater, holding his own.

"Morrissey's got lots of tricks up his sleeve," said Henry.

"Thatta boy!" cried Peck to the radio. And then: "Don't you worry, matey. Didn't I always know he was a champeen in his own right? Don't you worry."

But the tears were pouring from Henry Lowell's haggard face. Suppose they did recognize old Ray!

BACK in the ring once more. Everything going Raymond's way. Morrissey's long lay-off was beginning to tell. The pace set by the challenger was fierce, heartbreaking. The champion's left eye was closed, and his nose was battered. Raymond's lips were twice their usual size, and his body, white usually, showed pink and red streaks.

"Now, me lad," said Mick, "do ye feel all right, still? Ye do? Sure, ye're even better than Paul. Mind me. This is the beginning of the ninth. Morrissey's almost all in. Can ye punch as hard as yer brother?"

"Harder—in the old days."

"Not so old," said Mick generously. "Sure, I mistook ye. Go in and fight him. Trade wallops. An' ye can beat him to it; ye'll knock the heart out of him."

They advanced to the center, Morrissey prepared to find Raymond dancing as usual. He was surprised to see him flat-footed in front of him. Raymond fainted, drew the champion's lead, and crashed a right home to the cheek. Morrissey stormed in, but was checked with a left. They clinched, and this time Raymond was on the offensive. It was he now who did the pulling and hauling. The referee parted them, and they sparred. Then Raymond, with a burst of fury seldom seen, flew at his opponent, backed him to the ropes, rained left and right hooks to the body. Even the judges could hardly count them, so fast they came. Shifting suddenly, he brought his blows to the jaw. The title holder was glassy-eyed. His knees were sagging beneath him.

By the side of the ring men were standing, yelling. Up in the galleries, the regular furrows of garden flowers, as Raymond had visualized them, were broken by bobbing heads and waving arms. Uproar everywhere!

Morrissey's eyes were closed, but he would not go down. The round ended with the champion groping for his corner. His seconds had to rescue him and lead him home. The referee went over to Morrissey's corner, and Raymond could see the latter shaking his head. Evidently Morrissey wanted to go on—wouldn't take an easy way out!

"Plucky!" thought Raymond.

Mick, as busy as ever, was almost singing.

"Ye're great. Go in and finish him now. Just a right to the button, boy, and Paul Doyle is champ."

Raymond smiled, his heart warmed by such loyalty. Even now, Mick was thinking about his brother, not himself. The crowd were yelling for the referee to stop the fight, but that was impossible. If a champion wanted a chance to go on to defend his title, he must get it. Raymond was sorry, as he stepped up to the almost blinded man.

He poked a left to the stomach which brought down the tired arms, and then

deliberately he snapped home a stiff right to the jaw. Down sank Morrissey to be counted out. But he was all the time trying to get to his feet. His legs were powerless, so he couldn't.

Raymond, remembering another less important bout, carried him to his corner. There he shook the beaten man by the hand. He was a good sport.

"Fooled me with that left, Paul," said Morrissey, speaking as if from a great distance.

Raymond felt like a criminal. Paul himself could never have delivered that left. He hadn't got it. He'd have won, of course, but by other methods; nevertheless——

The Garden police cleared a way for him through a milling crowd that checked him in his hurried progress from the arena and almost trampled its own members. The applause of these hardened men waving their hats beside the ring, the cheers of the distant, serried seats—they were intoxicating—or, rather, would have been—had he not been conscious of guilt against Morrissey—against them. He was not a professional, and he didn't want to be. Above all, he was not Paul Doyle. He longed to shout the truth at them, but here was Mick at his elbow—Mick, with his birdlike eyes suffused with tears.

"Boy, he couldn't have done as well, much less better. Lad, it's Paul Doyle will be the proud boy to-night. Sure, he never said anything, but I saw ye that time before. Can't I read him like a book? Worried he was and always asking did I hear anything about a Raymond? Turned ye down that night, didn't he? But he did it for the best. He's not had an aisy moment since. Ye can believe Mick. Don't I know him? A gintleman like yerself, sir. Sh! Here's Hickson!" Raymond had not said a word, but he had heard all.

Well, the score was paid. He had returned to Paul Doyle all he had unconsciously taken from him. The information that old Harry had worried about himself was balm. They were in the dressing room now.

"Tell those men to go, Mick," ordered Raymond, indicating the rubbers.

THEY were driven out, but Hickson stood there, with a sly smile on his face. As the door closed on the others, he said:

"Fine fight, Mr. Lowell."

That name acted as a spur on Raymond.

"May I ask whom you are addressing?" he demanded.

Hickson laughed.

"Think I don't know my own boxer's style? Seen you before, young man, too. I'm no fool." His expression was insolent, but Raymond could afford to be cool. "Where's the Dude?"

"In my apartment at the Palo Hotel, damaged by thugs. Know them? Thought, perhaps, you might. My trousers, Mick!" Raymond dressed leisurely and added: "Think we had better arrange our business with Doyle present."

"Suits me!" Hickson was still impudent.

They drove up, all three, in silence, and Mick was as watchful as a suspicious dog. As Raymond turned the key in the door, he heard a shout from both Peck and Paul.

"Ray, old twin! Couldn't have done it as easily myself. Sure are a winner! Come here!"

Paul was trying to lift himself out of bed, but Raymond stopped him with a look and a nod toward Hickson who was following on his heels.

"Good evening, Paul! So the Lowells fight in couples, eh?" He chuckled, and Mick scowled. "Great story for the papers, Paul! You know the terms of our contract? Don't call for any substitutes. What about this guy?" He jerked his head toward Raymond who stood silent, threatening.

What would Paul say to this crook of a manager?

"Sit down, Hickson. Got the contract with you? Winner's purse, but still only challenger's, so far as money goes."

"Sure—thirty per cent if Paul Doyle fights. But he didn't, eh?"

Henry Lowell sat up straight in his bed.

"And you want?" he asked.

"That remains to be seen."

"Collected the check? Yes? Fine! Now, suppose I make you out my check for fifty per cent. Not satisfied? Pity! You want the championship, Ray? Thought not. Same here."

"What's that got to do with me?" demanded Hickson. "I got a story, and it will sell pretty good, too."

It was Mick who piped up:

"They're born every minit. I knew it wasn't Paul Doyle. So did you. I can swear it. That'll look fine in a story—what?"

The manager still tried to bluster. If they would continue to fight, he'd say nothing about the name of Lowell. They wouldn't? This decision struck him all of a heap.

"I would not be a professional boxer," declared Raymond, "as I told you once before, for all the money in the United States treasury."

"I've no reason to be one now," added Paul. "I've got what I want. Take your fifty per cent and keep silent about this, or what?"

"Bad cess to ye! Can't ye see Paul's tired? Take yer filthy check and go." It was Mick. "If ye don't, well, I know several things."

With a curse, Hickson took it and left. As he got outside the apartment, he smiled, however. He hadn't done so badly at that. Fifty thousand dollars! He was well rid of this dude. Still, he sighed. It was a good story, but in Paul's hand was a paper drawn up by Raymond, signed by Hickson, saying any tale the manager might wish to tell about to-night's fight was blackmail.

"Ray," Paul was saying, "it's yours. Do what you like with it." He was handing over another check for fifty thousand. "I didn't earn it."

Raymond shook his head.

"But you need it for your plans. In any case, I don't need it. I've got a real job. Only helped you out, old man. Never would have gone into that ring otherwise."

They looked at one another, and then each extended a hand.

"Good old Ray!"

"You don't know, Harry!"

"Don't I?"

"I couldn't touch that money."

"Me neither."

In the offing were Mick and Peck, both proud and inclined to be argumentative about the relative merits of their respective masters. It was Henry who jerked a head toward them.

"Fine fellow, Mick," he said.

"Peck, too. Best pal any one ever had. I know."

By tacit agreement they summoned the two in. There was some money to be divided between them. How would they like the checks to be made out? The Lowell brothers did not want the money, and they did want to compensate two faithful companions. Peck and Mick exchanged glances.

"Mick," said Henry, "you know you've always wanted a training camp. How about it?"

"Peck, you're a boxing enthusiast," said Raymond.

The two followers eyed one another.

"Might make a go of it together," said Mick.

"Like to try," said the other. "But we——"

After much persuasion, they were induced to receive the money donated to them jointly. The Lowell brothers as amateurs would be patrons of their boxing school.

IN a mellow, brown library in Boston's Back Bay another scene was reënacted. A little old lady, looking like a ruffed grouse, was crying quite happily. A man, long, lean, clad in a dressing gown, was sitting up, with a certain effort, on a couch. Before them stood their two tall sons.

"Ray has got this awfully good job in South America. It won't be for too long. His boss says he's made good in New York, and he'll send him back. As for me—I'm through with boxing, honorably through Ray. He——" It was Henry speaking. "Dad, did you listen in over the radio? I could never have done it. That——"

"Shut up," said Raymond. "Mother, everything is all right. Old Harry can go on for his profession, and I've got a real billet."

"But I want you both at home, Ray. You've been so fine. I know, for your father has explained."

"We'll be home, mater. Just another little spell. All right, dad?"

His hand pressed again on a twitching shoulder that quieted under his touch.

"All right, son. Man you are. Proved it. Henry, too. Come home soon. But I'll be here, and your mother. We are both happy now."

Raymond smiled.

"I'll be home."

So he left, a dream fulfilled.

The book-length novel in the next issue of THE POPULAR *is called "Faked Evidence." When we tell you that the author is Henry C. Rowland you will not need to be reminded that here is one of the best stories to be found in any magazine for the year 1927. Here is Rowland at his best, and you know as well as we that means a full-blooded, human story, warm with sympathy and beautiful with truth.*

THE RED MAN'S VICTORY

THIS ought to be called the return of the red man, because it certainly does offer a splendid opportunity to any one who wants to make one of those perennial predictions. Out in Chamberlain, South Dakota, a full county ticket of Indian candidates was victorious during the recent elections. They say this is the first time in American history that such a thing has happened. Of late years we have seen Indian athletes, scholars and professionals; but there have been very few, if any, who have successfully ventured into political offices.

"But what is the use," says one of the elected men, "of the government educating the Indians if they are not to take their proper place in the affairs of the country?"

All of the victors are the equals of their political contemporaries in the matter of qualification for the positions to which they have won. Indeed, to at least one of the men, Thomas Tuttle, who is now county commissioner, his participation in official affairs is no novelty. In the days of General Custer he was an issue clerk, and has since been a member of his tribal council not only at home but at Washington.

The offices filled in the elections were: clerk of court, auditor, register of deeds, and county commissioner.

AN INDIAN POINT OF VIEW

THE attitude of the Indian toward his squaw is not, from his point of view, a cruel one, although we palefaces may not regard it as admirable or suited to our own customs. Very few of us, after all, are pioneers in our own conventions, and the Indian is no exception. He follows the habit in which he was raised, and in which his ancestors were raised. Therefore, his squaw does the hardest work as a matter of course, and both she and her lordly master unquestioningly accept the custom. Now, what would happen if an Indian were upbraided or questioned about such a condition? There happens to be an interesting case in point. An Indian was traveling in the Mojave Desert on horseback; and back of him, trudging along with a fat papoose on her back, laden with baggage and taking the dust from the horse's heels, was the squaw. The little caravan proceeded toward its destination, just as thousands of others had doubtless done for countless years. Enter the representative of civilization, a gallant and chivalrous American. Highly indignant at the Indian, he stopped his automobile and called out: "Say, you. What's the idea—your wife walking in the desert like that?" The Indian glanced at him calmly. "She ain't got no horse," he said, and rode on.

Red Moon

By Robert McBlair

Author of "The Ace of Spades," "Dollar Billy," Etc.

When the moon assumed that color, the Indian legend ran, some mortal would die. Although Ben Tolliver did not attach too much importance to superstitions—for an engineer, however romantic, must be practical—he did feel that the trend of events pointed to a climax.

CHAPTER I.

AN INDIAN PROPHECY.

THEY say it is a good rule not to interfere in a fight between a husband and his wife. I reckon that is a particularly good rule when the husband is a man like Lafe Holman, who takes pride in the fact that it only cost him three hundred dollars, for lawyer's fees and jury bribes, to get off scot-free for killing those two men—one in Kenova in April, and the other in the fall, at the Stone Coal Barroom. I mean, Lafe Holman was the sort of man who took a pride in that sort of thing. He would brag about it. I knew when I butted in that I was inviting trouble.

And afterward I realized, from the look in his little pig eye, that it was just a matter of time before he arranged to get me. That is, unless somebody got him first. He nursed his grudges; and, being a native of these wild West Virginia mountains, he knew that in any trouble with a "furriner" he could count upon a jury's sympathy.

I don't know that you could call it a fight. We were sitting around the oilcloth-covered table in Holman's shack, just finishing dinner. Looking past Holman's bullet head and heavy shoulders, I could see through the window the slanting rays of the sun gilding the boles of the hemlocks on the mountain across the river. The Indian woman had just put a tin pot of fresh coffee on the cracked plate at Holman's elbow and, as quiet as a cat, had disappeared again into the kitchen.

My mind was far away. The construction of the railroad tunnel had got to a stage where very little engineering work was needed. Two of us could give

them the occasional center points and levels which they required; in a pinch, one of us could do it. My rodsman was off on his vacation; he would get back in the morning, and I had packed my bag for a week's vacation in the city of Huntington. Celia Dabney lived in Huntington, but I wasn't going to let myself go to see her while I was there. Three months ago we had had it out. I had wanted her to marry me and come back to the mountains to live, while the tunnel was being completed.

"No, Ben," she had said; "I will never live in the mountains."

"Why?" I had demanded.

"There is a reason," she replied. And that was all I could get out of her.

I had made an issue of it. We had argued it out, each growing more stubborn. I said that my work was in the West Virginia mountains at present, and if she felt the right way toward me she would go where I went, and be glad to do it. She retorted that if I really cared for her I wouldn't ask her to do something she had a good reason for not doing. I replied that if she really cared for me she would tell me what the reason was. I went to some pains to show her how foolish she was, but Celia is the kind of person who, if you try to show her she's foolish, only gets mad. She can't reason things out like a man.

Presently she became so unreasonable that I got mad, too. I took my hat and told her that if she ever got tired of being a stubborn old maid she could get on the train and come to look me up in the mountains, and I might be willing to marry her. Instead of appreciating this, she got mad all over again. As I was going out of the front door she hollered after me that if she had to choose between being an old maid and marrying me, she'd be an old maid forever.

This wasn't nice of her. She lives at Mrs. Cooper's boarding house in Huntington, and there were a lot of the boarders on the porch at the time, and they heard her. I mean, it made it sound like she was giving me the gate, which wasn't the case, any more than I was giving her the gate. So I was mad, and I came back to camp and didn't write to her or anything. And I decided that when I went on my vacation to Huntington I wasn't going to look her up at all. I didn't know what would happen if I chanced to run into her on the street.

So I wasn't paying much attention to Lafe Holman and his queer wife, as we sat around the red oilcloth waiting for another cup of coffee before leaving the table. I was brought back to the present by something strange in Lafe Holman's voice.

"We'll leave it to Ben, here, to decide," he said.

HE was leaning over the table so that the muscular arm in his black shirt pressed against the handle of the coffeepot. There was a shine of perspiration on his narrow, receding forehead, and his small black eyes, set close together between his pointed, pock-marked nose, glared at his wife, as in some furious emotion. She shrank back in her chair, and, as they looked tensely at each other, her emaciated white hand rose slowly from her lap and clutched at the blue-and-white calico blouse, where it buttoned over her scrawny bosom.

"Ah!" exclaimed Holman, as he caught her wrist and dragged her toward him. The coffeepot went over, fortunately on the floor, as Holman reached his free hand into her dress and snatched forth a folded paper. The woman gave a cry and tried to regain it, but succeeded in tearing off only a tiny corner before he thrust her back to her seat and began unfolding it on the oilcloth. She looked down at the piece of paper, the size of a dime, between her thumb and forefinger; then she put it between her palms and held her hands, in the attitude of prayer, against her breast. Her trembling lips were pressed against her joined finger tips, as she watched her husband out of the side of her large, violet eyes.

He was oblivious of both of us. His pale, pointed face on the powerful neck was bent over the paper. His thin lips were moving, as his short, blunt forefinger traced the words. Once he caught his breath and looked up at her, his face purpling with a sudden anger. There was something brutal and overpowering

in his aspect, but she didn't quiver. She merely sighed and let her hands fall to the table. For the first time I noticed that there was something unusual about the woman. There were wrinkled bags beneath her eyes, her face was prematurely lined, and her dark hair, streaked with gray, hung in oily coils and wisps about her sunken temples. But her skin, despite its indoor pallor, was of a finer texture than the skin found in the mountain women, and there was the hint of a vanished beauty to the outline of her straight nose and the curve of her chin. In fact, there was something vaguely familiar about her profile, and it gave me a start to realize that I had never really observed the woman before.

The reason was that she very seldom came to the table. My assistant and I rented the adjoining shack from Lafe Holman and took our meals with him. The handsome Indian woman did the cooking and served us, and Lafe's wife very seldom stirred from her large bedroom in the opposite end of the one-storied, unpainted wooden dwelling. There had been some gossip to the effect that she owned the house and land and had known better times back East. It seemed to me, as I observed the blue veins through the fine skin of her long thin hands, that I recalled some legend of her having stepped off the midnight train, crazed with drugs, and that Lafe Holman, now the tunnel watchman, had taken care of her.

In fact, that had been put down as the one thing to Lafe Holman's credit. I mean, that they had married, and that Holman had stuck by her and had kept away inquisitive visitors, and for years and years had supplied her with some patent medicine which seemed to afford her the stimulation which she craved. The stocky, primitive man at the foot of the table and this woman made a curious pair. It was like the mating of an antlered doe of the ranges with a razorback mountain pig. And now at last, in some mysterious quarrel, the wild pig was showing his tusks.

"So," said Holman, folding up the paper again and hunching down in his chair, "it's like Bateman said, eh? And if he hadn't told me, you'd 'a' got away with it, wouldn't you? I suppose you was figurin' on sneakin' off and dyin' and leavin' me to find this out too late?"

THE woman straightened her shoulders and turned to me; she looked me over slowly, from the part in the side of my crisp black hair, down to where the khaki coat over my blue-flannel shirt disappeared under the red oilcloth of the table. There was something in that look which made me wish I was a better-looking and better-dressed man. I felt sorry that, no matter how close I shaved, there was a bluish look about my chin. I wished that my eyebrows weren't so heavy, and that my eyelashes didn't make it seem like there was a ring of soot around my blue eyes. To tell the honest truth, I actually felt to see if my tie was on straight, and I actually blushed when I found I didn't have one on. Then she turned back to Lafe Holman.

"I owe you nothing," she said. Her voice, hoarse as from disuse, had a cultivated quality, edged with contempt. "I have kept to my bargain, and you have kept to yours. You married me and arranged for my—conveniences. I provided you with house and land and money for our living. Ours was a business bargain and nothing else. When I die the partnership ends." She laughed icily, and her voice dropped a note. "Surely, Mr. Holman, you were not counting upon continuing our partnership beyond the grave!"

Lafe Holman's small black eyes were fixed upon her in the expression of one upon whom some truth is just dawning. A flush rose from the thick neck and slowly purpled the pale, pock-marked skin. He leaned gradually forward in the chair; you could almost see him bristle, like a wild pig facing danger. A large paste diamond flashed on his extended stub of a forefinger and made you notice the broken and dirty nail.

"I been lookin' out for your wants for nigh ten years," he announced in a voice furred with rage. "You think I've liked it? I like the city. I like some bright lights in my life—more than you can get in these God-forsaken hills, snowed in

from November to April. I been expectin'——"

"Dead men's shoes," she murmured, as he paused.

"Yes, by God!" he cried and struck the table.

"For yourself alone?" she inquired, smiling curiously.

"Yes," he said and struck the table again.

The Indian girl came noiselessly out of the kitchen door behind Lafe Holman and stooped to pick up the coffeepot. He didn't see her until she was rising with the shining tin in her hand. He started and watched her until she had returned to the other room as soundlessly as she had come.

"Yes, dead men's shoes," Holman repeated, turning back to his wife. "Ain't I entitled to it, after these years? I'll leave it to Ben, here. What business have you got willin' everything to a kid you wouldn't even know if you saw her before you?"

The woman shrank, as if he had struck her, and he leaned farther over the red oilcloth of the table, a sneer disclosing the gleam of two gold canine teeth.

"And if she saw you," he said, "she'd likely pass you on the road without speakin'."

The woman rose to her feet so abruptly that the wooden chair fell over backward. She stood straight, with her hands clenched at the sides of the baggy calico dress. Her thin figure trembled from head to foot.

"This is our last conversation," she said arrogantly and would have swept past him, if he had not jumped up and caught her wrist.

"Like hell it is!" he grated, swinging her around to face him. "You'll change this before you die, or, by God——"

He didn't finish his sentence, but slowly and with increasing force twisted her arm till she was bent sideways and had to elevate her chin to keep her defiant eyes upon him. I had stood for this; after all, it was none of my business; but when he twisted her arm farther, and a low cry escaped her pale lips, I stood up and stepped around the table between them.

"Don't do that, Holman!" I said sharply.

He paid me no attention, and I caught his shoulder and forced him back over the table. He still held her wrist; his other hand was braced upon the rumpled oilcloth; and, leaning back there, his chin thrust forward over his powerful chest, he turned on me the venom of his small black eyes.

"Take your hand off my shoulder, Ben Tolliver," he commanded in almost a whisper.

I could sense his thoughts. I mean, he was in a killing rage, but his gun was in the shoulder holster hanging on the wall with his coat, and he wasn't the sort that fights with his fists.

"I'm not going to stand by and see you hurt a woman," I said, and I didn't budge.

WE stood that way for perhaps a minute before he released her, and I stepped back. He took a deep breath and sat against the table, folding his muscular arms across his swelling chest. His face was deathly pale and his eyes were on the floor. There was something inhuman about the silent intensity of his anger. I was toting a gun, and I wasn't bothered about him for the moment; but I didn't feel comfortable at having aroused that kind of hate against myself.

"Thank you, Mr. Tolliver!" said this woman who had entered into the shell of a marriage with him for their mutual convenience.

She was very straight and dignified, in spite of the tousled hair and her baggy, calico dress, but her face was so pale as to seem transparent. She turned toward the kitchen, her head held high, and paused, with an arrogant gesture toward the Indian girl who stood partly blocking the doorway. The Indian girl, hands clasped limply against the beaded deerskin dress, regarded her proudly and impassively and did not move. Mrs. Lafe Holman, drawing her calico skirt close about her, as if to avoid contamination, swept through the door, and a moment later there was the sound of the door to the farther room slamming shut.

"Look here, Holman," I said. "I have

heard you threaten your wife. I don't know what the fuss is about, and it's none of my business, but I'm not going to see you abuse that sort of woman, and I don't believe the men at the construction camp would like it, either."

I didn't want any trouble with the fellow, but I knew that he would take any move toward conciliation as a sign of weakness.

"I am going away to-night, as I told you, on my vacation. I'll be back in a week."

Then I waited a moment for some reply, but he merely lifted his bullet head and turned his little black eyes slowly toward the holster on the wall. There was nothing more to be said, so I whirled on my heel and went out of doors. I didn't look back, but I admit that I felt uncomfortable between the shoulder blades, as I walked along the weedy path to the pine shack where I and my assistant slept, and I was relieved when I was at last inside of it.

I unlaced my high leather boots, took off my work clothes, and, after a cold sponge in the dented, tin basin—during which I looked forward to the nice warm water at the hotel in Huntington—changed into business clothes. When at length I emerged into the cool evening of early fall, the sun had gone down, a few pale stars pricked the cloud-spotted eastern sky, and across the river, on the sharply silhouetted summit of Twisted Gun Gap, a round red moon rested like a copper dish. I took the longer path down the hill, to avoid passing by the Holman house, and I was surprised to find around the first turn the Indian girl ahead of me, standing motionless on a rock, one hand resting against the trunk of a cedar, her broad shoulders and her black head, with its two long braids, outlined against the glimmer of the yellow river. Her back was toward me, and she started in surprise, as I reached her.

I don't recall that she had ever spoken to me before; she was silent even in attending to our wants at the table. But, after looking down at me for a moment from her perch on the rock, she raised her slim arm and pointed toward Twisted Gun Gap.

"Red moon," she said softly. "Somebody—he die!"

Never had I heard that saying before. The two or three Indians in the county —remnants of the tribes that had perished or fled westward centuries earlier—still preserved some of their sayings and legends. I recalled that there was some Indian legend which accounted for the name of Lover's Leap, which had been given to a shelf of rock overhanging the rapids beyond Twisted Gun Gap. As I stood looking at the young Indian woman, whose soft oval face was tinted to a hue of ruddy olive by the rising moon, I thought that these rushing rapids and rocky hills belonged more truly to her than to me. There was something resigned and inscrutable in her slit eyes shining down at me. I could think of no reply to her prophecy, and, shifting my suit case to the other hand, I continued on my way to the train.

CHAPTER II.

THE DOCTOR'S PRESCRIPTION.

TO tell the truth, I didn't have a very good time on my vacation in the city. I kept to my determination not to go to see Celia Dabney, and that resolution messed things up. I mean, you can't have a good time if something is always on your mind. Not that I wanted to see her, or anything like that. It was just that I couldn't stop thinking about the fact that I was there, and that I wasn't going to see her. When I left the hotel and went downtown, I was always afraid I would run into her. Not afraid, exactly; sometimes I wished that I *would* run into her; but it kept me busy thinking just what I would say and how I would say it to show her that I hadn't been having her in my mind at all.

I looked up some of the fellows I knew. Most of them had girls, however, whom they saw in the evening, and those that didn't have girls wanted to go to some speak-easy and drink a lot of moonshine. I tried that once or twice, but the booze didn't work on me. I mean, instead of making me happy and feel good, it only made me feel worse. At last, I decided I must have something

the matter with me, so I went to a doctor, the best one in town. He thumped me and listened to me with things in his ears, and took a lot of tests; stuck a pin in my ear, I remember, and drew out a drop of blood. And, after he was all finished, he said I was the healthiest man he had ever seen.

Then he asked me if I was worrying about anything. I explained to him that I had no immediate anxieties; that my work was going fine, and I was in line for promotion, and had some money in the bank. Finally he asked me:

"Are you married?"

When I replied in the negative, he said:

"Well, then, have you had a fuss with your girl?"

"I did have a fuss with a girl, but that was three whole months ago, and, besides, the world is full of girls, and one is as good as another, so a man wouldn't worry himself about a girl."

He grinned and turned around to his desk and wrote out a prescription. I paid him his five dollars and went out of the office. And who should I run smack into on the sidewalk but Celia Dabney!

She was as surprised as I was. She went kind of white.

"Hello, Celia!"

I tried to act casual, but it is hard for me to act casual when she looks at me with her eyes. I mean, they are a sort of melting brown, and just now she was trying to find out something with them. She stared at me with her red mouth drooped and solemn. The top of her little, tight-fitting black hat came up about to my lips. She looked so small and trim in the brown-cloth dress and tiny, brown, high-heeled shoes that I wanted to take her in my arms and protect her. From what? From anything that came along. I was willing to bury the hatchet and smoke the pipe of peace.

"I'm certainly glad to see you, Celia," I said, and I meant it.

"I am sure you are," she said. "That's why you've been here a week without looking me up. Good day, Mr. Tolliver."

Then, before I could say "Jack Robinson" she had clipped off down the street. I might have gone after her, but a fellow took off his hat to her, and she stopped and talked to him, like he was a long lost child or something. Put her hand in his arm, and they went into a drug store together. I passed by and glanced in, and there they were, sitting up at the soda counter together, and Celia was smiling up at him. If I had had a gun I might have shot somebody. Well, that's the way women are.

THEN I walked to the hotel and went up to my room and lay on the bed. I began to feel rotten again, and I remembered that prescription from the doctor. I fished it out of my vest. It was on a printed slip of paper, with the doctor's name and address at the top, and under that an "R" with an "X" hitched onto it. The doctor had written:

"Go and make things up with her, young man."

Maybe I wasn't sore! For ten cents I would have gone back and punched him in the nose and made him give me my five dollars back. A fine doctor, that was! How in the heck was I going to make up with her, and what did that have to do with medicine, anyway? I was sick and tired of this town. So, instead of going down and punching the doctor, I began to pack my bag. I took it downstairs with me and, after I had settled my bill and had a big lunch, I went down to the railroad station and bought a ticket for the one-thirty train back to Damron. So long as I was on vacation, I decided that I would get a seat in the Pullman, too. It was twenty minutes before train time, but the gates were open, so I invested in a couple of magazines and climbed aboard.

The Pullman was pretty well filled by the time the conductor called: "All aboard!" Just as the train was starting, I heard the colored porter saying:

"Here you are, lady. Chair fourteen."

He swung a little black bag beside the chair opposite mine, and the next thing I knew two tiny, brown, high-heeled shoes and trim ankles were located beside the bag. I looked up, and there was Celia, looking at me. Her mouth was solemn, but there was a mischievous light in her eyes.

"So, Mr. Tolliver," she says, "you are following me again, are you?"

"I certainly am not!" I said indignantly.

Then what do you think she did? She laughed right out loud. In fact, she began to giggle so she almost had hysterics.

"Where are you going?" I demanded.

"I am going to Damron," she said.

"Where?"

"Damron, sir."

"But that's where I'm going; that's where the camp is!"

"So I've heard," said Celia and giggled again.

"Did you know I was on this train?"

"No, sir."

"Then what are you going to Damron for?"

A cloud came over her face, but only for a moment.

"On business," she said.

"Look here, Celia. Damron's no place for you to be going. There's nothing there but a tunnel-construction camp, a corner store, and a few log cabins. What is this business?"

I reckon I spoke rather sharply.

"My business," said Celia.

And that was that. I got sore and went back to my magazine. But in a few minutes I felt a touch on my arm, and she was holding out a letter for me to read. I took it. It was typed on a sheet of heavy, cream-colored paper, with the name "Morris Bateman" printed in blue at the top. It was dated the first of September.

MY DEAR MISS DABNEY: I have the honor to inform you that, as executor of the last will and testament of Mrs. Celia D. Holman, recently deceased, I am filing the same for probate to-day and have sent you under separate cover by registered mail a notice to the effect that you are the sole legatee.

The purpose of this present communication, which I am also registering, is to relieve myself of an important responsibility. Aside from a parcel of land at Damron, West Virginia, improved by two frame one-story houses, and known as the Lafe Holman place, the main value of the estate lies in an option which the decedent has never exercised, and which expires on September 3d. This option, if exercised, possesses the estate of very valuable coal and timber rights and also completes the purchase of the Lafe Holman place, which otherwise reverts back to its prior owners. The estate is in possession of sufficient funds to take up this option, but they must be presented in cash at Damron not later than the 3d.

I suggest that you meet me in Damron on the 2d for the reading of the will and for carrying out the option. I tell you frankly that, if this option is not exercised by the estate, the aforementioned valuable timber and coal rights will unquestionably fall into other hands. My function as executor terminates after I deliver certain accounts to you on the 2d. In the meanwhile, I have fulfilled my legal obligations by acquainting you with the situation in time for you to act.

Respectfully, MORRIS BATEMAN.

I lowered the letter and stared at Celia. I felt like I was looking at a person I had never seen before. She had told me that her father and mother had been divorced, and that her father had died several years ago, and that she had made her own living for some time. Recently she had been talking of going into the millinery business for herself. But it made her seem like a new person to be associated in any way with Lafe Holman and his wife.

I didn't like it much. And then it came over me suddenly how Lafe Holman had threatened his wife, and now she was dead. Mrs. Holman had been such a ghostly figure for so long—staying in her room and being seen only at long intervals, as a pallid invalid—that I suppose every one had been expecting her to die any time, and the news hadn't surprised me at first.

"What on earth's the matter?" Celia cried.

"Nothing," I said, swallowing.

I didn't want to scare her, and, besides, I had only my suspicions; Mrs. Holman might have died of natural causes.

"Where are you going to stay?" I wanted to know.

"At the Lafe Holman place, of course. It's mine."

"That's no place for you," I said positively. "I live there, and I know. I'll get the contractor to put you up over the commissary, with his wife. And

this," I added, putting the letter in my pocket, "I will take care of for you."

She reached over and snatched the letter out of my pocket.

"I am staying at my place," she repeated, "and as for this, I will take care of it for myself."

"Now, don't be stupid, Celia. You know you don't know anything about business."

She stamped her foot. She looked mighty pretty with her color suddenly high and her dark eyes snapping.

"Don't you dare call me stupid! And don't you dare give me any advice or meddle in my affairs. I'm sick and tired of being treated as if I were a child or a fool. Maybe girls used to be like that, but now things are different."

"Now, honey," I said, "don't be silly. You know that men——"

I didn't finish, because she twirled her chair around so that I was looking at its green back, with the little Pullman napkin buttoned over it. I couldn't see her at all. She wouldn't listen, even when I was putting her right and wanting to help her out. Well, you see, that's the way women are.

The conductor came around for our tickets. She had to wheel about to get hers out of her hand bag, which was lying on her satchel, and I passed it on to the conductor, who gave the stubs back to me. Without thinking, I put them in my pocket.

"I'll take mine, please," said Celia sharply.

"All right, take it!" I snapped.

Gosh! She could make me mad. I fished in my pocket and handed her one of the pieces of paper. But, as soon as I had done it, I saw that it was a white piece of paper and not the Pullman stub. She opened it, looked surprised, and then began to grin, as she handed it back.

"This isn't my ticket," she said.

I looked and saw that I had handed her the prescription of that fool doctor. The words looked a foot high: "Go and make things up with her, young man."

I felt my face go hot. She kept on staring at me, and suddenly she began to giggle so hard that she had to bend over and hide her face. Gosh! She could make me mad! That's the way a girl does, you see, when she hasn't got any use for a fellow. It was my turn to wheel a chair around. I tried to read a magazine, with my back to her, and I didn't speak to her again until the brakeman hollered:

"Damron—Damron! All out for Damron!"

"Here we are," I said.

I took her bag in one hand and mine in the other and led the way off the train. I dropped the bags outside on the red-clay platform and helped Celia down. And the first person I saw after I took up the bags again, was Lafe Holman. He was all dressed up in a black-alpaca suit, a black shirt with a white string tie and a diamond pin, patent-leather shoes and a black Stetson hat. I reckon he figured that he was wearing mourning clothes. Anyhow, the alpaca coat was so light that you could see the outline of his shoulder holster perfectly plain. And I didn't like the way his pale, pock-marked face was turned kind of the other way, while his black, little pig eye watched Celia and me like a hawk.

CHAPTER III.

PAST AND PRESENT.

SEEING Lafe Holman standing there, sort of woke me up. He was looking at Celia defensively, alertly, but at the same time something of the animal was shining through. His stocky, piglike figure in the slick shoes and pressed black suit had something hateful about it to me. I remembered the last scene between himself and his wife. He had become aroused to the killing point, almost, at the prospect of losing her property. And now, for some reason, it had been willed to Celia. There was something in his pointed, pock-marked face which told me that Lafe Holman hadn't given up yet.

"There's Lafe Holman over there," I said to Celia. "I think you'd better go to the commissary to stay, as I suggested. There's no one at his place except Holman and an Indian woman."

"I thought you lived there?" she retorted.

"Well, yes. Myself and my assistant live in the shack by the main house."

"If you can do it I can do it," said Celia. "What's that funny thing? And where is that little engine going?"

"That's the concrete mixer. And the dummy engine is taking the concrete car back into the tunnel, now that our train has gone through. Those colored men on top will shovel the concrete into the wooden forms inside the tunnel. When the concrete has set, the forms will be taken down, and the tunnel will be finished."

She stood and looked about her. The dummy engine, obscured by its own smoke, was just disappearing into the mouth of the tunnel which we had blown into the base of the low, green mountain. Above, on the left, the colored laborers, dripping with perspiration, were swinging sledges, drilling the dynamite holes in the rock quarry. The rock crusher filled the sunny autumn afternoon with an incessant rumble. Celia turned slowly around to look at the scene. The glistening rails followed the bridge, which arched above the foaming yellow river, and twisted out of sight around the spur from Twisted Gun Gap. I explained to her that the little box at the bridge end was the telegrapher's shack, and that he lived in the other little box up on the hillside.

"But I thought this was a town! There are no houses!"

"The tunnel workers bunk up by the commissary," I told her. "I live at the Holman place. Aside from this crossroads store, where Lafe is standing, there aren't many buildings—that's a fact. See that road winding around the mountain, following the river? There are a few clearings and log cabins along that. The nearest town is Gatlinville—to get there you have to go on foot over Twisted Gun Gap. Of course, to the east, there's Bluefield by train, and Kenova to the west by train. That reminds me. They are blowing for the dummy engine to come out again. The Bluefield train is coming. Hear that whistle? I imagine Morris Bateman will be on that, if he said he'd meet you here to-day. Suppose we wait and see."

IN a few minutes the Bluefield train appeared around the curve and approached across the bridge, with a thunder and hissing, the locomotive bell clanging steadily for the crossing. It stopped with its fender at the tunnel's mouth, panting and radiating heat. The door of the Pullman, behind us, clapped open, the white-coated porter emerged, carrying a small leather bag, dropped his step box, and waited. Presently he was followed to the ground by a wizened, but active, wiry little man of middle age, wearing a spinach-green fedora, a reddish-brown suit, a red tie, and tan Oxfords. He took the bag from the porter and gave him a coin. The negro looked for a long moment at the coin lying on his extended palm and then cast after his passenger a glance of mournfulness and reproach. This incident and the man's appearance served to confirm me in thinking that this was Morris Bateman, a man about whom many legends clustered.

Curiously I watched him as he approached, glancing with birdlike eagerness here and there through the gold-rimmed spectacles which gleamed on his narrow, parrotlike nose. Originally a mountaineer boy, who acquired a meager legal education from a county lawyer, he was reputed to have become well to do through his foresight in acquiring options on the timber and coal and mineral rights of the land owned by the natives. The coming of the railroad had given a value to such holdings.

It is, perhaps, a commentary on Bateman's methods in acquiring these rights to say that when he ran for the legislature, having been picked by the Republican committee on account of his business prominence, mountaineers who had never voted before walked for miles to vote; Bateman was snowed under, and his county went Democratic for the first time in eighty years. This was the more remarkable as he had no personal weaknesses or faults, unless miserliness could come under that head.

"Is this Miss Dabney," he asked, stopping to peer at Celia with cold gray eyes. "My name's Bateman. And there's Lafe Holman. Hey—Lafe!" he

shouted, waving a knotty hand. "Come over here! And this gentleman?"

"This is Mr. Ben Tolliver," said Celia. "He's my business adviser," she added, giving me a wicked glance.

"Lafe," said Bateman, "this is Miss Dabney, and this is Mr. Tolliver, her business adviser. Suppose we go to your place, where we can all set down and get this business done."

"Pleased to meet you, Miss Dabney."

Lafe Holman smirked and took off his hat, stood moistening his thin lips and looking at Celia in a way that made me want to hit him. He caught me looking at him, and his little black eyes hardened. He turned off down the red-clay road, Bateman fell in step beside him and Celia, and I brought up the rear. It was a beautiful, clear day, with just a faint haze purpling the distant hills that wound in graceful convolutions around the green valley. We passed the corner store and, following the road up the river, came in a few minutes to the Holman path. Celia was drinking it all in and she asked me several questions about the size of the Holman holdings and the likely value of the timber rights and the coal vein, outcroppings of which we could see occasionally on the side of the steep hill, as we went up the path.

THE main house was a frame affair, covered with tar paper, held on by vertical rows of lath, and roofed in the same manner. Beyond the pump and the wellhead of field rock, beside the sagging wooden porch, could be seen the one-room, unpainted pine shack, roofed with tar paper, where I and my assistant slept. These two dwellings stood alone on a shelf of land above the road, a little rock-strewn tract of perhaps an acre, overgrown with sumac bushes, now red with berries, and long, yellowing grass. Behind it rose the low mountain, the turning elms and beeches and maples spluttering scarlet and gold against the dark-green background of the thick growth of hemlocks.

We went into the house. Morris Bateman dropped his bag on the oilcloth table cover of the first room, opened it, and took out a Manila folder containing papers. We sat down in the homemade chairs, and Bateman, rubbing a knotty hand over his creased and leathery clean-shaven countenance, turned to Celia.

"This is a short horse, Miss Dabney," he said in his harsh, high voice. "Let's curry him quick. I reckon you know the story of the past. We'll end it here and now."

"I should like to hear the whole story," said Celia, looking at me. "I scarcely remember my mother, Mr. Bateman. I haven't seen her since I was a baby. She and my father, as you may know, were divorced a long time ago, and he brought me up."

"All I know," said Mr. Bateman, "is that Mrs. Holman, who was then Mrs. Dabney, called me in about drawing up some papers. She was a sick woman, Miss Dabney. That was in the days when the old wood-burning locomotive pulled the freight and passengers, all in one train, around the bank of the river. There wa'n't any tunnels. Some folks said she fell off that train on a purpose that night. Anyway, Wade Damron found her beside the track in the rain. He and Mrs. Damron was taking care of her over the corner store. They had got word down the line and had her trunks and bags sent back. She was too sick to move, and, besides, she didn't want to move. I mean, she didn't want to go again into what she called 'the outside world.' I reckon she counted on passing out pretty soon. And she didn't want to be a burden on the Damrons, neither. So she made a deal with Lafe Holman, and they called me in from up here at Naugatuck, where I was living then, to draw up the papers."

Mr. Bateman took a handkerchief from a hip pocket and wiped his lips. Then he brought out a paper from the Manila folder.

"Here's the contract, right here. She paid Holman five thousand five hundred spot cash down. He was to add a big room onto this here room where we are sitting. He was to provide her with what she called her conveniences. I reckon that mostly meant certain drugs which she knew how to get hold of. He was to see that she was served with proper food

and kept free from annoyances, by which she meant visitors. If he kept up his end, she was to pay him two thousand a year for board and lodging."

Mr. Bateman paused and cleared his throat.

"The first five thousand," he continued, "was first payment on the purchase of the Holman place. At the end of eight years, she was to have the privilege of paying five thousand more, in which event the title would pass finally to her. If she didn't make this last payment, the Holman place would revert to Lafe Holman."

I whistled in astonishment.

"She must have been sick, all right!" I exclaimed. "Why, at that time the whole Holman place, including the buildings he added, wouldn't have been worth two thousand dollars. It wasn't until they found coal over at Tug River that——"

"That's neither here nor there," Mr. Bateman interrupted quickly. "We are confronted with the fact that Miss Dabney must pay Lafe Holman, under the contract, five thousand dollars in cash, not later than sundown of the third of September, which, of course, is to-morrow. There is a little more than that much money on deposit to Mrs. Holman's account in the bank at Gatlinville; that is, in fact, the entire estate, with the exception of this option. Miss Dabney may, of course, if she chooses, let the option lapse and take the bank balance for herself. I hereby present Miss Dabney with the power of attorney, transferring my authority in the matter of the bank balance to her. My job is over."

Mr. Bateman returned the Manila folder to the bag, which he carefully locked, and rose to his feet.

"Well, then," said Celia, rising briskly, a peculiar smile on her piquant young face, "I can give Mr. Holman a check right now and conclude the purchase of this property."

Lafe Holman, tilted back in the chair, the black hat in his lap and his muscular arms folded over his powerful chest, kept his little pig eyes on the floor.

"The contract calls for cash," he replied. "This here proppity is worth a mint of money now. Wa'n't for this here contract," he added, his anger rising, "I could sell out to the coal people and git clear of these here mountains!" He glanced guardedly at the kitchen door and lowered his voice, as he added, sullenly: "I got to have the cash, not no checks."

"Don't forget," said Celia, her brown eyes snapping, "that this contract was your idea, not my mother's. You evidently expected to get the first payment, which was worth more than the land, and then get the land back for nothing. You probably figured she wouldn't last, and——"

"It was Bateman's idea," snarled Holman, turning his pale, pock-marked face toward the lawyer, who was smiling coldly. "He planned to let her carry the option for years, till he got round to buying it off of her. She told me he had come to try and buy it just last month. She told him she had willed it to her daughter. And then Bateman come and told me what she had told him. It was one of his schemes. He wants this land himself!"

"Miss Dabney," said Bateman, ignoring Holman's angry glare, "it would seem necessary for you to provide the cash. I am going over to Gatlinville to-morrow to do a little banking, and if you and your friend will be ready to start at eight in the morning, I shall be very glad to show you the way over the Twisted Gun Gap trail. I can also arrange with the bank to provide for you an armed messenger to bring the cash back."

"By God, I remember now!" cried Lafe Holman, jumping up and striking the table. "He come to me two years ago, when I was busted and feeling rotten after a spree, and he give me a hundred dollars for a sixty-day option on the property at the same terms, to begin after the other one expired! He's after it himself!"

"Be reasonable, Lafe."

Morris Bateman showed his sharp, yellow teeth in a smile which did not rise as high as the cold gray eyes behind the spectacles. "I lost a hundred dollars, and you made it. My option is worth nothing at all, now that Miss Dabney has

appeared to complete the original contract. After I learned that she had sent copies of her will to Sheriff Hadfield and to the county clerk, asking them to keep them as a record, I suggested that you try to get her to change it voluntarily. I wanted you to have your property. Lafe."

"I know you," Holman repeated, breathing hard. "You are after it yourself, if she don't get it. By God, I'm goin' to tell you something. And you, too, Tolliver! This is my land." His short, blunt hand, flashing a diamond, came up and patted the outline of the shoulder holster which showed through the thin alpaca coat. "If anybody tries to take this land from me, on the excuse of a sneaky contract or option——"

He didn't finish his sentence, but patted his coat again significantly. Then he picked up his hat, which had fallen to the floor, and, after a final glare at Celia, slapped the hat on one side of his bullet head and swaggered out of the door.

I noticed that he stepped to one side at the porch steps. And who should come into the room but that fellow I had seen meet Celia on the street in Huntington. I recognized him right off by his little black mustache and the teeth which stuck out under it. His black hair was parted exactly in the middle and slicked down like leather. He seemed to be proud of something as he stepped in, with his derby in one hand and a yellow cane over his arm, and looked around till he spied Celia.

"Oh, theah you are!" he tooted. "I missed your train, old deah, and came down on the freight. Clevah, what?"

"So clever," said Celia, "that you are going to have to start out with me at eight in the morning and walk over two mountains before lunch. If you are real good, I'll let you walk back with me."

"My Gawd!" cried the man and dropped into a chair, throwing up his hands like an actor.

I had seen enough. I left. But Celia caught me on the porch.

"I think I ought to get the money and take up the option, don't you, Ben?" she asked.

"Sure," I said. Then I tried a laugh. "I see now why you decline to live in the mountains," I added and went off down the path to the road.

I turned and glanced back when I had reached the corner store. Celia was still standing alone on the porch, looking after me. But she didn't wave or signal. I wheeled away and started in search of Sheriff Hadfield. I wanted to ask him a question—a question which might bring interesting results.

CHAPTER IV.

A FULL MORNING.

NOW, I wanted to ask Sheriff Hadfield if he knew anything about the circumstances surrounding Mrs. Holman's death. This had been bothering me. The woman had been ill, she had been threatened in my presence, and if I had gone away and left her unprotected, and anything had happened to her, it made me feel as if I were in some way to blame.

But the sheriff wasn't up around the crossroads store, where he usually hung out, and Wade Damron, the proprietor, told me he had gone down to Stone Coal and wouldn't be back till morning. The whistle had blown, and the negro laborers were trooping out of the tunnel and down from the rock quarry and concrete mixer, their tin lunch buckets glancing in the slanting sunlight of evening, their eyes and teeth shining whitely against their black faces, as they laughed and talked. I didn't want to go back to Holman's. In fact, there wouldn't be room for me if Bateman and that mustache were going to be there. So I plodded in the yellow dust of the clay road, along with the timekeepers and foremen and the donkey engineer, up to the commissary, where the white men were boarded, and had dinner with them.

It was good to be at the long table, with a dozen or more men in their shirt sleeves, all of them hungry, but good-natured, and the air full of: "Pass the face mortar, Charley." "Gimme some of that red horse, Bill." "Hey, Ma Casselvoy, how about another cup of coffee?" And of course there was a lot of good-natured kidding. It helped a fellow for-

get about his troubles—not that I had any.

I spent the night in the bunk house over the commissary, too, but I didn't sleep much. I couldn't seem to figure any sense into anything. I mean, why should I be working and trying to make money and get ahead? What was the reason for it all? I felt kind of rotten, and every time I was about to fall asleep I'd see that fellow with the teeth and the mustache talking to Celia in the drug store, or starting out with her for the two-mile tramp in the morning over to Gatlinville, and I'd wake up again.

But, presently, morning came, and after breakfast, when I was walking back to the tunnel, I began to see things a bit straighter. I began to see that if Celia had married me, she wouldn't have had much. An engineer's wife has to live in all kinds of outlandish places, maybe, and her husband doesn't often get rich. Whereas now, coming into the Holman property, she could sell that and live in style in the city, with folks like the fellow with the teeth and the mustache. I couldn't very well marry her, anyhow, now that she was rich, even if she was willing, which she wasn't; so it was nice to begin to see how fine things were going to work out for her, even if I wasn't going to be a part of it.

I was just crossing the railroad tracks and heading for the store to see if there was any mail, when Sheriff Hadfield's rangy figure came into sight along the road from the Holman place, and he hollered to me.

"Hey, Ben! I been lookin' for you!"

I always liked the sheriff. There was something about his deep blue eyes, sunk in a nest of crow's-feet behind his high-tanned cheek bones, and in his limber jaw under the aquiline nose and drooping black mustache, which told you that here was a man who didn't pretend to be anything except what he was—a good sheriff, a good shot, a good husband, and a good judge of corn liquor. He was looking at me intently from under the shade of the black Stetson hat, as his long, thin legs strode over the uneven, yellow clay road.

"Letter for you, Ben," he announced, producing a long white envelope from the inner pocket of his black coat, "from Mrs. Holman."

"From who?"

"Yep." Sheriff Hadfield looked beyond me at the misty mountains, seeking words. "She wa'n't feelin' pert, Ben, last week, and she ast my old woman to come down and set with her." The sheriff brushed some dust from his sleeve and continued: "Then she wouldn't let my old woman leave her, Ben, and the mornin' before she died she give her this here letter for you." The sheriff paused for thought. "Come to think of it," he added, "it didn't happen jes' that a way. That there Indian gal come up for the old woman, herself. I mean, she ast the old woman to go down there, and when she got there, Mrs. Holman was glad to see her. I been wonderin' ever since what made that Indian come up for my old woman. I bet it was something about Lafe Holman. I been meanin' to tell Lafe he better watch himself."

"Why?" I asked, turning the envelope over in my hands and wondering what was in it. "I have never been able to make an Indian out, sheriff."

"Nor nobody else," opined the sheriff. "But Lafe's been lettin' it out that he's figurin' on leavin' these here mountains And I know one thing about an Indian woman, it don't pay to try and fool her."

THE sheriff shook his head wisely and made off toward the crossroads store. I was just running my finger under the flap of the envelope when I saw three people start across the footbridge that spanned the rapids just this side of the Holman place. Their bodies were silhouetted against the streaks of foam which dappled the yellow water, where it swirled and leaped against the opposite cliff. Above them, against the dazzling sky, stood the gray shelf of Lover's Leap, reaching out from the vertical cliff to hang above the rapids, like the bowsprit of an enormous ship.

I recognized the first one as Morris Bateman; next came Celia Dabney; behind her walked the gentleman of the teeth and mustache. The footbridge was made of a single width of pine board

bolted to two parallel cables; shoulder-high above it ran another cable; and the three travelers made slow progress, shuffling sideways along the swaying board and holding on for dear life to the cable. They could have come down to the crossing and gone over the railroad culvert, but I suppose Bateman wanted to save time. He believed in saving anything he came into contact with.

I watched them until they reached the other side and became lost in the heavy growth of rhododendron and small saplings, as they climbed the steep and rocky hillside on their way up to the Twisted Gun Gap trail. They would get over to Gatlinville before noon, and, after resting and eating lunch, they would come back with the armed messenger from the bank, bringing the five thousand in cash over to Lafe Holman before the dead line of the option had gone by.

It occurred to me that this return trip might be a ticklish business. Bateman wouldn't be sorry to see Celia's option fall through, as he was the next in line. And Lafe Holman, himself, might be interested in stopping the money from getting through, figuring that he could take care of Bateman afterward. Five thousand dollars was a good deal of money to be coming across the mountain, protected only by a girl and by the gentleman with a mustache, who wouldn't be likely even to have a gun. And I didn't know what messenger Bateman might arrange for; possibly one of his friends.

As if to confirm my ideas, Lafe Holman appeared at the end of the path below his house and sauntered along the road toward me. I put the letter from his dead wife into my pocket. But he passed me by, with a nod which was too good-natured for my liking, and came to a stand in front of the crossroads store, his blunt hands in the pockets of the black-alpaca coat, his attitude one of what seemed to me to be exaggerated nonchalance.

Already I had made up my mind to go over the trail and come back with the money and the messenger, so I stepped down to the Holman place to change from the gray business suit, which I was still wearing, into khaki and high-laced hobnail boots. There were some steep and slick places on the Twisted Gun Gap trail. While dressing, I popped out of the shack every now and then to take a squint at the railroad culvert arching across the river. The third time, I saw Lafe Holman, no longer sauntering, but walking at an unusually rapid clip across the culvert or bridge, which ran across the river an eighth of a mile below the footbridge. Once on the other side, he turned rapidly into the Twisted Gun Gap trail, which there came down from the mountain right at the bridgehead, and I lost sight of him.

IT looked to me as if he were trying to gain the trail without my seeing him, so that he could secrete himself, if this was his plan, and hold up the money when Celia brought it back. My heart began to beat, and I felt a sudden hate for this stubborn and brutal man. Here was Celia, on the verge of a comfortable fortune, which would bring her happiness, and this piglike Holman, blind to everything except his own greed, was pitting his brutish and ruthless nature against her.

I buckled a shoulder holster under my coat and went back up to the tunnel. There was no hurry. The returning travelers would not come within Holman's reach before two or three o'clock, at the earliest. My best plan—always assuming that my suspicions were justified—would be to let Holman find himself a hiding place. Of course, he would choose some steep and rocky ascent, where he could get the drop while the messenger was using his hands to climb. Then I could slip along the ridge above him, find out where he was, and have him, in the event of trouble, at the same disadvantage that he was seeking to make for the others. If there was no trouble, I could then come quietly back without having exposed my suspicions.

They didn't need any help from me in the tunnel. I had given them center points and levels two days before, and now they were going ahead, putting up the forms and filling them with concrete, and taking the forms down as fast as the concrete set. I loafed around at the

crossroads store till lunch time. Just as the whistle was blowing for noon, I heard the dummy engine giving a lot of funny whistles, as it came out of the tunnel. I went to the door of the store, just as the engineer, after breaking down suddenly on the spur track, had jumped down from his seat; he came running toward me with a white face.

"A big fall of slate, Mr. Tolliver!" he exclaimed. "They's two colored fellows caught under it!"

Then there was the devil to pay. A mean place, at the farther end of the tunnel, had been braced up because the slate had looked bad. Some men, sent up there to put up the concrete forms, had knocked loose a couple of props in order to make room for their own job. I suppose the continuous running of trains through the tunnel must have loosened the shaly slate to a deeper depth, because it came down with a rush that filled the tunnel from one drainage ditch to the other.

It took time to get the men free; we had to pry up the slate above one of them and make very careful props and balances to keep a lucky hollow from falling farther and crushing the man to death before we could get the bigger pieces on top broken up and lifted off. I had to estimate the time it would take and advise the chief engineer, at Kenova, and the train dispatcher; already there was a fast freight whining and panting at the western tunnel mouth, and a passenger train was due from the east. I got some uncomplimentary telegrams back from the chief, and an irritable request for speed from the dispatcher's office, as there had been a landslide on the only possible detour, and he was receiving some hot wires, no doubt, from headquarters.

Time goes pretty fast when you are carrying a whole railway system on your shoulders. By the time the slate was hauled off and dumped, the men sent to the doctor's house, and the tracks cleared enough for the trains to pass through without scraping, it just began to occur to me that I hadn't had any lunch.

My watch showed three o'clock. And then it came over me suddenly, as I emerged from the dark tunnel into the blinding sunlight, that Celia and the messenger with the money would be coming back across Twisted Gun Gap about now, and that I had forgotten all about them.

CHAPTER V.

THE INDIAN WAY.

WITHOUT stopping to get any food, I went straight down the track, past the crossroads store, over the culvert and past the telegrapher's hut, and then took up the path, no wider than a deer trail, which led up the side of the hill to the Twisted Gun Gap trail. It was cooler in the shade of the big hemlocks. The rocky hillside was covered, inches deep, with the mold from the season after season of dead birch and poplar and maple leaves and with hemlock needles. My hobnail boots, slipping, would uncover the old limestone boulders, damp and smelly of earth, with white scratches, where the nails had slid.

In the quiet aisle of the path between the tree trunks, the world seemed far away. Now and again I caught a glimpse of the opposite hillside, blue with distance; once, to avoid a boulder, the trail bent with breath-taking suddenness, to the very edge of the sheer rocky cliff. I saw the uneasy river, swollen from storms at its headwaters, crawling like a resistless snake through the meadows of the world, its gold and silver body flecked with foam. The dummy engine, like a baby's toy, passed into the tiny black dot of the tunnel's mouth, waving a plume of vapor like a woolen thread.

The fears and the angers of mankind seemed very unreal, as I progressed again into the quiet shade of the hillside. The ageless rocks with their sentinel trees told of something which went on and on, undisturbed by man's trivial concerns. Even the occasional bird, flitting through the spear of sunlight that dappled the path, appeared to mute its note to the key of peace and contemplation.

It seemed absurd to anticipate any trouble from Lafe Holman, and, although I maintained a fast pace over the undulations of the trail, my thoughts went into other channels. Once more a feeling of

thankfulness came over me that Celia would be well provided for, and be free to choose her own way of happiness. I thought how curious are the ways of chance—that a mother she had scarcely remembered should at the end be the one to take care of her.

I suppose it was this idea which reminded me of the letter from Mrs. Holman, which, in my interest in keeping an eye on Lafe Holman while I was dressing, I had slipped into the inside pocket of my khaki coat. I stopped for a breathing spell and took the envelope out and opened it. Inside was the copy of her will which Lafe Holman had taken from her in my presence. I recognized his thumb print, and the corner of it was torn off where she had caught it. I assumed that she had recovered it by some subtlety and had sent it to me so that still another copy of it would be available to confute any of Lafe's expected claims. Idly I unfolded it, and my attention was caught by a few lines scrawled waveringly in ink at the bottom of the page.

On this day, August 27th, I, Celia Dabney Holman, being near to death and desirous of showing my gratitude to the one person in the last ten years who has shown me a kindness, do hereby revoke all previous wills, and do hereby will and bequeath all of my real and personal property to Ben Tolliver, him and his heirs and assigns forever.

It was signed: "Celia Dabney Holman." In the lower left-hand corner was written: "Nancy Lou Hadfield, witness," and the date was repeated.

The human being is a curious animal. A moment before I had been happy that Celia should be independently wealthy and free to seek her own happiness in her own way. And yet, when I read these words, a thrill ran through me. I had a picture of myself, a man of wealth and power, coming to Celia Dabney, the poor business girl, and offering her my love. It was a pleasanter picture than that of the poor engineer turning away from a girl because she was wealthy and because she did not love him. But such pictures, be they ever so pleasant, can last but a moment. I laughed aloud at myself, as I tore the document into a hundred pieces and let them drift through my fingers and go floating down the declivity below the path.

As I stared after them, dreaming, I grew aware that some one was near me. I turned with a slight start to discover Morris Bateman standing just ahead of me on the path. His reddish-brown suit blended in with the hues of the ground, and a splatter of sunlight, falling upon his leaf-green hat, gave to his gold-rimmed spectacles and hooked nose the semblance of a vivid and unwholesome bird; this likeness was increased, as he worked his thin lips.

"It's better to burn 'em," he croaked and showed his sharp, yellow teeth, as if we were sharing some evil secret.

"Where is Miss Dabney?" I asked him curtly.

"I was in a hurry," he explained. "I got her Bud Jinkins to bring the money, but she and her friend allowed as how they'd git somebody theyself. So I come on. I'm glad I run into you," he went on glibly as I tried to pass him. "They's something I want to talk to you about."

"Some other time," I said.

"I can make you a piece of money," he persisted and laid a knotty hand on my sleeve.

"Some other time," I repeated and pushed by him.

I had the feeling that he was trying to delay me, a feeling that was increased, as I looked back at the turn of the path and saw the tense expression on his leathery face. A sense of vague alarm came over me. I began to run along the uneven and narrow trail, unbuttoning my coat so that the revolver in the shoulder holster was close to my hand.

The trail here was rising gradually before the dip that ran down to the shelf of Lover's Leap. I planned, as I ran, to reach that shelf as soon as possible, because from its point the upstream trail, paralleling the cliff, could be glimpsed through the trees for nearly a mile. With this on my mind, I was unprepared, as I breasted the rise, to see Lafe Holman on the trail, about a hundred yards ahead of me, crouched behind a boulder.

His stocky back was toward me. He had not heard my footsteps in the soft mold. Just as I stopped and stepped behind a tree to observe him, he took off his soft black hat and slowly raised his heavy black-clad figure until he was peering over the boulder in the direction of Lover's Leap, which was only a little way beyond him. He dropped down abruptly but cautiously, and, crouching, wormed himself slowly about till his back was against the boulder. I noticed then that the revolver in his hand was held by the muzzle, and that a projection of the rock would hide him from any one coming from Lover's Leap until they had gone a few paces past him.

Before I could decide what to do, it had happened. A spindling mountain youth, bearing a small, paper-wrapped parcel in his hand, swung. with the long stride of the mountaineer, around the curve of the path; and Lafe Holman rose and struck him from behind. From way up where I stood, I heard the crack of the pistol butt against a human skull. The lad dropped like a suddenly broken machine; his foot still forward, his hand still swinging in the walk, he went down without a jerk or a jump. He, for one, could certainly never bear witness to what had hit him.

In an instant Lafe Holman was upon him, like a hawk on a chick; he was reaching over the prostrate body and limp limbs for the parcel still in the nerveless hand. He got it, lifted it toward him, and then the motion stopped; he tugged sharply, and the lad's body rose a bit toward him. The parcel, whatever it was, seemed to be tied to the lad's body, and Lafe Holman, after a rapid pointing of his white face up and down the path, stepped over and knelt beside the body, his elbows working and his back toward me.

Then it was that I slipped from behind the tree and, with the revolver in my hand, began to run softly toward him.

PASSING strange it is how many thoughts can enter the mind in such a brief moment as that. I wondered why the messenger was coming along alone. The picture came into my mind of Celia and her gentleman escort becoming so immersed in themselves that they had become indifferent to the fate of the option. Then I thought of the consequences if I should kill Holman; I saw the jury of hard-bitten, distrustful mountaineers; heard the foreman, as he cleared his throat and announced: "We find the defendant guilty." All these things leaped through my mind, as the broad bent back of Lafe Holman grew larger and more distinct until I could see the displacement of the crisp black hair, where his pig's neck wrinkled above the collar of the black-alpaca coat. And then I was standing behind him, the revolver covering his back, and was saying:

"Put 'em up, Holman. If you move, I'll shoot!"

I remember, as he whirled on one knee, seeing his pale, startled face, the little eyes wide; and then something white came toward me, propelled by his arm and hand. I pulled the trigger and dodged; doing both things, I suppose, too late. For the tin money box, laced about with a fine steel chain and wrapped in paper, struck me on the ridge of cheek bone between the ear and temple, and my bullet missed Holman entirely. A searing white-and-red flame took the place of the sunlight, as I staggered, half conscious, sideways; only a white birch sapling, against which I fell, saved me from a sliding fall down fifty feet of rock and shale to the cliff edge, where I would have made the fatal drop to the river. As it was, some unconscious instinct brought the gun up and caused me to fire again. But, even as the report and the back kick roused me, I felt the grip of Lafe Holman's hands on my wrist, and I knew from the power of the twisting grip that the man was uninjured.

He was bending my forearm back and sideways. Coming out of my daze, I struck a short-arm blow with my left fist behind his ear, and he slipped forward on the uncertain mold-covered footing, driving my forearm against the birch so painfully that my paralyzed nerves let the gun fall free. I jumped against him, as he released me to reach for it, and drove him sideways to one knee; but, before I could stoop, he was up and lung-

ing for me, and the next moment we were rolling on the ground in each other's arms.

Some instinct of self-preservation, I suppose, drove us uphill, instead of down, and we fell across the path. I hadn't expected quite the tremendous strength that this man had. I was a strong young chap myself, but when he closed his arms about me I was cased in a band of iron. Only, as we turned and tossed, when he brought his fingers up to grip my throat, did I have a chance. He had rolled me under, and, as he lifted himself to clutch my gullet, I swung with my right fist, and the clip on the point of the jaw drove him sideways. I cut his mouth with my left, as he came back over me, but it was like striking a tree; and what temporarily released me was a tremendous wriggle which enabled me to bring up my knee to his stomach. My thrust with it tossed him to the left. I was scrambling over to rise and meet him, when he let fly from his knees with a rock that caught me fairly in the pit of the stomach.

I went flat on my back like a board; my hands and feet were curling in upon themselves with the tug of the agony radiating from the paralyzed solar plexus. My mind was clear. I wanted to rise and protect myself, as Lafe Holman, with a rock in his hand, crouched over me. I wanted to raise my arm and protect my head from the blow, as he took the gray rock in both hands and raised it slowly over me for the skull-crushing descent. I could see, and I could think, but my body was numb and powerless, as in the nightmares which I had had when a child. The thought flitted through my mind, that maybe this was a nightmare, too. But Holman's crimson-stained mouth, and widened eyes, as he drew in his breath for the crash, made me see the death in his hands. I tried to shout and could make no sound.

And then from somewhere came the crack of a shot; at the same instant, it seemed, a rip of red crossed Holman's wrist. The rock fell, striking my left arm above the elbow with such pain that I was roused a trifle from my petrifaction. I tried to rise, but could only lift my head. And I think I shall never forget the expression on Lafe Holman's face, as he backed down the hill, reaching blindly around on the ground with his hand for the gun, but staring above and beyond me at something strange enough to distort his countenance with a mixture of astonishment and terror.

HE felt the gun and his hand gripped it; he became for a moment still; and at that instant another shot cracked from behind me. Lafe Holman's expression changed to a foolish smile, as he sank slowly to the ground.

I turned over on my hands and with an effort struggled up to my knees. Coming straight down the hill toward me, her oval, olive-skinned face paled to a greenish bronze, her black braids lolling against the beaded deerskin dress, rushed the young Indian woman, her moccasined, pigeon-toed feet leaping sure-footedly from rock to rock. I looked around, but no one else was in sight, and, as she leaped finally onto the path, I observed that the rifle hanging in her slim copper hand emitted a faint veil of bluish smoke.

She did not look at me, as I stumbled and swayed to my feet; she went straight by me to lean over Lafe Holman. When she straightened up, her black, staring gaze took me in no more than the rest of the scene around her. Moving with the lithe sureness of a cat, she picked up the tin money box and the revolver that I had dropped, came to me and laid them in my arms folded across the sickening pain of my stomach. I hugged them tight, too weary to use my hands, too dazed to speak or think, and stared at her stupidly, as she raised a slim bronzed arm and pointed peremptorily back along the trail that I had come.

"Go!" she commanded.

Befuddled as I was, I sensed in this wild spot the spirit of her ancestors, speaking through her to the race which had betrayed them, edging her voice with bitterness and contempt. I staggered up the trail, each step jolting a flash of stars across my aching brain, and I heard her voice, after a moment, strong and clear:

"Now you are mine," she said, in her slurring, musical voice. "Mine at last—all mine!"

At first this came to me as another voice from the nightmare, and I dreamed it was addressed to me. But, my head clearing near the crest of the rise, I stopped for breath, turned, and looked back.

She had taken the head and shoulders of Lafe Holman's limp body upon her knees. Seated, she swayed slowly backward and forward above it; her hand caressed his cheek. Through the shade and sunshine of the hillside floated the croon of a guttural lullaby, such as an Indian mother might use in singing her child to sleep.

CHAPTER VI.

INTO SPACE AND NOTHINGNESS.

I HAD forgotten about Morris Bateman; or, perhaps, it is more accurate to say that I was too befuddled to do much thinking at all. The blow in the solar plexus still caused me to feel weak and sick, as I went over the rise in the trail and dragged my weak legs down the slope beyond. My left arm ached acutely above the left elbow, where Holman's rock had struck me, and I began to feel the bruise where my head had hit a rock when I fell from the blow in the stomach; I had not been conscious of this head blow before. Gradually, however, as I half staggered along the narrow trail, my brain cleared a bit, and I began to give some thought to what had occurred and to what remained to be done.

The first thing was to take the money box to Lafe Holman's house before sundown. Whether Lafe himself was dead or not, I did not know for certain; but the option required that the payment be offered at his house before sundown, and if it were not, the privilege of purchasing the now valuable property for a song would fall to Morris Bateman, under his secondary option. Bateman's miserly greed, as every one knew, had grown to be almost a disease with him, and if the requirements of Celia's option were not fulfilled in every way, he would not hesitate to press his own claim.

How curious it was that Celia and her friend of the teeth and mustache had not appeared, but that was not my concern. I knew what Celia's interests required. Maybe she would marry this fellow who had followed her down here. If she did, this might be the last chance I would have to do anything for her. Looking at it this way, my head and my arm didn't ache so much. In fact, I almost got a sort of pleasure out of thinking that I had got bunged up doing something for her, particularly as it was the last thing I would ever be able to do. It's funny, but I was even a little bit sorry that the place on my head was only a bruise, and not a cut. I mean, I would have liked to have had something like a scar, which I could keep, you might say, to remember what I had tried to do for her.

It made me feel good to observe presently the scraps of paper that I had thrown down the side of the hill a while before. I noticed, however, that there were fewer pieces now than before, and, looking closer, I saw that some one had walked in the sliding shale down some fifteen feet to where the pieces had been lying, and had walked up again in the direction of the railroad, so that his tracks made a "V" in the side of the slope. I figured that it must have been Morris Bateman, curious, no doubt, to know what I had destroyed.

And then it occurred to me that Bateman had passed Lafe Holman on the trail, and that Holman had not molested him. I remembered the tense expression on Bateman's face, and how he had tried to detain me. It seemed pretty certain that he had understood what Holman had been up to; likely he had told Holman who was bringing the money, and had counted upon Holman's getting off with the money box; either escaping clean—because there would have been no witnesses to the holdup—or avoiding capture, at any rate, until after sundown of this day, which would make Bateman's option good.

As I came out once again upon the shelf of rock that hung sheer above the rushing river far below, I noticed that the shadows were lengthening across the valley. It would take me perhaps half an hour or more to climb down to the railroad, cross the culvert, and walk down

the band of yellow road to the dip in the opposite mountain where, from the cliff, I could see the Holman buildings, golden in the slanting sunlight, like two children's play houses. I could easily get there on time.

THEN a feeling of anxiety came over me. Morris Bateman, I remembered, must have heard the shots behind him on the trail. Certainly he must have doubled on his tracks and, peering over the crest of the rise, have seen what had occurred. Or it was likely that he had followed me, to find out what would result from my meeting with Holman. In either event, he would have learned that I had secured the money box and was on my way to Lafe Holman's place.

I transferred the small tin box, which was wrapped with a thin steel chain secured by a padlock, to my left hand; the revolver, which I had put back in my holster, I examined, and then carried it ready in my right. From where the trail ran around the big boulder to the cliff edge, I could see ahead along the trail for perhaps sixty or seventy feet. There it turned sharply to the left around the gray, gnarly trunk of an ancient cedar.

In the quiet half light that fell through the branches of the tall evergreens, each arch of needle-strewn rock, each cylinder of brown tree trunk, each spray of shrubbery was clearly outlined, as in some old oil painting. With the gun held ready, I stepped softly from the wind-swept limestone of the shelf to the quiet bed of hemlock needles and passed around the boulder, with a wary eye on the turn in the trail ahead.

I was barely beyond the boulder when I felt a tremendous blow on the back of my skull. I had the flash of a dream—that the mountain had blown up into a volcano; everything became a hot, red haze. There was a sharp twist at my right hand, something hit my forehead glancingly, and, as if the red curtain had lifted, I caught a glimpse, directly in front of me, of Morris Bateman's leathery, beaked face, drawn into a mask of terrified anger because I had recognized him.

As if in a dream, I realized that I was back again upon the shelf of limestone rock above the river far below. As if in a dream, I saw Morris Bateman reach excitedly for the box in my left hand; but the clubbed gun, which he had snatched from me, must have struck it, for it fell and bounced over the edge. To my mind came vaguely the significance of the sound of the box striking and bouncing against the side of the cliff, starting a little shower of stones which poured glibly down the precipitous cliff, suddenly to leap into space and become silent, lost forever.

Morris Bateman seemed a secondary actor in the play. I was dimly aware that he had dropped to a knee with a cry, reaching for the money box which was gone; and I saw, as if it were a mirage, that a wallet had slithered from his pocket and lay now balancing upon the three strands of yellow grass which sprang just over the rocky edge. The wallet was of pigskin; the thread was missing or raveled around its edges, and its slick yellow surface had been stained by perspiration in the center to a shiny brown, but there were green and yellow bills protruding from its mouth.

Now I felt as if a spectator, made powerless by drugs, had been forced to watch the struggle between the river and this man. To my stupefied intelligence, it seemed to epitomize the struggle between nature and all mankind. Bateman reached his knotty hand and hooked the clubbed pistol butt around the balanced wallet. It seemed to me symbolical of man trying to wrest a little wealth by force from the stores of nature. And when the wallet slipped sideways and dropped silently into the silent void below, it seemed to me as representative of the fact that man, no matter what he may garner, goes back with his wealth into the keeping of nature again.

It was with something of surprise, therefore, that my gradually waking intelligence observed the expression of personal hostility on Bateman's face, as he leaped abruptly to his feet. It was as if his miserly soul had been ravished of its hoard, and that, instead of the river, he was blaming me. It was only for an instant, as I swayed drunkenly there,

that I had a chance to think of the balefulness of the glare of his cold gray eyes, shooting a narrowed beam through the glinting gold spectacles. Because, almost as he rose to his feet, he pushed me deliberately backward toward the edge of the cliff. I awoke from my daze with a shout. As I balanced there on the brink of the void, waving my arms in an attempt at balance, Bateman, with a crazy light in his eyes, pushed me again.

I screamed and reached at the air. I saw a sunny bedroom of my childhood and my mother sitting there, sewing on a bright-red shawl. The roar of the foaming river, like the triumphant voice of nature, broke suddenly loud upon my ears. I wished that I might have had a moment in which to tell Celia good-by and explain to her that I had done what I could. Then I saw the face of the Indian woman, the eyes dark and inscrutable, like the eyes of Nature herself, the face lighted by a ruddy glow. And, as I walked out into space and nothingness, and the world grew abruptly dark, I heard her voice saying gutturally:

"Red moon. Somebody—he die!"

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE EDGE OF LOVER'S LEAP.

WHEN next I opened my eyes, I thought that I was in bed in the shack at Holman's place, with my arm hanging over the side and touching the floor. And I couldn't understand the pattern of cedar branches traced thinly against what seemed to be a starry sky. I seemed to remember hours ago, or maybe ages, having heard Celia's voice and not having been able to answer. My body was sore and bruised, and, as I turned to become more comfortable, I came awake with an exclamation and lay perfectly still. Because, far below me, I glimpsed the white-flecked river, gleaming in copper patches from the light of an invisible moon. And beyond that, in the masses of darkness and of shallower shadow, a tiny light, like a beacon, shining from the place where I sensed that Lafe Holman's house should be.

My arm, I found, was hanging over a three-foot shelf from which grew a knotty cedar tree. I lay between the cedar and the cliff wall. Looking up, I discerned the outline of the point of rock from which I had fallen. With infinite care I turned my stiff body and climbed to my knees; then I found myself entangled in the cedar branches into which I had fallen and which had broken the force of my twenty-foot drop. Three feet farther to the left, and I should have gone straight down where the money box and the wallet had gone, and I became for a moment stiff and dizzy at the thought of that hurtling dive.

Behind me I heard suddenly a sniff and a grunt. Holding to the trunk of the cedar, I twisted about, to see in the semidarkness the glow of eyes. Gradually I made out that the motionless animal was a wild razor-back hog, indignant, no doubt, at my invasion of his haunts. He wheeled, with another grunt, and trotted off into the darkness. My heart lightened. If he could come down from the trail, there was a way of getting back; so, after testing myself carefully to find if any bones were broken, I crawled along the narrow shelf of mold-covered rock, keeping as close as possible to the wall of the cliff. My hands felt the pig' track, beaten in the center of the earth; gradually the shelf rose, as it turned the cliff wall; after ten or fifteen minutes of careful crawling, I swung finally up a stiff ascent, hanging on to roots and saplings, and found that I was on the trail again.

I forgot my bruises in the exultation of being once more started back in the direction of camp. After such an experience, the loss of a few thousand dollars or of a prospective fortune, at first seems of little importance. It was only when I was completing the abrupt descent, where the trail comes down to the railroad track, that I began to think of the disappointment in store for Celia. There was no light in the telegrapher's shack at the bridgehead. The rails wound, faintly glimmering, across the viaduct, lost themselves in the darkness before they reached the tunnel mouth, which showed, a grayish square in the moonlight, at the foot of the shadowy mass of mountain beyond the river.

I was disappointed not to see some of the men about. It was as if I had been away for a long time and had hoped to be welcomed back. The crossroads store. however, was dark and deserted, I noticed, as I walked over the viaduct; and I had reached the crossroads itself and was hesitating whether to go to the right to Lafe Holman's place, or up to the commissary toward the left, before my eye was caught by the flare of a gasoline torch on the river bank below the viaduct. At about the same time I noticed that the moon, above the spiked silhouette of the Twisted Gun Gap mountain, was round and red. It gave me a curious feeling. as I walked over to where the bank began to fall away, stooped and peered beneath the screen of weeping willows.

TORCHES were flaring along both banks of the river. Lights leaped on the angry, white-crested yellow waves, made spots of delicate lace where the foam curled over the muddy sand. The leaves of the trees overhanging the bank were tipped with silver. And, lessened by distance. in the circles of the torches' glow were the black figures of men, walking beside the foam or standing with their faces toward the river.

One group in particular caught my attention. A smaller man was standing up to his knees in the water and would have gone farther, had not one of the others dragged him back. The light gleamed for a moment on his spectacles, and I recognized the figure and the head of Morris Bateman. Even at that distance, however, I could detect something strange in his behavior. And, as the men turned, with a sweep of the torch, and left him, I heard his voice rise high and harsh above the murmur of the river, and I saw him running after them, waving his arms.

Suddenly a panic possessed me. I remembered how Celia and the man from Huntington had not been with the messenger carrying the money box over the trail. It occurred to me that they might have preceded the messenger and have had an encounter with Holman and Bateman, and that this was why the men were watching the river. A body which went over the cliff, say, at Lover's Leap, would be caught or delayed by the rocks in the wide shallows below the viaduct.

It would take me some time to go up the commissary road and make my way down the slope to the river bank. I recalled the light that I had seen in Lafe Holman's cabin. Forgetting my soreness and fatigue, I ran down the road, past the crossroads store. It had come over me all at once that if Celia were to die, I should want to die, too. I could stand seeing her married to some one else, if she were happy; but I could not face her death. And, as I ran and saw at last the light of the Holman window, I called to her. The roar of the river, as if in derision, tried to drown out my voice, and over the mountain, rising higher, shone the Indian woman's blood-red moon. My heart was icy with fear as I dashed up the path to the house.

"Celia! Celia!" I shouted.

Then, when I reached the doorway, I stopped at what I saw, and I leaned against the door jamb, panting, trying to hold back the storm of relief that threatened for a moment my composure.

Celia was there, one little soft hand on the red oilcloth. She had half started up from her chair at the shout of her name. Her lids were red, as from weeping, and a damp ball of handkerchief showed from the hand pressed tightly against her breast. For a moment she was motionless, her liquid brown eyes staring from a fixed white face, as if she were seeing a ghost. Then:

"Oh, *Ben!*" she said.

That was all. And the next moment she had flown across the room, was clinging to me, trembling, her face against my coat in a storm of tears. I had always wanted to have my arms about that brown-cloth dress, anyway. So I patted her back, and because she couldn't see me, I kissed the top of her tight-fitting, black-felt hat.

"Never mind, Celia. honey," I said. "Money isn't everything. You'll make a success of your millinery business. or you'll marry some rich man. I tried my best to get the money over here. I got it from Holman, but Bateman hit me

when I wasn't expecting, and the box fell over the cliff."

She was standing quite still now, listening, and I went on comforting her.

"I went over with it, honey, or I'd have been here sooner to tell you what happened. I caught on a cedar tree on a ledge, though, and didn't get hurt a bit —just stunned for a few hours. Seems to me I remember hearing your voice, while I was down there. But maybe I was dreaming."

SHE leaned back, still holding me tight, and looked into my face, her sweet red mouth, drooped and solemn.

"Ben," she asked, "you mean to tell me you went up there and fought with Holman and Bateman to help get that——"

"It wasn't much of a fight, Celia," I said.

Her eyes filled with tears, and I put her head back on my shoulder. I was expecting that fellow with the teeth and the mustache to come in at any minute. This might be the last time I'd ever hold her in my arms again, and I wasn't in any hurry to quit. But she pulled herself free, led me over to a chair, and, when I sat down, she sat on my knees and put her arm around my neck.

"Oh, Ben," she said, "you might have been killed!" And she kissed me.

This was what I had wanted her to do all my life, it seemed; but now she was doing it because I had tried to save her money. It made me feel bad, instead of good, and I turned my head and looked out of the window, feeling rotten. The moon, an orange ball, had risen higher above the mountain; only its lower edge was tipped with red.

"I thought you *had* been killed," she went on, her voice trembling. "And it would have been all my fault. I should have told you our plan, but I wanted to be smart and independent. We sent the messenger ahead across the mountain, and I should have known that you——" She stopped and swallowed. "But Phil said——"

"Who's Phil?" I interrupted.

"He's the man you saw. He's the husband of my best friend, Mary Stone. He's a lawyer, and Mary made him come after me, because——"

"Oh, is *that* Mary Stone's husband!" I exclaimed, and I took a deep breath of relief.

"Yes. And Phil said, we'd better do it our way and not tell you, because it was the best way, and if we told you, you'd insist on doing it yourself. I mean, you wouldn't let us do it for you."

"Do what for me?" I demanded. "I didn't have anything to do with the business—except I wanted to get the money over here in time to take up the option for you. Now that skunk of a Morris Bateman will probably get it."

"Oh, no," said Celia. "We've already taken up the option."

I pushed her away so that I could see her face.

"What?" I cried.

"Yes, dear," she said, putting her head back against me. "I was just trying to tell you. Last night, when you slept up at the commissary, we planned how we'd get the money over. Then, when Sheriff Hadfield came down here this morning and told me and Phil confidentially that mother had willed the property to you because you had protected her, we decided we'd go over without telling you. We decided that if you knew, you'd insist on bringing it over yourself, and Lafe Holman hated you, so——"

"You mean, you brought this money over to take up the option for *me?* But, why?"

"Why, Ben," she said, kissing me, "you know why."

I couldn't say a thing. I just sat there, swallowing.

"So we locked the money box and padlocked a chain around it," she was saying. "It would be hard to open; so hard to open, that if Holman got it, he'd make off with it in a hurry and leave the trail open for us to come through without being bothered. We explained to the messenger the risk he was running, but he was glad to do it for a hundred dollars. Said he wished somebody would try to hold him up. So I sewed the bills into the lining of my dress, and Phil and I came along over the trail about an hour later. We met the messenger. He had

been hit on the head, but was not really hurt, and he was on his way back to Gatlinville. He was young and awfully ashamed to go back. But we told him it didn't matter."

"But what about Holman?" I asked.

"He didn't know who had hit him; I mean, the messenger didn't. He told us that just as he was coming to from the blow, he thought he saw a woman, an Indian woman, standing on the edge of Lover's Leap, holding a man in her arms. He didn't know whether he was seeing things or not. He shut his eyes and shook his head to clear it up a bit; and when he opened his eyes, there was nobody there any more. So he got up and started back home."

"She shot Holman," I explained. "From what the sheriff said to me this morning, I judge she thought he was going to run off with the money and leave her. She shot him to keep him, poor creature!"

Celia drew her arm tighter around my neck.

"The sheriff had seen you go up on the mountain," she said, "and that's why, when we came home and couldn't find you, we were worried. We thought maybe you had fought with Holman and gone over the cliff. We tried to find out something from Morris Bateman, but he seemed to have gone sort of crazy. Kept crying that his money had gone into the river; kept going in after it, looking for it, and the men had to keep pulling him out to keep him from being swept away and drowned."

"You mean they are looking for me?"

"We ought to go and tell them," cried Celia, jumping up. "We searched the cliff for hours and couldn't find you. I imagine, when you thought you were dreaming, it was me you heard, all right, calling for you. Oh, Ben, I can't believe that we have come through so lucky. The land and the timber and mineral rights are yours, and the five thousand is yours, too. Phil says that if no Holman next of kin turns up—and nobody knows of any—you may just keep it. You see, I was here with it, ready to make the payment before the option expired, so that closed the deal. Phil's at the river now."

We had passed out to the porch while she was talking, and we stood there a moment, looking down across the tree-bowered road to the murmuring river. The moon, now high in the heavens, was of the palest and purest gold; it made a fairyland of shadow and silver of the mountain scene, and laid across the tossing water a bridge of flaky gold.

"But the property isn't mine, Celia," I explained. "She was your mother, and it belongs to you. As to the will," I added, "I tore that up, over on the Twisted Gun Gap trail."

Celia didn't say anything for a moment, but stood staring across the river; the moon laid a shadowy beauty about her eyes and carved, as in marble, the dainty outline of her nose and cheek and rounded chin.

"Ben," she said at length, "you understand now why I didn't want to come to the mountains. I knew mother was somewhere about, and—well, it would have been uncomfortable. But, Ben——" She turned and caught the lapels of my coat. "Ben, if you still—— Oh, Ben, it doesn't make any difference, does it, *which* one of us anything belongs to?"

It was my turn then.

"No, honey," I said, when I released her, "it doesn't make any difference at all."

Then we remembered and went hand in hand down the path and up the road to tell the men at the river.

Other stories by Mr. McBlair will appear in future issues of this magazine. If you keep a weather eye out for the best in contemporary fiction, watch for the work of this author. His stories are uniformly excellent.

Leguerre of the Lost Division

The Heart of The Eagle

By Howard Fitzalan

Author of "Brethren of the Lamp," "Marie, Queen of Plots," Etc.

When Nugent Leguerre, government agent, was sent into Mexico for special information about a border difficulty, not only his life, but perhaps the fate of nations, depended upon the turn of a word and a fountain pen.

THE city was passing through the wringer of a blazing July day, such as only New York knows. In the humid editorial office of *Society Tattlings* a youth who boasted his easy familiarity with the East's very best back stairways, no less than his cultivated acidity of style, pecked languidly at a typewriter. He wrote:

Your Avenue correspondent can't quite decide whether the idle rich or the idle poor have the best of it. Nugent Leguerre, we dare say, finds the world pleasant enough.

With fat bags and lean purse. with golf clubs and tennis rackets, our Nugie is off this week on a summer-long guesting tour of the nicer New England estates. For a young man whose annual income is known to fall considerably short of even a modest five figures, he doesn't seem to us to fare so badly. But what chiefly excites our envy, after all, is thought of the cares that his poverty spares him!

There were many of Nugent Leguerre's friends who resented the tone of the squib; yet Leguerre himself, when he came to read it, found it entirely to his satisfaction. Publicity of just this sort was priceless to him. He assiduously courted and encouraged it, posed and paraded for it, and he was enormously pleased when it came.

This particular paragraph held, to be sure, certain elements of truth. Leguerre had received a sufficient number of country-house invitations to round out his summer; and, weighed with the paraphernalia of sport, he had quit New York. The end of his journey had not been in cool New England, though, but in a city

hotter by several degrees than sweltering Gotham—in a Washington, sun-dazed and deserted by president, cabinet, Congress and diplomatic corps, abandoned until autumn to the desk-chained helots of the civil service.

From the railroad station Leguerre had taxied, sans clubs and rackets, to one of the older government buildings; and there, in a dark and breathless rear office, he had dropped into a chair beside a littered table at which sat a gray-eyed, gray-faced, gray-haired man whose spare body was incased in a tightly buttoned long, black coat.

By the lettering on the door panel, this one shabby isolated room was now the headquarters of the Intelligence Control Division, that great coördinating bureau of war-time might, latterly become a politicians' football and referred to as the "Lost Division," by official and journalistic Washington on those increasingly rare occasions when it was spoken of at all. The gray man who sat in lone and parboiled state behind the door, drumming a dusty letter file with thin, nervous fingers, was the same Judge Gunther who had been shifted from the United States attorney general's office to head the I. C. D. in its heyday. In the years since the armistice he had amused the capital by doggedly persisting in his weekly visits to the White House which had been properly a part of his war-time routine.

Judge Gunther's regard of his caller's six-foot, flannel-clad length was thoughtful, but his earliest remark was nevertheless a rather disappointing banality.

"You look cool, Nugent," he offered. "Gad! I don't see how you manage it in this devilish weather."

"Maybe decepton is getting to be a habit," Leguerre said. "It does become part of a man. But I'd have been as cool as I look, just now, if your wire hadn't caught me at the club. It got in at the last minute. I was leaving for Reggie Wilmerding's place in New Hampshire."

"And since you're not going to Wilmerding's, where are you supposed to be?" the older man demanded crisply.

Leguerre flipped the ash from his cigarette.

"Still farther north. I telegraphed Reggie that I'd drop in on friends in Maine before I came to him, and I saw that *Society Tattlings* had a hint I was off to play the summer circuit. I don't suppose it's my luck that you want me to look into that Alaskan matter?"

THERE had been hope as well as deprecation in the question, and Gunther smiled grimly.

"No," he said. "You're going south—far south."

Leguerre lifted a week-old newspaper from the table, blew off the dust which it had gathered, and put it into service as a fan.

"That means Mexico?" he queried.

"Precisely," nodded the Lost Division's chief. "You can guess in what connection, I think."

"Something to do with the raid over the line at Hidalgo? But isn't the state department——"

"We're called upon to backstop 'em again," said Judge Gunther. "I've had a long code telegram from the summer White House. A personage of very large consequence in this United States government is impatient to have the facts in the Hidalgo affair before him. He wants quick and definite information, without bias, and he has paid us the compliment of requisitioning the I. C. D. for it. Certainly you're familiar with the incident—in a general way?"

"I read the newspapers," said Leguerre. "There were points of contradiction in some of the dispatches I saw, but they all agreed that a skirmish, begun on the Mexican side between Federal and guerrilla troops, had swung over onto our lot. And the New Mexican village of Hidalgo had got pretty well shot up before it was finished. Five or six Americans were killed, weren't they?"

"Six were killed that night, and three more of the dozen or so wounded have since died. That was nearly two months ago, Leguerre, and Mexico City still politely and firmly denies all knowledge of the battle."

"Of course," murmured Leguerre. "The regular thing. And the state department begins an investigation that

won't be wound up until the American in the street is undecided whether Hidalgo is that new ten-cent cigar he's been intending to try or the tango number that used to be so popular on the radio last spring. When the report is ready, it'll be pigeonholed, and the gringo will be observed by all Latin America in his accustomed posture, with the other cheek turned!"

Judge Gunther shook his gray head seriously.

"Not this time, Nugent," he said. "The administration has its back up. Homer Noble was sent to Mexico last month to dig clear to the bottom of the raid—to learn who the combatants were and exactly by whom they were led. You know Noble, don't you?"

"Yes; we were together for some weeks in Paris."

"What do you think of him?"

"Speaking from very positive and personal knowledge," said Leguerre, "I can tell you that Homer Noble is one of the most thorough men I have ever met, and one of the bravest. Defeat and fear are words outside his vocabulary, chief."

Gunther pressed a spring, and the lid of the letter file flew back.

"I give him all due credit for thoroughness and courage, he said. "But resourcefulness — cleverness — hair-trigger thinking—those are other things. And the man is slow. Here's his last report. It's three weeks old. Not a word has come from him since."

Leguerre glanced over the first sheet in the folder that his chief had taken from the file and tossed before him. It contained a characteristically stiff inventory and digest of the appended papers:

Items A to H: Affidavits of citizens of Hidalgo, New Mexico, all of good repute, concerning events of the night of May 9th, last, to which each was eyewitness.

Item 1: Statement of Colonel Ignacio Torrezon, Mexican federal commandant of Northern Chihuahua Zone, obtained from him by me as for distribution over wires of Affiliated Press.

Items J to R: Hearsay statements collected on both sides of border in neighborhood of Hidalgo, New Mexico.

In submitting these statements would direct attention to variation between them and newspaper reports—viz.:

Time at which first of combatants appeared in Hidalgo was one forty-five a. m., not two fifteen.

There was no actual battle in streets of Hidalgo, as reported. The engagement on Mexican territory had conclusively resolved into flight and pursuit. The pursued were mounted irregulars in nondescript garb. The only fire witnessed by affiants was by pursuers, who wore uniforms recognized as of Mexican federal army.

Few of probably two hundred rounds fired in Hidalgo were apparently aimed at force in flight. Fully eighty per cent of bullets spent pierced adobe walls and thin wooden walls of houses not conceivably in line of combatant fire.

Calculation of angles convinces me that American civilian casualties in Hidalgo resulted from wanton and promiscuous firing by Mexican regulars.

Colonel Torrezon—vide Item I—denies absolutely that troops of his command crossed international line on night of May 9th, or at any other time. Further, he insists that no federal forces other than his have operated in or entered upon the Northern Chihuahua Zone this year.

To check on this statement I go to-morrow to Chihuahua City, using Passport Q—Herman Koentler, foreign commercial traveler. Second report will be dispatched from there via El Paso, Texas. N.

FROM the state-agent's closely written script, Leguerre looked up with a question.

"The report from Chihuahua City hasn't appeared, chief?"

"It hasn't," replied Gunther; "and for a quite sufficient reason. Noble never got to Chihuahua City. He hadn't, that is, up to three days ago. His department has been in touch by wire with the United States consul there. Somewhere in Chihuahua State, between Juarez and the capital, the man has dropped from sight."

"And my job is to find him?"

"That's part of it; you may call it the smaller part. If Noble has got himself into a mess. and it's possible for you to lend him a hand without deviating from your straight line of duty, by all means do what you can. But you must under-

stand the situation is one in which the fate of any individual counts for little.

"Your assignment is to pick up the inquiry where Noble left off, and you must proceed on the assumption that this first report of his is also his last. I have gone through the affidavits sent on by Noble. They cover the Hidalgo end adequately, so that ground need not be gone over again.

"First of all, you are to learn exactly what occurred on the Mexican side preceding the crossing of the border. We should know where the fighting began, and whether the defeated force was made up of soldiers regularly enlisted under a recognized revolutionary standard, or of common bandits.

"Find out who led them, if you can; but, far more important than that, discover who was the responsible head of the pursuing troops. So much you should be able to accomplish with small difficulty. Because of your knowledge of Spanish and your experience among Mexicans of all classes, I'm banking on you for certain results."

Leguerre stopped fanning.

"So much?" he murmured. "Then there's something more?"

The chair behind the long table, dilapidated in keeping with the other furnishings of the Lost Division's remote rookery, creaked ominously, as Judge Gunther leaned back in it and swung to face Leguerre.

"There is, Nugent," he said slowly; "but only the Lord knows how you're going to get at it. It's flattering that the highly placed officer, whose contingent fund supports us continually, looks to the I. C. D. to perform miracles; but there are times when his sublime faith is damned embarrassing. We're expected to discover not only the identity of the officer who led the pursuing cavalry into Hidalgo, but also whether he acted merely on his own initiative or on orders authorizing him to ignore American neutrality at his convenience."

Leguerre's brows had drawn together in a frown that quickly cleared.

"Even that might not be impossible," he said. "The thing could be done, given time and luck and money. The Mexican soldier's pay isn't so large, nor his pay days so regular, that a few hundred pesos shouldn't go far."

A faint smile briefly lighted Gunther's gray face.

"Now, isn't it odd I hadn't thought of that?" he queried softly. "Not that I, in my official position, could counsel or consider a recourse to bribery or anything of the sort.

"However, you know these people, Nugent, and I do not. Certainly I don't wish to place restrictions on you which might militate against your success. I'm content to leave the selection of means absolutely to your own judgment. You must understand, though, that any measures you may adopt will be taken as a private citizen. As usual, you'll be quite on your own from the moment you leave Washington."

A broad grin answered the fading smile.

"I'm always grateful for the reminder, chief," said Leguerre. "But it's hardly necessary."

"If you get yourself into trouble in Mexico," pursued Gunther, "you'll have to get yourself out!"

"Doesn't it go without saying?"

The judge glanced at the anachronistic silver wrist watch which was his sole outward concession to modernity.

"I think I'd better not detain you longer," he said abruptly. "A train leaves for New Orleans in exactly forty-five minutes. You'll make almost a spot connection there for El Paso. What you do, and where you go after passing over the border, I leave entirely up to you."

At the door, a moment later, Gunther stood with a hand on Leguerre's shoulder.

"But careful of your facts—*careful!*" he said earnestly. "Uncle Sam stands ready at this minute to turn about from his traditional policy. He's resolved that the guilty must be punished, if it be at cost of war. You're handling dynamite this trip, Nugent."

Leguerre passed a monogrammed handkerchief over his damp forehead.

"It's what time, you say?"

"Five thirty."

"Just the beginning of the cocktail

hour at Wilmerding's!" sighed the elegant one. "Oh, the clink of the shakers, the breeze off the lake!"

He picked up, squeezed, and dropped Judge Gunther's hand in one flowing motion and swung off down the hall.

CHANGING trains in New Orleans, Leguerre at the same time made a change of identity. New initials on his hand luggage and a disk of polished glass no larger than a silver dollar sufficed to work the trick; and it was the Honorable Abercrombie Daunt of England and Alberta who registered at the Hotel Paso del Norte in El Paso.

Leguerre, who habitually carried a half dozen passports about with him, had one to fit the new name. Casually displayed before the British counsul, it passed muster without question. Even better credentials, so far as his majesty's commercial representative in El Paso was concerned, were the Honorable Abercrombie's perfectly trained monocle and his flawless Belgravian speech.

"Conditions south of the line," confided Bradish, the consul, "are a bit muddled up just now, even for Mexico. If this business of yours can be put over, Daunt, I'd really advise that you wait. Say, for a month or two, at any rate. By that time, I fancy, there'll be a decided change."

Leguerre stared through his single glass.

"What—what? Can't say I'm surprised a half, Bradish. Isn't Mexico a land of upsets?"

The consul lowered his voice, after a glance into the outer room in which an olive-skinned clerk sat writing.

"It's something different we're all looking for now," he said.

"Not intervention!" murmured Leguerre. "No, I can't believe the States would be up to it!"

"More than intervention," asserted Bradish solemnly. "Something closer to actual war, I'd say. There's been a rather serious episode recently—a case of Mexican sniping on the American side, and a dozen or so peaceable Yankees done in."

"With the customary furious diplomatic interchanges resulting?" queried Leguerre lightly.

"No; and that's my point. The incident has been permitted to die in the American press. There's been no bluster, but a jolly ominous calm. I have it on good authority that a quiet, but general, troop movement in the direction of the border is under way. The meaning of that, I fancy, we're to see when this beautiful summer's over."

Leguerre fixed the consul with his monocle.

"Is it your suggestion, Bradish," he asked mildly, "that an Englishman may not travel where he has a right to go unless a foreign army marches along to protect him?"

The color heightened in the consul's ruddy cheeks.

"I'm merely giving you my soundest and most disinterested advice, Daunt," he said. "If you'd intended going to Chihuahua City by train, and thence on to Mexico City, I'd not have spoken a word. But you tell me you're bent on making the trip by motor, stopping for a look here and there at the mine workings."

"What's to prevent that?"

"It's dangerous—foolhardy."

"For a subject of Great Britain?"

"For any one who might look as if he'd carry valuables sufficient to repay the trouble of slitting his throat. Bandits are thicker in the Chihuahua mountains these days than they've been since Pancho Villa laid down his arms. I dare say you've heard of 'El Aguila?' "

Leguerre's eyes remained blank, but his ears went forward.

"My Spanish isn't strong," he said, "but I imagine that must translate as 'The Eagle,' eh? Is it a person?"

"A demmed formidable person," said Bradish. "El Aguila was one of Villa's principal lieutenants—one so strong in his own right that he refused to come in and make the peace when Pancho did.

"After the Villa surrender, a number of Federal columns went into the mountains to smoke The Eagle out. It was officially reported a few months later that his followers had been dispersed and El Aguila himself killed in battle.

"But it seems the Federals got the

wrong man. At any rate, after lying low for years, The Eagle appears to have set up in trade again at the old stand, as the Yankees say. I've had this sub rosa—and straight. And I've had positive information that Torrezon, the Mexican federal commandant in this sector, has been piling cavalry into the mountains for weeks past. With the rising unrest throughout Mexico, The Eagle, *redivivus,* would soon have a tremendous following flocking to his banner. It's policy to nip him early, at any cost."

LEGUERRE thoughtfully tapped a cigarette on a well-polished thumb nail, and observed quietly:

"A new liberator, eh? Would you consider it likely then, Bradish, that this Eagle chap would deliberately court trouble with England by molesting a British subject?"

The consul gave a grunt of impatience.

"El Aguila," said he explosively, "is a plain brigand—nothing more, nothing less. In the pose of a revolutionary patriot, he can stir trouble in plenty for the existing Mexican government, and profit vastly under cover of civil war, but his chances of winning through to Mexico City are nil. He knows that; and, since he can have no real hope of coming into supreme power, he's given his men unconditional permission to pillage and murder to their heart's content, without respect to persons. I'd take an oath upon it, Daunt, for I'm certainly speaking with reason."

Leguerre shrugged.

"I've been in many a remote corner of the world and among ugly customers of savages, too," said he, "but I've yet to find the place where British nationals are not mightily respected. Certainly there's at least one mode of advertising in which we outshine the Yankees. It makes us safe the whole earth over."

"You don't know Mexico!" protested Bradish. "Not this part of it, at any rate—not the Chihuahua mountains! No traveler is safe among them. There was a commercial chap who went in about a fortnight ago, a fellow I'd had my eye on. Where's he to-day? I can't tell you, Daunt; but I'll wager a quarter's shot he won't be coming out again—poor Koentler!"

Leguerre caught his breath and permitted a moment to pass before he ventured speech.

"Really?" he queried idly. "Who'd give a hang for *his* government—now? Fair game—what?"

The consul wagged his head.

"It's blessed little prestige his people have lost anywhere in Latin America," said he. "They've jolly well caught up the old commercial grip wherever they've had to let go, and they do have a fashion of buying their way where they choose to journey. That's why, I fancy, this man Koentler decided he'd be safe enough in trying the Chihuahua roads by motor."

There was an edge to Leguerre's voice despite him.

"Well, what happened to him?" he demanded. "If there's an object lesson, I dare say I'm bound to consider it."

Bradish tamped down the tobacco in his pipe and drew upon it deeply.

"I keep in touch with things, Daunt," he said. "It's not officially part of my duty; but it's my nature to keep my eyes open. I have sources of information that I'm constantly developing, and, though Koentler spent only one night in El Paso, I'd looked him over before he got away. I knew when he left, and how, and in what direction. And I knew his business.

"Koentler had represented himself as a traveler in machinery, but I'm well satisfied that his real trade was in firearms. He gave it out he was heading for Chihuahua City, and after that into the south and east. Unquestionably his actual destination was southern Sonora, where General Francisco Pesquiera has declared his independence of the central government.

"Instead of going by train out of Juarez, Koentler purchased a motor car and engaged a driver familiar with the back country. He drove away at dusk that evening—and that was the end of him."

"Why," asked Leguerre brusquely, "do you say 'the end?' "

"For the quite simple reason," Bradish replied, "that four days after his departure the car and driver had returned

to Juarez without Herr Koentler. It's impossible he could have got even to Chihuahua City over the mountain roads. Indeed, Daunt, I've made it my business to assure myself that he *didn't* get there. And I learned, at the same time, that the American government had been looking him up, too. That's what convinces me that he'd gone in to bootleg arms and munitions."

"What do you think happened to him?"

The consul lifted his beefy shoulders.

"Considering the time element, my opinion is that he either was done up by his driver guide, or fell into the hands of El Aguila. Whichever way, there's dashed little difference. It's against The Eagle's principles to turn his victims loose after he's robbed them, and he never burdens himself with the care of prisoners.

"What price motoring the Chihuahua highways now, Mr. Daunt?"

Leguerre, rising, picked up his hat and stick.

"Really, you know," he said slowly, "I'll have to think it over a bit."

WITH the Honorable Abercrombie Daunt, née Leguerre, a bit was no more than a bit. Within an hour after he left Bradish, he had presented his passport for the visa of the Mexican consul general in El Paso and had taxied across the international bridge into hectic Juarez, with its wide-open gambling casinos, its reeking saloons, crowded shoulder to shoulder, along foul and muddy streets, and its jostling, sidewalk mobs of rum-elated refugees from the great American drought.

In the fiesta across from the noisy Cabaret Central, he gambled desultorily at roulette and faro and chuck-a-luck. Later he drifted, a tourist of tourists, along the closely packed line of cafés until, toward dusk, he had drifted into the lurid precincts of the "Red Way" called the Calle Diablo.

There, very convincingly the worse for the high-powered cheer with which Juarez lures the tripper, he took the trail of the guide who had driven Herr Koentler into the mountains. Eventually he had his clew from a one-eyed ruffian on whose dance floor Mexican soldiers, with side arms banging their thighs, whirled plump, dark beauties of the town.

"You are right, señor," said the master of the dance. "To see country from the rail is nothing. It is from the road one really sees. My friend Gomez is the man to take you in his fine machine wherever you would go, whether it is to Chihuahua City or beyond. All roads Gomez knows well. Only a little time ago he has driven another señor through the mountains, with perfect satisfaction."

The good eye lighted, as Leguerre opened an impressive wallet and tossed a bank note on the bar.

"Good name—Gomez. Musical—what? Let's have a drink to Gomez. Where's he? Where shall I find him?"

"But here, señor. You have only to wait a little. *Un ratito*. Gomez comes here nightly. He is my friend, as I have said. We shall drink again on—what you say—the house?"

A lounger at the end of the bar close to the door sauntered out after the proprietor has spoken swiftly to him in Spanish: "Bring Antonio. He will be at the fiesta. Tell him another señor would use his machine, and that he must come at once or he may lose him."

Before Leguerre appeared a solicitously proffered bottle of tequila.

"You will take with it the lemon, señor, or the salt?"

Five staggering drinks of the ardent tequila were eating into the floor at Leguerre's feet when a swarthy giant, whose garb was a semimilitary conglomeration of leather and whipcord, swaggered to the bar and sent a silver dollar spinning along its length.

"What did I promise, señor?" whispered the Cyclops. "This is Gomez." His lips lifted from his teeth in a yellow grin. "Antonio would be a good traveling companion in a rough country—*si?*"

At a hail from the proprietor, the big Mexican came to Leguerre, acknowledged an introduction with a sweep of his half-acre sombrero, and extended a tremendous furry paw.

"I am your servant, señor," he said, when Leguerre's wishes had been explained to him. "This country for one

thousand miles around I know as—as I know the label of the good José Cuerva, from whose bottle we drink."

Leguerre's eyes were filmed, his tongue thick.

"Right-o," he said. "I've heard about you. You're just back from a trip through the mountains—what?"

For an instant the man's gaze was hard; then he smiled blandly, and replied slowly:

"It was not long ago that I returned; but this last journey was a short one." His glance descended to Leguerre's bespatted ankles and returned to the gleaming monocle. "The señor is not an American? No, I do not think."

Leguerre laughed.

"Not I!" said he. "Can't you see I'm not quite that?"

"And not—French?" queried Gomez softly.

Leguerre had been twirling his glass at the end of its wide cord. He screwed it into his eye again and stared stonily at the huge Antonio.

"Gad!" he cried. "That's not bad, now! Hadn't thought I'd palled it up with the French enough in Flanders, you know, to come to look like them!" He brought out the roll of bank notes that had brought the light into the one good eye of Antonio's friend, separated a small bill found with seeming difficulty, and tossed it on the bar. "I'll stand the house on that. But I say, Gomez, have a good look at an Englishman while you've the opportunity. Perhaps you'll know one the next time."

Vigilance departed from the Mexican's sharp black eyes.

"A thousand pardons, señor," he murmured. "I can understand that I have not paid the compliment. I have not had the honor to meet before the English—not once."

Leguerre shrugged.

"It's odd. We do get about. When shall we start, Gomez? Your price of twenty pesos daily and the cost of your petrol, will do well enough. I'm a bit impatient to be off toward Chihuahua City. With the stops I wish to make some——"

"I am ready when you give the order, señor," said Gomez—"whether it shall be in an hour or in five minutes."

"Then in the morning—at seven," decided Leguerre. "You'll meet me here—what?"

Gomez nodded.

"If I am spared by God," he said piously. "But in one manner I would advise the señor. You will go back to El Paso to-night, I think?"

"Oh, I must. I've my luggage to look to."

"Then guard yourself, señor, that you do not let it be known how you travel. There are many thieves both in El Paso and Juarez, and it is as well they do not learn we go by automobile."

IN front of the Café Central, a few minutes later, Leguerre folded a couple of bank notes into Antonio's vast hand and swung waveringly aboard a trolley bound for El Paso. The ride over the bridge into the heart of the anachronistic city on the American side was a short one, and the boiler-room breeze off the river was quite the reverse of bracing; yet the monocled passenger was notably the better for the trip when he stepped off the car in front of the Paso del Norte.

He stood for a moment in thought, then shed his eyeglass and shouted after a darting empty taxi.

"Fort Bliss," he told the driver. Then, sensible of the man's stare, he added: "Oh, I know the time! But that makes no difference. I have good friends at the post."

The particular friend whom Leguerre sought out when he had been deposited at the fort was a lieutenant in pajamas, who dug his knuckles into eyes heavy with sleep after answering the rap at the door of his quarters and bellowed:

"Beards of all prophets! Is it Nugent Leguerre?"

"In person—and in a hurry," observed his visitor succinctly. "I'm making an early start into mañana land to-morrow, and I intend to get a little sleep myself. No—don't bother to draw that cork on my account. It's a purely business call this time. What does Army Intelligence know about El Aguila, Parsons?"

"In his last incarnation—or this?" de-

manded the awakened officer, yawning at the edge of his army cot.

"Is there a difference?" Leguerre wanted to know.

"That's what we're trying to find out. El Aguila is officially dead, written off our books—that is, he was until a few weeks ago. Then we began to hear reports that set us to wondering. The word is that The Eagle is miraculously resurrected. Maybe the story of his demise was the traditional exaggeration; or maybe some one else has seized on El Aguila's name and reputation. Anyway, we're curious to know. Possibly we'll be hearing in due course. There was a state-department man in the vicinity of El Paso a while back, and I believe he went into Mexico."

"He did," nodded Leguerre. "How'd one tell this Eagle, Parsons, if he were to happen to see him passing in the crowd? Haven't I been told he was carved up a bit—about the face and neck, as the police reports say?"

"Just so," said the weary lieutenant, impolitely gaping. "The Eagle's right cheek resembles—well, a platter of cold cuts. Or, maybe, a double-tracked railroad. He's got four long scars running down it. Count 'em—four!"

"Most accommodating of him," Leguerre remarked. "It's barely possible I may be running into El Aguila. And if I do—now, here's the well-known army's part, Parsons."

He drew his chair closer to the narrow bed, filched a cigarette from the tin beside it, and talked on in a discreetly lowered voice. After exactly a quarter hour of steady monologue, swift and incisive, he glanced at his wrist watch and arose.

"And there's the program, old bean," he said; "and, say what you will, I'm going through with it. You people must sit tight for a week. If you'll do as I suggest, then—well, I'll be glad to see you, I fancy."

"But, great Lord! The chances you're taking!" protested the intelligence officer.

Leguerre grinned.

"What a type you are, Parsons, for a safety-first lecturer! I'm thinking of one time in the Philippines—— Oh! Are you blushing? I'll sign off, then. But you needn't worry about me. I haven't met The Eagle, but I know his breed. I'll gamble his heart's as yellow as his skin."

He turned back at the door.

"At all events, Freddie," he said, "I feel safe in saying just au revoir!"

Then the door slammed, and the gravel of the path along the officers' quarters crunched under his quick light steps.

WITHOUT doubt, Antonio Gomez did have the appearance of a "good traveling companion in a rough country." When Leguerre picked him up in the Calle Diablo at the appointed hour he wore about his waist a wide cartridge belt from which depended two holstered pistols and a long knife in a dark leather sheath.

"It is well to be prepared for unpleasantness," he explained amiably. "Then less likely is unpleasantness to occur. Oh, I know this country! And the señor—he is armed?"

Leguerre tapped the bag he had just tossed into the rear of the machine.

"I have a gun in there," he said. "Dare say I shan't have to bother getting it out."

The big Mexican shook his head.

"I don't think, señor," he said. "Me, I can make the way open if somebody stand in our road. But that is not the one chance in the one hundred—not on the road we go."

But it was a wild route which Gomez followed after the outlying *jacals* of Juarez had been left behind—a trail ever leading deeper and lifting higher into the bald and rugged mountains. There was a stop for a luncheon of barbecued goat meat and bitter wine in a herder's isolated *jacal;* and through the dry, searing heat of the afternoon Gomez accomplished the better part of a second hundred miles of bumpy climbing and bumpier coasting.

The shadows were flinging fantastically from a high peak they were skirting when the thing which Leguerre had been expecting came to pass.

From behind rocks lining the lonely way sprang a dozen tatterdemalions with leveled rifles. Automatically Gomez threw out his clutch, and the groan of

the brakes was one with the groan that rumbled in his throat.

"Valgame Dios! They are many, señor—these people. To fight would be to suicide. But perhaps they are only soldiers who will permit us to pass when they know we are not their enemies."

"My pistol!" roared Leguerre. "Damn it! It's in the bag. Toss me one of yours, Gomez."

The Mexican's big hand descended to cover the holster nearer his companion.

"No, señor," he said. "I have my own life to protect. We must treat with these men. *Habla usted Español?"*

"Do I speak Spanish?" queried Leguerre. "That what you mean? No, not a blessed word of it."

"Then let me to talk," urged Gomez.

The car, a hundred feet up the narrow rocky road when the riflemen had sprung out to block the way, came finally to a halt within a couple of yards of the closest of them. As he listened to the ensuing interchange, Leguerre's eyes were as blank as if the conversation were wholly incomprehensible to him; but his heart, nevertheless, was thrilling. Gomez had spoken angrily; and the anger, at any rate, was genuine.

"Pigs!" he had shouted. "Why have you caused me to come so far? What is the reason you did not appear at the cabin of Maximilian, the herder?"

The ragged man in the road glanced questioningly at Leguerre and caught reassurance from the driver's eyes.

"The Eagle dwells in a new nest, Señor Antonio," he said deferentially; "and he would have this gringo brought to him."

"It is not a gringo," corrected Gomez. "It is a rarer beast.I have fetched to the spit. This animal, who is weak in but one eye, is English. What does The Eagle desire of him? Are there not places nearer by where he can be laid away when we have stripped him? Ah, he carries much money and a great watch of gold that strikes the hours! This, in addition to the small watch which he has had made into a bracelet. Truly, to the English time must be a valuable thing, Ruiz."

The barefoot Ruiz cackled.

"I have heard it said, Señor Antonio, that they deal with time as if their lives depended on it. That must be true. Perceive that this man, bringing his watches into the mountains, has placed his life in——"

Gomez halted the sinister sally with a peremptory ejaculation and turned to Leguerre.

"Perhaps, señor," he said in English, "this will not turn out so badly as it at first appeared. These men are soldiers, not robbers. But there are no officers among them; and, having been set to halt all who come along the road, they dare not let us proceed until we have been seen by their commander. They wish us to accompany them."

A half dozen of the riflemen were already climbing into the machine, jamming the tonneau. Leguerre glanced around at them.

"I'll leave it to you, Gomez," he said. "But when we've seen this general Johnny, don't stand about gabbing any longer than you're obliged to. I'm all for getting on to this town of Hermosa before it's too late to keep on, and sleeping in a bed."

"Oh, but we shall be quickly away, señor," promised the Mexican with a strained solemnity. "When I have explained that you are English, assuredly the commander will pray for your pardon. It is of certainty a great privilege to be an Englishman!"

THE car was moving again. It completed the dip and flew at a sharp up grade. In the tonneau a high voice struck up an air that Leguerre recognized as an old marching song of the followers of Pancho Villa. Other voices came strenuously into the chorus:

La cucaracha, la cucaracha,
No quiere caminar——

And so, singing, abandonedly jesting, filled with a spirit of carnival in their sense of a job neatly done, Leguerre's captors came under a midnight moon onto a wide shelf of rock, where a man whose cheek was streaked with four long, red scars stood waiting their return. He had come to the door of a rude, canvas-sided hut.

Leguerre, stepping out of the machine, looked swiftly about. Many other men —as many as a hundred—were uncoiling themselves from the *sarapes* in which they had been sleeping on the bare rock. All that he saw were Mexicans, save for a few whose squat statures, chunky shoulders and high cheek bones were characteristic of the unconquerable Yaqui. Of Homer Noble there was no sign.

The Eagle called out an order and vanished into his hut. Presently, after a second and more thorough search of his person had convinced the lately musical guerrillas that he had no weapon, Leguerre was shoved into the presence of their leader.

El Aguila, a bulbous man with a great black straggly mustache, sat at a table which bore a single bottle, a single glass, and a single candle. He addressed Leguerre in an English quite as good as that of the border-dwelling Gomez.

"I am glad, señor, to welcome you," he said. "It is good fortune that you have honored me by coming into these mountains of mine."

"Are they yours?" asked Leguerre indifferently. "Quite a property—what?"

"Ah, yes, they are mine," said The Eagle. 'Some, I know, would deny it. They would also deny my existence. But I am here, señor, and I hold the mountains."

El Aguila deftly built himself a cigarette of black-flake tobacco within a wrapper of corn husk and lighted it at his candle.

"I have been told," he continued then, "that the señor is of the race of new Romans who are greater than kings and presidents and such humble patriots as myself."

"My passport," said Leguerre, tossing the folder which contained it onto the table, "will speak for me. Be good enough to examine it at once."

"Ah, passports!" murmured The Eagle and spread his heavy hands. "They are not always real." He grinned before the challenging flash of Leguerre's monocle. "But a little minute, señor. It is not to question this document of yours. I have the pleasure to meet Englishmans during many years. You are what you say—what the passport will say. Before this, though, I have had a guest——"

"I am interested," interrupted Leguerre coolly, "only in my own affairs. And they will be best served by getting this business done with the least possible further delay. You have my passport before you, and I assume you can read."

"But slowly," said El Aguila. "However, señor, I would speak of this other guest of mine. It may be you will hear more of him. He was a foreigner—so he would have had me believe. In his passport was written a name of many harsh consonants, beginning with a letter which is not in our language—a 'K.' That is the crooked-backed letter, no?"

LEGUERRE fastened the glass more firmly into his eye. His face still remained impassive.

"What has all this to do with me?" he demanded, with a gesture of impatience.

"Nada," said The Eagle. "Nothing—direc'ly." His voice took on an edge of ironic politeness. "You will give permission that I speak on, please? Well, this foreign man was what you call the beeg fake. This I knew from friends who had observed him beyond the border; and when he crossed into Mexico he had the obligingness to travel with escort of another who was also my friend. So he came to be my guest."

Leguerre stifled a yawn.

"If that's all," he said, "I'd like to be getting on."

El Aguila's grin widened.

"But no, señor!" he exclaimed. "You are to accept my hospitality."

"Couldn't think of it," protested Leguerre. "Really, no. Kind of you and all that, I'm sure."

The Eagle drew a pistol from his belt and placed it conveniently on the table. Then he picked up the passport, still folded, and thrust a corner of it into the candle flame.

"Observe, señor," he calmly invited, as the paper blazed. "This is the visé of The Eagle."

He dropped the burning passport onto the rock floor of the hut and brought his boot heel down upon it.

"It is no difference that the paper is destroyed," he said. "You will not need it again."

"You've made trouble for yourself!" cried Leguerre. "If you think the loss of the passport wiil manage to keep me from——"

El Aguila moved a heavy shoulder.

"Quién sabe?" he queried. "Yes, I think you will remain, señor. This is my will, and the will of The Eagle is here supreme."

"If you try to detain me," warned Leguerre, "it'll go all the worse with you when——"

Again The Eagle cut him short. With the pistol in his hand, he rose and walked to the door.

"You may see, señor," he said, waving the gun, "where the good earth has been turned. We have made a bed there for the señor of the crooked 'K,' and you shall rest beside him."

The monocle, released, as Leguerre's eyebrows lifted, dangled at the end of its cord.

"What—what?" he gasped. "What the devil do you mean?"

"You surprise me to ask," said El Aguila, lightly reproving. "I have said I am glad to see you come to me. It is for the reason that you will do me a service, I think."

Leguerre studied him for a moment through the restored glass.

"A service?" he repeated at length. "In what way?"

"I wish you to write for me a letter. It shall be to the English consul in El Paso, and I will see that it reaches into his hands."

"Preposterous!" snapped Leguerre. "What should I be writing to our consul about? I'm barely acquainted with him."

The Eagle expelled a ribbon of acrid smoke.

"You will tell him," said he, "that you have fallen into the hands of troops of the Mexican Federal government. Also, that it is threatened by their commander that you will be shot. This is plain to you, señor—*si?*"

"Damned if it is!" burst out Leguerre. "Don't believe it's the truth, for one thing. These chaps of yours don't look like soldiers of any government to me. Out-and-out brigands, rather."

"We call ourselves patriots," submitted El Aguila gently. "However, the señor need not bother himself with distinctions. He will write the letter for me. *Si*—I am certain."

"What if I don't?"

"You die."

"Ho!" cried Leguerre. "This is a chance you're offering me to buy liberty—and life. If I write this imbecile letter for——"

"Then also you die, señor. That must be. You will see clearly when I have explain'. It could not be otherwise. No, I would not give a promise to raise the false hope."

Leguerre stared.

"You're a queer sort, my friend. I know very well that you're trying to run a bluff on me, as our cousins over the line say. But suppose I did take you at your word? If I thought you intended to pop me off in any event, why the devil should I——"

THE EAGLE eyed him with the detached and dispassionate regard of the killer. He replied slowly:

"Oh, but there is death and death, señor; quick death and slow death; death that is merciful and death that may come so ling'ring, so 'orrible, that—no, señor, this you will not choose. You will write this letter. After all, it is nothing to you or your country. With my other guest it was perhaps different. He was, you must know, an agent of the gringo government. *He* would not write."

At the impact of the revelation, Leguerre all but stepped out of character.

"Good God! You *tortured* him?"

The Eagle's gaze wandered to the new grave.

"No, señor. The torture he have escape'. Unexpected, he seized a pistol from the belt of one of my men. He 'as killed two and wounded others before bullets bring 'im down. But that will not happen again. We have learn' a lesson."

Leguerre, his brain racing, retreated into the hut and seated himself on the upended box that had been The Eagle's throne.

"Now, I wonder," he said presently, "if you *are* lying. What could be your game?"

El Aguila measured the distance between him and Leguerre and evidently found it discreet. Dropping his gun into its holster, he rolled a fresh cigarette.

"It is more than a game, señor," he said, frowning. "This is strategy—the international chess. Your own government, he plays it; although, perhaps, not in The Eagle's way. Have you not hear ever of me, señor—El Aguila?"

"Have I, I wonder?"

"Then you do not know Mexico, señor. For The Eagle is the great liberator of the nation. Me, I have sworn years ago that this government of Mexico shall fall. And just so the government have sworn that I shall be kill'.

"When first I had gather' strength, a beeg campaign was begin against me. I was not then prepare'—not then with my good wisdom of to-day. The regulars were too many. They beat me in battle; and they think that one of my generals, who lies dead upon the field when the fight is end', is El Aguila himself. Unhappy Zamarra! He was of the build of me, and upon his cheeks were scars like mine—made at the same time, when we had come unfortunately into the hands of the Yaquis.

"I have let the whole world think, señor, that Zamarra was The Eagle. It has give' me time to think, to plan. I have seen that by myself to displace the government is impossible. So that I am satisfy for the gringo to do. He has not the will to do it, but I am force him.

"You are strange to Mexico, to the border. I must reveal to you, then, how I have start'. Some time ago I have cause' the report to go out that The Eagle is yet alive. This is the beginning of my plan. Then I have make a battle that is not a battle. Some of my men I have dress' in the uniform of captured Federals and sent them to chase across the border others without uniform.

"The chase is through a town on the gringo side. Many shots are fire' there, and all, be sure, señor, are sent into the gringo houses. This, I have believe', will be certain to bring the American soldiers into Mexico—certain to bring the fall of the government that I hate so bitter."

The Eagle made a scornful gesture with the hand that held the cigarette.

"But the gringo," he went on, "has no stomach for war. It is not enough for him, this what I have done. He will not act, but first must make great talk. And the talk is all. The voice it become smaller and smaller, until finally it is not heard at all. *Your* country, señor, would by this time have its flag flying over Mexico City. Is it not so?"

"I think my country," drawled Leguerre, "would—take steps."

El Aguila's lips lifted off his big gleaming teeth.

"Ah!" he chuckled. "And this is how you will serve me, señor! When you have written to your consul that you are held by the Federals—and when, pardon me, you have quite entirely disappear'—then something will be requir' to happen. Unless he would have England to the south of him as well as to the north, the gringo must fight until the Mexican government is overthrown.

"In this, The Eagle will be the gringo's ally. For the gringo will not wish to stay in Mexico, and who but the liberator who has aid' him shall be left in power? So now, señor—is all not clear? You will write and die—quickly, without pain?"

El Aguila's eyes were on the fat, red-barreled fountain pen clipped in the pocket of Leguerre's coat.

"I see," he said softly, after a silence; "I see you have brought the tool to write."

LEGUERRE had been thinking of the pen, too—thinking for many minutes past, thinking of it even before it had caught the attention of The Eagle. He lifted it out of the pocket.

"But," he said blankly, "there's no ink in this pen."

El Aguila laughed.

"A small matter. Blood would be better. But I am please' to supply good black ink, señor—and paper, also. You will write as I give the words—no?"

For a space Leguerre sat staring at the pen. Gradually his face changed, as with the hardening of decision. He had been

holding the barrel of the red pen in his right hand. After a time, slowly the fingers of the left hand closed around the cap.

"Do you know," he said, his voice very low and yet with an arresting quality in it that brought The Eagle's head sharply around, "Señor Aguila, I had a sort of feeling I'd find this pen useful some day."

The Eagle suddenly, instinctively tense, scowled as he peered down at Leguerre.

"You say—what is it?"

"I was speaking of my pen. You have asked me to write with it. But this, my friend, is not a pen made for writing. Quite the contrary. Its purpose is to—*erase!*"

"Como? I do not understand."

Leguerre met his blinking, puzzled eyes.

"Soon enough you will," he said. "Listen! Have you ever heard of pens meant for other things than writing?"

"Not for writing?" echoed El Aguila. "You have select' a strange time to jest, señor. For what else would a pen be?"

Leguerre's glance dropped to the pen and remained lingeringly upon it.

"You were not in the Great War, or you would not ask," he said. "Have you never read, though—has no one ever told you—of the pens that the enemy left behind?"

Comprehension and something akin to consternation dawned on El Aguila's dark face. He said nothing, but stared harder.

"Remarkable little inventions, the enemy pens," pursued Leguerre evenly. "They'd be left behind in the dugouts as the forces dropped back on their defensive line. Then along would come some poilu or cockney or Anzac or American. The pen would be snatched up, and—well, I saw a couple of the poor devils, Mister Eagle.

"They were in shreds—blown clear out of their belts!"

El Aguila's voice came hoarsely.

"Ah Dios! And this pen of——"

Leguerre nodded.

"This is one of 'em. There's concentrated hell in it that will kill every living thing within a hundred feet if it is let loose."

The Eagle laughed loudly, but a little uncertainly.

"It is good, señor—very good! You attempt now to—what you say—to run the bluff on me? But I have no fear. Your pen may not write, but then I shall supply one. I will call to have it brought."

HE drew a deep breath; but, before the cry was out, Leguerre had spoken a sharp warning sentence in fluent and staccato Spanish:

"Don't raise your voice, Aguila! It'll be the last sound ever heard out of you, if you do!"

The Eagle's chunk of a jaw dropped lower.

"You speak our language? I did not know."

"I speak it," said Leguerre, "as well as you do. If any one comes in, and you talk too much—that's the end of you. Remember!"

A pallor was creeping over El Aguila's swarthy cheeks.

"Come, señor!" he blustered. "Be through with the nonsense. I am not the man to be tricked by such child's play." His right hand was creeping toward the holster at his thigh. "Your pen is—*pah!*—nothing!"

"I can easily enough prove what it is, Señor Aguila," said Leguerre. "But the proof will be lost on you. You'll never know what happened. But if you really wish it, I'll take off the cap. Shall I?"

El Aguila looked into the pseudo Englishman's eyes. He found them cold, steady, purposeful, uncompromising. His own gaze wavered. For all the chill held by the thin night air of the mountains, beads of perspiration were shaping on his low forehead.

"Are you sure you know what it means if I remove the cap?" queried Leguerre. "It will be death for both of us, and all near the hut will die with us."

"I do not believe!" whispered El Aguila; but his hand had halted in its stealthy approach to the pistol and dropped limp at his side.

"It is an unpleasant death, Aguila," Le-

guerre went on, holding the other's eyes. "One's legs will be blown away from the body—one's arms—and the heads go rolling off like footballs. I've seen it many times."

His shudder imparted itself to The Eagle.

"You would not dare!" said the liberator.

"No?" asked Leguerre. "I don't see why not. You say I'm to die, anyhow—and at the worst I'm comfortably certain of not ending up in the same hell that waits for you. As a matter of fact, Señor Aguila, in a very few minutes I intend to show you that I *do* dare. If you have any desire to pray, begin your prayer now. I'm going to count ten to myself; then——"

His fingers tightened on the red cap and twisted it.

"There's one full turn," he announced. "Another does it. Look out at the night, Señor Aguila—at the mountains, at the moon! You see them for the last time."

A choking cry, pregnant with animal terror, escaped El Aguila.

"No! Do not!"

"What difference?" demanded Leguerre. "You have said you do not believe?"

"Your eyes have told me that it's true, señor. Your face is of death. I think you are the devil himself—you, with your devil's pen!"

"You will soon meet other devils," said Leguerre grimly.

The Eagle's eyes were glassy with horror.

"Put the thing down, señor! I will be your friend! No harm shall come to you. I swear it!"

"Am I a fool to trust your oath?" asked Leguerre. "No, Señor Aguila. We're both quitting the world—together. Now!"

"No, no!" pleaded the wilted Eagle. "You are mad! You would give up your life without need. To-morrow I will see you safely back into the United States, or to Chihuahua City—wherever you wish to go. On my sacrd honor!"

Leguerre eyed him keenly.

"There will be no to-morrow, Señor Aguila," he said. "You must show your good faith to-night—at this minute—or off comes the cap. Gomez is outside. Call him. Tell him that I am to be taken back to Juarez, that the start is to be made at once, that *you* ride with us. Nothing else! Do you understand what I say?"

The Eagle nodded dazedly. He moistened his dry lips and his voice crackled tremulously through them.

"'Tonio! Come to me!"

THE giant Gomez, his mystification long since lost in weariness, was in a half doze behind his wheel when Juarez came into view at the foot of a long slope the following afternoon.

Leguerre's fist, pounding his back, roused him, as the car approached a crossroad.

"Turn east!" was the order. "We will go to the ford below the town instead of over the bridge."

Mechanically, unquestioningly, Gomez swung the wheel. In another hour the machine stood on the south bank of the sluggish, shallow Rio Grande. El Aguila turned red and sleepless eyes upon Leguerre, who had shared the tonneau with him on the long journey and still held the red fountain pen in his hand.

"It is here we part, señor," he said. "You see, I have kept my word to the letter. You have come through without trouble of any kind. On the other side is the gringo Fort Bleess. See—a patrol moves on the shore across from us!"

Leguerre stepped stiffly from the car.

"You are mistaken, Señor Aguila," he demurred. "I am not ready to say good-by to you. I want your company over the river."

The Eagle drew back into his corner of the tonneau.

"It is impossible, señor. Have I not fulfilled my bargain?"

Leguerre fingered the cap of the fat, red pen.

"I don't care much about life myself," he said. "And my heart's really set on having you come with me."

His eyes were ponds of ice shimmering blue at the surface. The Eagle looked into them and shivered. Slowly he pushed himself erect, climbed down over

the running board. His dragging feet stirred the dust of the bank, then splashed in the turpid water.

On the far bank a rifle and a voice simultaneously were lifted.

"Git back!"

Leguerre answered the trooper's challenge with a jaunty wave.

"Don't waste a good cartridge on us," he entreated. "We're coming to call on Lieutenant Fred Parsons!"

THAT evening, from the post telegraph station in Fort Bliss, Nugent Leguerre sent two telegrams. One was long and in code, addressed to one Judge Gunther, resident in Beauregard Lane in the city of Washington. The other informed a Mr. Jeremy Phelps, of Kennebunkport, Maine, that Mr. Leguerre would arrive to pay his delayed respects on the afternoon of the third day following.

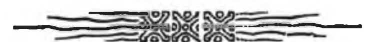
The signal corps operator in the telegraph station was moved to enthusiastic comment after the messages had been written.

"That's a Jim-dandy pen you've got, Mr. Leguerre," said he. "Cost a heap, though, don't they?"

The pen was fat and red—not beautiful. Nevertheless, Leguerre caressed it as he returned it to his pocket.

"Yes," he admitted; "but they're worth the price. Now this one—yes, it's been a life-saver! I really mean it."

More stories in this series of "Leguerre of the Lost Division" will appear in future issues of THE POPULAR.



THE ALBERTA BUFFALO HERD

RECENT reports from the Alberta section of Canada declare that Alberta's hinterland will soon have as large a buffalo population as it had in the primeval days. Thousands of buffaloes from the Wainwright Park herd have been shipped to the wooded buffalo area in the North, and this year four thousand more are to be transferred to the same section. The animals are thriving and their numbers are increasing, and they have begun to fraternize with their big brothers, the wood buffalo.

A FIFTY-YEAR SEARCH FOR A MINE

THE most patient of all human beings is the prospector. His plodding faith rivals that of any other. Just think of searching fifty years for a lost mine of red ore! The man who did this is still searching, and presently, as soon as he can save enough for another grubstake, he will set out again with pack, pick, sieve and burro for another trip into the desolate San Matillo Mountains.

Fifty years ago an Indian told this man, Manuel Taylor, that back in the mountains there was "much gold." Accordingly, Taylor prepared and, with the Indian as guide, ventured into the San Matillos. After a difficult journey, they arrived at a place where ran a long streak of red earth. There, in that bricklike dust, was gold, the Indian insisted. Taylor examined it, but found nothing. Out of habit, however, he carried back some samples of the earth, wrapped in a cloth.

For the time he forgot all about the dust, but, months later, he came across the samples as he was preparing for another trip. He was surprised to see tiny particles of gold as the dust, now quite dry, crumbled in his fingers. An assayer told him that the red ore tested two thousand one hundred dollars' worth of gold to the ton.

Taylor then knew the prospector's idea of heaven, but his dream came to a sad end when he learned that his Indian guide was dead. And now, after half a century, he is still seeking his lost treasure; and who can say that his faith is diminishing?

All Motives Lacking

By Mark Reed

Author of "Useless," "'Adios, Senor!'" Etc.

A good story is always enjoyable; but only the kind that hits home to a universally inherent sentiment or longing will really make you thrill. Throughout this tale, about an ordinary business man who disappeared from his home and office, you are bound to get that thrill.

THE boy was eighteen, bareheaded, well set up, and his eyes were marked with dark circles, as though from lack of sleep. As he accompanied the police inspector up the stairs to the third floor of the vast hive of railroad offices, he lagged behind to pull himself together. He did not dare trust his voice, but merely nodded to a passing clerk to whom he had once been introduced by his father. In the auditing room several men recognized him.

Instantly, by some mysterious telepathy, clerks, stenographers, executives—every last person on the entire floor—seemed to get the information that John Tobey's son, Carl, had come in with a police inspector. Without actually seeing them, the boy got a sense of long rows of staring faces, as he passed. In partition doorways groups gathered curiously, glad something had happened to break the day's monotony.

"Well, son," said the inspector, "lead me to his desk first, then I'll talk with some of the big chiefs."

Carl wished he could have conducted the inspector into one of the important-looking mahogany boxes with "General Auditor" or "Auditor of Freight Receipts" on the door. Still, his father's desk had not been so bad. It stood somewhat aloof from the rest, and it had been given additional privacy by a short partition at one side, which, while it made electric light an all-day necessity, on the other hand proclaimed that an official of some distinction functioned behind its shelter.

Rounding the corner, Carl expected to find his father's desk deserted, shrouded in a desuetude befitting the circum-

stances. To his amazement, a man was at work there, a younger man with black hair and little civility. He was even sitting on the leather cushion Mr. Tobey always used. It had been in the chair when Carl's mother first brought him "to see where father worked," fully ten years ago. Then the cushion had been black and glossy; now it was worn and squashed out of shape. A lump came to the boy's throat.

"This—this was his desk," he said.

The inspector threw back the lapel of his coat.

"I'm Rebstock—police headquarters," he snapped in his best staccato. "Making inquiries about John Tobey—disappeared two nights ago. Left his work in good shape?"

"Everything was completed right up to the time he quit."

"How long you worked here?"

"Nine years."

"His leavin' upset the routine any?"

"No; you see I'd been his assistant, and I knew his work."

"Did he have any enemies—any one who'd like to see him drop out?"

The dark-haired man flushed self-consciously.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed. "This is a good job, but even so you don't think I'd——"

"I'm not thinkin'; I'm askin' questions," interrupted Rebstock. "Tobey ever friendly with any special jane here?"

"Look here, Mr. Rebstock!" interposed Carl hotly. "He wasn't that kind of man."

"Kind of man? That's every kind of man. How about it?"

The man in the swivel chair sought to evade the issue, but the inspector wrung it from him. Mabel Royle, a stenographer who sat around the corner of Mr. Tobey's partition, had been absent from work the same number of days as John Tobey himself, and inquiry at her lodging house had revealed that she had given up her room.

Inspector Rebstock smacked his lips.

"Ha! Now we're getting warm!" he said and borrowed the telephone to put headquarters on the girl's trail.

Carl, listening, burned with humiliation. This was indeed getting serious. He followed the inspector into the head auditor's presence, fervently hoping some less scandalous light would be shed on the subject directly.

But the head auditor had little light, scandalous or otherwise, to shed. After Tobey's disappearance all funds had been checked up, and not a penny was found missing. The man had been a trusted employee for many years, faithful, popular, punctual. As to the missing stenographer, much to Carl's relief, the head auditor was inclined to set her down to coincidence.

"Ah, ha, Mr. Head Auditor!" said Rebstock. "It's right there you're slipping. Around forty the young faces begin to get 'em. Many's the case I've had the misfortune to handle before this."

ONE block from the red-brick bulk of the railroad offices at the corner, Carl and the inspector waited for a car, by a white-banded pole.

"It—it was right here by this white pole he was last seen," said Carl; "about five minutes after six."

"Seen by who?"

"Charlie Waldo."

"Who's he?"

"Member of the lodge my father was treasurer of. He said that my father was waiting apparently for his car. But the conductor of the six-six car told me he was sure he never took it."

"Humph!" thought Rebstock. "That doesn't exactly square up with Mabel Royle. Still—yes it does."

At sight of the Tobey cottage, his brows uptilted superciliously. The green shutters were newly painted; the small lawn was neatly clipped; while profusions of shrubs and flowers, growing halfway to the eaves, gave the house an air of reposing in a nest edged with blossoms. It was hardly the inspector's idea of the proper home for an offender against the law.

As they came up the cement walk, Mrs. Tobey rushed out on the porch in a flutter of excitement.

"I've heard from him," she cried. "A post card. See!"

Carl glanced at the view on the card.

"Why, it's nothing but our own railroad station!"

"Hand it over, son!" ordered the inspector. "Huh! Postmarked eight p. m., June 26th. That's the night he disappeared. Took it long enough to get here."

Mrs. Tobey looked shamefaced.

"You see, sir," she said, "I wasn't home that night, and the next morning when I came back and found he hadn't slept in his bed, I was so flustrated, I called up his office right off, and they said he wasn't there. So, of course, I knew he was missing. It must have been in the mail box since yesterday, as I never thought to look there all day, and this morning I——"

"What's he say on it?" interrupted the inspector. "Maybe you can read his handwritin' better'n me."

Although she already knew it by heart, Mrs. Tobey adjusted her spectacles and read with some indignation:

"DEAR MARY: Have got to go on long vacation. Don't worry. Love. Hastily,
"JOHN."

"Gee!" muttered the inspector to himself. "The same old stall!"

"I can't make out," went on Mrs. Tobey blandly, "why he should want to take a vacation now. We've always taken our vacation the last week in August. Last year we had a week with my sister in Akron, and——"

"Sorry, ma'am, I gotta be frank. He ain't on no long vacation. He just wrote you that to let you down easy."

"You don't think——"

"I don't—not unless he's taking one long vacation to avoid taking another. But I suspect that ain't the truth, either. Just you wait till we locate some reason for his having to clear out. That'll explain everything."

An hour later, in the presence of Charlie Waldo, to represent John Tobey's lodge, the small safe in the living room was forced open by an expert. The lodge funds were found intact; the books balanced. No money missing here. The inspector started to rummage through the safe.

"Move that light over so it'll shine in, inspector," said Waldo.

THEN an unexpected discovery was made. From a narrow, upper-corner compartment, Waldo drew forth a package of bills, yellow and crisp, fresh from the press. Rebstock counted them.

"Five hundred bucks! Any idea where they came from?"

Mrs. Tobey, who was just a good old-fashioned wife and mother, despite her modern bob, quailed before the inspector.

"No, sir, I haven't. I never knew John to have that much cash at home."

Carl, watching closely, could have sworn the upper-corner compartment had been empty when he first looked into the safe.

"I'll take charge of this cash," announced Rebstock.

"Oh, come now, inspector," said Waldo. "I don't see the necessity. We've no evidence Tobey stole a cent from anybody. Probably this is some money he saved up. Why not let it stay right there where his wife can use it if she needs to?"

"Well, at that, I ain't got any objections. I've known from the start money wasn't the reason he cleared out."

"What was the reason?"

The buzz of the telephone interrupted.

"Mr. Rebstock!"

The inspector took the receiver from Carl, with the bland assurance of a man about to produce a bowl of goldfish from under a silk handkerchief. As he listened, his blandness faded to incredulity, then irritation. He hung up with a jerk.

"That stenog's been located takin' care of a sick aunt!" he explained reluctantly.

Then his glance fell on Mrs. Tobey. One motive or the other: money or a woman. It never failed.

"Ever have any trouble with your old man?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"I tell you, John Tobey was a happy, home-loving man," said Waldo, taking up the cudgels again.

"Indeed he was," said Mrs. Tobey. "Why, almost every evening, except lodge nights, after supper he'd sit in that big chair and smoke, and we'd listen to the

radio. I know he wasn't unhappy or despondent. Of course, sometimes he was a little close-mouthed when he'd made his mind up—like most men."

Rebstock scratched his head and looked around the room. The steam was hissing cozily from the radiator. Near it, in front of the radio, a capacious chair, full of pillows and with a smoking stand beside it, was obviously the chair of the man of the house. The curtains were clean and dainty. The carpet clean and unworn. Books and magazines and a bright-red azalea were on the table. He had to admit it was the last sort of home a man would want to desert. There was one card left.

"Husband wasn't in very good health, was he?" he shot at Mrs. Tobey.

"Why, yes. I never knew him to have a really sick day. Sometimes I've heard him say he thought he didn't get enough exercise, but he was always well."

"Just what is your theory, inspector?" asked Waldo, a glint of amusement behind his air of concern.

"Theory—theory?" sputtered Rebstock. "How the devil can I have a theory? Here's a man with everything going jake: a good job, a cute little home, no enemies! There's no money gone. No skirts involved. What can I do, if I can't locate a single reason for him to clear out?"

"Oh, dear!" Mrs. Tobey seemed divided between exasperation and a desire to cry.

"Now, now, Mary, don't you feel bad," said Waldo, patting her arm sympathetically. "If he has written once, I bet he'll write again. And, until he does, you have enough money and a son to look out for you."

"Sure, I'll look out for mother."

Mrs. Tobey gazed at her son proudly.

"I'm not going to worry a bit," she said.

TRUE to Waldo's surmise, three days later the postman brought the Tobey household a second post card. As Carl and his mother studied it, they looked at each other with increasing mystification. The view was the huge shoulder of a mountain outlined against a background of excessively fleecy clouds. Halfway up the mountain a cross had been made in ink. Beneath it ran the following message:

> I am here. Don't worry, but look in the safe. Love. JOHN.

"It's mailed from a town called Tolifer," said Carl.

"Where in the world's that?"

He got down the family atlas.

"It's a speck of a place down in West Virginia."

"I don't believe any of it," she exclaimed indignantly. "Living halfway up a mountain, without a house to be seen on it! How far away is this Tolifer, anyway?"

"Easily four hundred miles."

Mrs. Tobey's usually good-natured mouth tightened with determination.

"I shall write him in care of the general delivery and tell him to come home at once."

"Maybe he can't."

Over a week elapsed before any answer came to her vigorous five-page letter. Mr. Tobey used the same view of the lonely mountain and the fleecy clouds on which to reply:

> Killed a rattlesnake to-day. It had nine rattles. Love to you and Carl. JOHN.

"'Killed a rattlesnake!' Well, thank goodness, it didn't kill him. I should think he was out of his head."

"Say, mother," exclaimed Carl, "that might be a reason for his disappearing. Inspector Rebstock said that men sometimes lose their memories, but he didn't think father had. We better send Mr. Rebstock down there."

But, over the telephone, they found the inspector lukewarm toward the whole idea.

"See here, ma'am," he said. "I can't chase a man all over the country when I haven't got anything on him. If I had something to pin on him, I'd be down there in a jiffy. But just because he has killed a rattlesnake ain't no reason to swear out a warrant. I don't want to alarm you; but, if I was you, I'd send down a doctor or one of those alienist experts."

"I'll try one more letter first," said Mrs. Tobey.

This time she summed up the whole situation in one succinct paragraph:

DEAR JOHN: If you really want to desert your wife and son, please have the goodness to say so. As it is, with you four hundred miles away and writing silly post cards, I don't know what is the matter with you.
Your wife, MARY.

To which Mr. Tobey made reply on the back of a vividly blue stream, specked with whitecaps:

DEAR MARY: Don't want to desert you. Wouldn't for worlds. Look in the safe. Peaches are beginning to ripen here.
Love, JOHN.

"He *is* out of his head, Carl. How can peaches ripen on high mountains?"

"They can't," agreed the boy. "He has been away over five weeks now. I guess it is either a case of writing the police down there, or else my going down in person."

"Of course," said his mother, "that mountain he says he's on may be miles from where he is mailing these cards."

"Leave that to me."

"And it may be dangerous down there. Mountains, rattlesnakes—and you don't know what!"

"Say, mother, I'll eat that up!" The eager-eyed boy seemed to grow an inch. "Guess I've not been one of the biggest athletes in Carter High for nothing."

"What *do* you suppose that man is doing down there?"

"Beats me!" said Carl, suddenly feeling quite superior to his missing parent. "I'll go down and bring him home."

TWO days later, near nightfall, an athletic figure in a well-cut suit and a straw hat with a green-and-yellow band, drew near the railroad station and shipping sheds at North Tolifer. Above the handful of ugly wooden buildings, Tolifer Mountain rose, an enormous, precipitous bulk, heavily wooded up to the point where the orchards began. Two thick cables sagged above the trees, connecting the loading platform far above with the rear of the shipping sheds. Down this cable were swaying cars of peaches, thirty baskets at a time, to be loaded into the waiting refrigerator cars.

Carl, still amazed to find that peaches did sometimes grow on mountains, had been going from orchard to orchard for two days. He stopped and stared up the mountain blackening in the twilight. The town of Tolifer itself, half a mile from the railroad, with its dusty, unpaved main street, false-front stores, mule teams, and muddy Fords, had seemed wild enough; but the shacks of North Tolifer lay at the base of the mountain like a frontier post; which, indeed, it was, for the railroad went no farther. In a square wagon in front of the sheds a burly man in overalls and dirty jumper was roping a load of peach baskets.

"Good evening," said Carl, speaking briskly with some effort. "I see from your wagon that you drive for Henderson Orchards."

"Drive—hell! I'm the manager."

"I beg your pardon. I'm looking for —for John Tobey. Have you anybody by that name working for you?"

The man eyed him with a sharpness that contained little approval.

"He is of medium height, about forty, and not very well——"

"Then he ain't workin' for me."

Carl consulted his list.

"Before you go, could you tell me where the Colfax Orchards are? I haven't been able to locate them yet."

The man in the square wagon laughed.

"That ain't so strange," he said. "They are off the map." He pointed with his whip. "See them orchards up yonder?"

Carl followed the direction of the pointed whip, as it swept the long ridge of the mountain, and made out what looked like two light-green napkins fastened to the dark slopes by innumerable thickset pins.

"Them's the Colfax Orchards!"

"Do you know if they have a John Tobey working there?"

"You might ask that fella cussin' out them mules. He's from Colfax."

During his colloquy with the Henderson manager, Carl had become aware of a mule team backed up to one of

the refrigerator cars. The load was off and into the car, but that fact, to the mules, one a brown, ungainly fellow of huge proportions, the other, black and solidly built, seemed no reason for movement. The driver was standing up, lashing equally with whip and tongue. The blows rang out in the still evening, and the man's anger seemed so ungovernable to Carl that he hesitated before interrupting.

The mule beater wore a blue shirt and black pants, both so faded by rain and sun that they were much the same tone. As Carl stood timidly at one side, he could see long locks of unkempt hair sticking through the breaks in his straw hat. The battle seemed likely to wage all night, when abruptly, as though suddenly he saw the point to the argument, the gawky off mule lifted his ears and settled forward into the harness, all docility. The driver sat down in a matter-of-fact way.

"I beg your pardon," said Carl politely. "Are you the manager of the Colfax Orchards?"

The man turned, and beneath an unshaven, bronzelike tan appeared the features of John Tobey.

"Father!"

The older man let his gaze pass from the green-and-yellow hatband, to the striped tie, and down to the wide bell-shaped trousers of slate blue. He even noted the conspicuously worn fraternity pin. Two days' tramping had done little to remove the urban poise and alertness of Carter High's biggest man.

"Don't you know me?"

"I reckon," said Mr. Tobey slowly, a vague look coming into his eyes, "mebbe you're a stranger in these parts."

"You don't seem very well known here yourself."

"Me? I'm John Kopriski, or jes' 'Priski' round here."

Carl felt weak. Then his father had been obliged to flee under cover of an alias.

"What?" He could not summon up courage to ask point-blank what his father had done. "You—you see," he went on diplomatically. "I thought I'd come down and see how you were getting on."

But Mr. Tobey, uninterested, was straightening his reins.

"Now I got those two hinges of hell started," he broke in, "I reckon how I better keep 'em movin'."

"Yes; but listen, father. I want to talk with you."

"Then get in an' ride!"

CARL crawled over the dusty wheels. The seat was a board supported by springs with a generous play, and he braced his feet hurriedly, as the team started with a jerk. Mr. Tobey devoted himself with painstaking concentration to the black mule, that obviously was regretting having started.

"Giddap, Dynamite! Yuh're so wuthless I'll be havin' yuh stewed up fur yuhr tallow!"

The boy listened anxiously. As he remembered, his father's voice was rather quiet and gentle; this man's voice seemed to well up from the bottom of his lungs: and it was curiously larded with bits of mountain dialect. He glanced sidewise at the bare forearm which held the reins. It was black with sunburn and dirt, and the cords and veins stood out like the wires of an uncovered cable. As he remembered, too, John Tobey had been stout—well, if not stout, at least thickset and not much given to physical exertion. This man was lanky and lean, with a queer, unrecognizing look in his blue eyes. All of these things made a fellow feel funny.

"How things going?" Carl asked, striving to speak as though everything was normal.

"That off mule," remarked Mr. Tobey, "is an outlaw. He broke a feller's leg, and the feller gave him to Ben. We've been breakin' him, but he's still hell on wheels."

"Who's Ben?" interrupted Carl wonderingly.

"Don't you know Ben? Ben owns Colfax Orchards—that is, he'll own 'em after this year's crop, and he'll be able to put in a cable car, too, if he has good luck. Mind lettin' down those bars, young feller?"

They left the main valley road and

struck off down a long lane. On either side were rough grazing pastures, some filled with steers, some with colts and mares; in another were several bulls. One, his tail in the air, came for them at a trot and followed along the other side of the fence. Carl eyed him apprehensively. The huge muscular chest was wet with sweat, the eyes were bloodshot, and the animal seemed to quiver with rage.

"I should think," ventured Carl, "that bull was strong enough to bust right through that fence."

"He is, but he don't know it; and he won't find it out 'less some damn fool gets him a lot madder'n he is now."

Carl breathed easier. For a moment he had forgotten he had come to take his father safely home. After a third pair of bars, they came to a stream, very rocky on either bank, but too muddy for the nature of the bottom to be seen. The mules stopped short, ears back.

"Hop in, you brutes!" yelled Mr. Tobey.

"Maybe they know it's too deep."

"Get in there, you long-legged loafers! Get in there!"

The mules snorted and quivered.

"That's water, you two sons of sea cooks—nothing you two damn fools never seen before!"

This sarcasm told. Abruptly the mules plunged forward. The wagon dropped, jolted and swayed. The water came to the hubs, and the hoofs of the struggling animals splashed the muddy stream over the two men in the seat. Carl drew up his legs to try and shield his best suit. Then the gawky, brown-colored mule slipped, and, for what seemed an eternity, his forefeet pawed the submerged boulders for security. After fifty yards of this they made the other bank, and struck, with the accuracy of an inch, a set of wheel ruts leading into the woods and up the mountainside.

"Loaded," remarked Mr. Tobey, "we take the ridge road. It's six miles round. But coming back empty, we come up this way, 'cause it's only three quarters of a mile."

It was soon easy to realize the necessity for this. The road at times seemed almost vertical. After every fifty or one hundred yards of climbing, it made a sharp hairpin turn; and the wheels were now deep in a rut, now on top of some stone from which they dropped with a jolt that threatened to shatter the wagon. The mules seemed to recognize the climb as an inevitable piece of drudgery. They settled down to it doggedly, throwing their entire weight into the traces. Regularly they rested, Mr. Tobey setting the brakes with the whole weight of his body.

FAR above their heads, century-old trees rose on either side and made the road dark. Yet, directly above, the sky was still blue, and the sun was on the clouds. Once, looking straight down the side of the mountain, he could see the stream they had forded far below. Mr. Tobey was as still as the forest.

"Are you feeling pretty well, father?"

Mr. Tobey considered this so long that Carl decided he was not going to answer.

"Me, you mean?" he finally said. "Well, I manage to eat all Ben's wife sets before me."

Still not a word of inquiry about his mother or a hint as to why the ex-railroad clerk was driving mules up Tolifer Mountain.

"Poor dad!" thought Carl. "Guess he has gone nuts, all right. Wonder what I ought to do."

They turned a final hairpin and came out into a clearing, in the center of which stood a low, whitewashed house. At some distance from it stood a shack which, from the hay bursting through the broken boards, evidently served as a stable. Farther on was a long building of good construction, freshly painted. This Mr. Tobey explained with pride was the new packing house, adding that the road which led past it was the ridge road to Tolifer.

"Better go back that way," he said. "It's longer, but"—he glanced at his son's clothes—"you won't have to swim the crick."

Carl thought fast.

"Say, it looks great up here. Mind if I stay a day or two?"

"It ain't anything to me what you do, young fella. Maybe Ben can give you

something to do if you're hankerin' after mountain life."

As they approached the back door to the whitewashed house, a vigorous voice cried out:

"You march your back tracks outa here!"

"Like blazes I will!" yelled back Mr. Tobey heartily.

"Oh, Priski! I reckon I didn't mean you. That heah yaller hound keeps a-sniffin' round my little possum."

Following his father, Carl saw a tall, rather handsome woman standing by the stove, stirring the contents of several spiders. Pushed close to the stove for warmth, was a cradle in which evidently lay the "little possum" referred to. At the table sat a large, broad-shouldered man in his shirt sleeves, his elbows on the table, as though he were very tired. Six children, ranging from four to twelve, chattered boisterously as they ate, three on either side. Priski's place was at the other end of the board, between a red-headed farm hand and the old man blowing on his saucer of tea. None of them looked up.

"Ben," said Mr. Tobey, "here's a young chap I picked up down to the siding. Can you give him work for a couple days or so?"

The broad-shouldered, tired-looking man turned and looked Carl over.

"Waal," he drawled, "he's a right smart purty fellah, but I don't reckon he has constitution enough for these heah mountainsides, do you, Priski?"

The light from the single lamp on the table was too dim for any of them to see a faint twinkle shining in Mr. Tobey's eyes.

Carl flushed hotly.

"I am quite athletic," he said.

"Waal, take him out on the sled with you in the morning, Priski, and give him a chanct—on our athletic field."

"I didn't come here——" began Carl angrily; then he stopped. "Guess the joke's on me!" he concluded.

Ben's manner changed.

"Nobody's hurt, I reckon. Draw a chair up to the table and lay in some grub. Reckon he'll need a plate," he added to his wife. "As for beddin' him, there ain't no place 'cept alongside of you in the packing house, Priski."

"That—that'll be fine," said Carl doubtfully.

In the packing shed he watched his father, still half dressed, stretch out upon a pile of hay and pull up his share of the ragged blanket.

"Don't you miss a regular bed?" he asked.

Mr. Tobey drew in a long breath, enjoying the scent of the hay.

"Boy," he said, "I ain't never been more comfortable in my life."

THE next morning Carl awoke to find his father watching him with that same vague impersonal stare.

"Six o'clock!" said Mr. Tobey. "Here's some duds for you. Soon's you get into 'em, breakfast's ready."

When Carl appeared outside the packing shed in an ill-fitting pair of overalls and a heavy pair of army shoes, his father was seated on an inverted basket, nursing his pipe with slow, comfortable puffs and gazing out into what appeared to be a sea of white smoke. Without turning his head, Mr. Tobey indicated the vast restless mass.

"Beginning to break up! Watch!" he said earnestly.

Never more certain that his father had gone daft, Carl watched. In a moment, through a jagged tear in the white smoke, a green patch of the valley floor appeared. On it he made out what seemed a house seen through the inverted end of a pair of opera glasses. The rent widened, and the streets and church steeples of Tolifer shifted into view, an infinitesimal clay model of a village far below. Then the fog, billowing along, broke in a dozen places and revealed sun-lighted sections of fields, woods, and river.

"Seven miles acrost that valley!" exclaimed Mr. Tobey rhapsodically. "Seven miles of nothin' but air!"

They left the seven miles of air to go in to breakfast, which consisted of fried potatoes, salt pork, snake beans, and coffee, with bread and butter, exactly like the evening meal.

"You and the new fellah can sled 'em down to the packing shed to-day, Priski,"

announced Ben, as he got up from the table.

"Sledding 'em down to the shed," proved an exhausting occupation. The orchards hung on the mountain at an angle of twenty to forty degrees, and the ground was a slipping, sliding surface of flat stones, varying from the size of a penny to the size of a plate. Wheels were out of the question, and the peaches were collected in a huge sled which, when started at the top of the orchard empty, the mules had no difficulty in dragging down to the lower side, while the man and boy piled on the baskets, as they went. Furrows had been plowed between the rows of trees, and by keeping the upper runner in one of these, the risk of capsizing was minimized. But sometimes their entire weight was required to keep the load from overturning. Each averted catastrophe Priski gloated over as if a personal triumph.

"Gosh darn mountain!" he muttered. "We'll show yer!"

At the first opportunity Carl slipped off for an interview with Ben. For a moment the big orchardman's face lost its tired look at the news that Priski was the father of the smartly dressed young city chap he had kidded on the previous evening.

"Jumping wild cats!" said he. "That's a right sudden piece of information. When Priski first come, I sez to my wife: 'He 'pears purty soft and pale, but help's scarce, and I guess I'll chance him. He acts like a fellah just escaped from prison,' I sez, too; 'but there ain't nuthin' here but peaches for him to steal, so I guess how we're right safe.' 'Mebbe,' sez she; 'but, all the same, I'm a-goin' to hide that jog o' moonshine whar he can't set his eyes on it.' "

"Oh, he doesn't drink," said Carl. "At least, he didn't at home. He was an auditor."

"Whar'd he locate his idees 'bout drivin' mules?"

"I think when he was a boy he lived on a farm. That's it!" exclaimed Carl, "I bet he's lost his mind and gone back to doing things he did when he was young."

"Waal," drawled Ben, "he's certainly lost his mind if he's give up a good job in an office to come up and grub on this heah mountainside."

Carl asked if he could stay a few days, work along beside his father, and wait for an opening to coax him back home.

"Sure! Stay long's you want. I'll pay you regular wages," said Ben.

FOR two long, hot, back-breaking days father and son sledded peaches to the shed. Ben was storing them there, not taking time to carry them down the mountain. The sun was ripening the fruit so fast, the important thing was to get them off the trees at once. By the third evening after Carl's arrival, fully fifteen hundred baskets of green fruit were picked, some still in the fields, many piled high in the packing shed, more on the porch of the whitewashed house; and Ben had gone down to the railroad that afternoon with the first load.

But Carl's problem was no nearer solution. Mr. Tobey seemed cased in a shell of utter forgetfuness. There was about him the bland perversity of a happy child who has no realization of the trouble he is. He mentioned his son, never as "Carl," but always as "the boy." As they washed up for supper at the back door, Carl tried again to bring a sign of recognition into his father's vague, impersonal glance.

"How'd you like to sit down to some of mother's cooking to-night? I'm tired of this darn fried pork and snake beans."

Mr. Tobey splashed water over his face and shoulders with the abandon of a man who had washed from a bucket at the back door all his life. "We got ground hog for supper to-night," he said amiably. "Old grandpap shot a couple this mornin' in the clover patch. Didn't you hear the shots?"

Carl admitted he had.

"Wonder why everybody's so quiet tonight."

Inside, they found the kitchen was heavy with disaster. Ben sat at the table, his head in his hands, his plate pushed to one side. The red-headed hand was eating voraciously, with the air of a man who let nothing interfere with the duties of life. Grandpap, smoking fiercely, added great clouds of blue smoke

to the gloomy atmosphere of the ill-lighted room. Even the children had been struck into dumbness. They sat looking with wide eyes first at their father, then at their mother, who sat on a wooden chair, stolidly kicking the cradle back and forth, the stewing ground hog on the stove forgotten.

"What's up?" demanded Mr. Tobey.

"Hell's up—and all its skunks!" snorted grandpap. "And some of 'em own peach orchards not a right smart way 'long the mountain, neither!"

Ben looked up. He seemed more tired than ever.

"Priski," he explained dully, "those fellahs down at the railroad said they wouldn't send out those refrigerator cars till to-morrow night. Now they up and say they've got to move 'em out on the eight o'clock in the morning."

"Damnation!" Mr. Tobey could not have uttered the word with more wrath had the peach crop, distributed outside in the gathering night, been his own.

"I'm a ruined man," said Ben, "I can't meet my notes. We might as well pack up and git."

"How about telephoning for another car?"

"Take days to get it here. Anyway, what do these railroads care about me? I'm small nubbins with them. Henderson Orchards and Brandon and Clearwater Orchards will get all their peaches out on these cars."

"Didn't you tell 'em how it was?"

"Tell 'em!" Ben snorted. "I reckon now that certain folks, seeing I've got my orchards well under way, would like right smart to own 'em."

They considered each other lugubriously.

"Have they the cars all full now?" asked Mr. Tobey.

"One car's near empty, but they'll run down their odds and ends on the cable early in the mornin' and fill it."

Mr. Tobey studied the bowl of his pipe. "Not if we teamed ours down all night, Ben."

"Couldn't get a quarter of 'em down. It's a three-hours' trip round by the ridge road and back."

They all became absorbed in their thoughts. With a start of satisfaction, Carl realized that the bankruptcy of the peach business might be the twist of fate which would enable him to get his father home.

"Ben!" said Mr. Tobey finally. "I think I could get them two hinges of hell I drive down the short road with a fair-sized load if I had to. I got 'em pretty well trained."

Ben shook his head. "Won't help much to have my mules and peaches rollin' in the crick."

"Might as well have 'em in the crick as in the hands of them big-orchard fellas."

"I have an idee," agreed grandpap solemnly, "I'd ruther."

"No harm to let me try to load."

"It ain't never been done," protested Ben; "above all, not on a night black's this'n. But you c'n risk your neck if you're hankerin' to."

Mr. Tobey's manner became suddenly aggressive.

"The first thing to do," he said sharply, "is to eat."

AS they ate, he deployed his forces. Ben's wife and the red-headed hand were to stay at the sorting shed to get the loads roped and ready, also to fetch down the odd lots from the orchard. Grandpap was to hustle the children to bed, while he, Priski, with Carl, would drive the loads down the mountain and across the creek, with the surer-footed mules; from this point Ben and his pair of horses would convey the load onto the cars, while the mules toiled back for another load.

"Ought to get a load down every forty-five minutes," said Mr. Tobey optimistically.

"Priski," said Ben, "I'm warnin' you fair. The only load you fetch down'll be the one that lands, bottom up, in the crick."

"Huh!" snorted Mr. Tobey.

The red-headed hand rose heavily.

"I've reached my limit," he said. "I can't work all night. I'm tired's a hound dog."

"Nuther can none of us."

Mr. Tobey considered them. They

had all been up since five that morning, and this day was only typical of the work for the past two months on that devilish mountainside, while they sprayed and cultivated the ripening crop. Only Carl's reserve strength had not been sapped, and he was lame and sore from the hardest work he had ever done in his life.

"Ben," said Mr. Tobey, "you got to. If you lose this crop your work of six years is gone."

"Reckon it can't matter in a hundred years."

Mr. Tobey deliberated.

"Wish I had a coupla quarts of Scotch," he muttered more to himself than to any one present. "Don't know where we could locate some moonshine, do you?" said he, turning to Ben's wife with sudden hope.

She looked at her husband, who nodded.

"Waal," she drawled, "reckon how I might lay hand on a jugful if I had need to."

"You'll never have greater need."

She darted out into the darkness, and in a few minutes she returned with a good-sized demijohn, which Mr. Tobey had seized before she could stop him. She cried out, as she saw the precious jug in the hands of the man from whom it had been hidden for the last two months.

"Hold on, Priski," said Ben, jumping up, "reckon how I'm the one to watch over that."

"Nothing doing!" said Mr. Tobey. "The best of men when they get going sometimes can't stop." He eyed Ben and the farm hand sternly. "This stuff's going to be doled out at one-hour intervals, diluted in water."

"Ha! ha!" cackled grandpap. "A good idee!"

Solemnly, as if he were filling communion cups, Mr. Tobey poured the colorless stuff into their tumblers, added an equal amount of water, and then passed them their fates.

"Here," he said, lifting his own tumbler, "is to a cable line down the mountain!"

They drank in skeptical silence. Carl watched his father, a startled look on his face, as though he doubted having tracked down the right man.

CARL never forgot that trip down the mountain. He clung to the seat, his muscles taut with apprehension, trying to peer through the impenetrable darkness ahead. His only job was to jam on the brakes when his father called for them. At times the locked wheels slid on as though the weight of the hundred and twenty baskets lashed to the wagon would push mules and all over into the unseen trees, whose leaves they could hear rustling below. Then the hoofs of the mules, as they struggled to hold back, would strike forth showers of sparks, and somehow the wagon would come to a stop, groaning in every joint. Once the mules refused to budge, despite repeated lashings. Carl got out to investigate. His father was trying to drive them over a drop many feet below.

"Dog-gone sons of guns!" muttered Mr. Tobey admiringly. "Eyes like eighty thousand owls!"

The road seemed to wind down for miles. They could hear the creek below, but it did not grow any louder. At least twenty times, Mr. Tobey's frantic cry of, "Brake her, boy! Brake her!" rang out, and the performance of sliding, jolting, pushing the braced mules ahead, despite themselves, was gone through with again. Each moment Carl expected the wagon to turn over. His hands, gripping the handle of the brake, became cold and clenched with excitement. The only reassuring thing was the steady, gentle voice of his father. Then this stopped.

The front wheel on the right dropped a foot from off a boulder. Suppose a wheel crushed under the strain! The off mule stumbled, pawed frantically for footing, and was tugged to his feet. Carl could stand it no longer.

"We—we won't make it, will we?" he inquired, his teeth chattering.

"Yep, one load's down!"

Just then the mules splashed into the water, and he caught sight of Ben's lantern on the opposite side of the creek, where he was waiting with the horses he had led down. The mules were quickly taken off the pole, and Ben was about

to drive on to the railroad, when Mr. Tobey stopped him.

"Reckon we better take our medicine," he said, as he took from under the wagon seat the demijohn, a cup, and a jug of water.

Back at the packing shed another wagon was loaded and ready. Three trips down were made, then a fourth and a fifth. Mr. Tobey began to calculate the number of baskets they would have down by dawn.

"The only thing that may block us now is Henderson Orchards. When they find that car full, there's likely to be some tall swearin', and some of those boys ain't above drawin' a gun."

WITH the sixth load came disaster. The rear of the wagon began to slide, and it seemed that mules, peaches, and men would be dashed down into the woods. Suddenly there was a crash, and they came to a standstill. They could hear the peaches bouncing down the mountain. While Mr. Tobey stood at the mules' heads, Carl lighted matches, and they saw that the wagon was held up only by the trees against which it had crashed.

"Ain't no use to try and unload," said Mr. Tobey expertly. "Untie the ropes and let 'em slide."

An avalanche of fruit and baskets poured down into the woods.

"Now take off what baskets are left, and we'll see if we can lift the hind wheels back into the road."

After what seemed hours of delay, they had the wagon back again on the road, but with barely twenty baskets upon it.

"We'll have to go on down, anyway, to turn around."

"Gosh!" said Carl, ready to weep from weariness and vexation. "We might have made it but for this."

"What time is it?"

He struck a match and looked at his watch, while they stood braked at a turn. He was dumfounded. They were only fourteen minutes behind schedule.

"We ain't licked yet, boy! Go on, you two hinges! This fight's just gettin' started."

The night was interminable. The boy grew so sleepy that only the fierce jolts over the stones served to bring his numbness of mind and limb back to consciousness and a sense of the man at his side.

Mr. Tobey was as one nerved to a supreme ordeal. Inexhaustible reserves of energy seemed to have been let loose in his wiry frame. Now he muttered softly, now he called the laboring mules every creature in the animal kingdom. Downhill he cursed them in a soft, encouraging tone that even held notes of tenderness and affection. Uphill his voice was harsh —a purely businesslike kind of harshness.

Meanwhile the baskets were steadily diminishing at the packing house. Dawn began to break at a point far down the valley, and a faint light struggling through the dense trees relieved the strain on their eyes, but not on their muscles. Carl felt if he did not loosen his grip from that brake handle he would groan with pain. The mules were revealed white with lather; their heads hung to their knees; and they breathed with long, snoring gasps, yet they tugged up the hill with a dogged vehemence.

Two thirds of the eleventh load fell into the creek, as a lurch of the wagon threw the entire weight of the hundred-odd baskets against a weakened rope. The green balls floated off on the current, herded along by several tipsy baskets, bobbing merrily as if in mockery of the chagrined Mr. Tobey on the wagon seat.

The twelfth load came down in an atmosphere of jubilation. Barely a dozen baskets had been left behind in the empty shed. The thing seemed accomplished. As they sat waiting for Ben to come, the sun rose. Mr. Tobey watched the long, slanting rays burrow into the wooded shoulders of the mountain.

"H'm!" he said. "About time for Henderson Orchards to be waking up."

There was no answer. Carl, his eyes closed, had dropped back, his head between two baskets. The man gently put the boy's hat under his head to protect him from the sharp edge of the basket and sat looking at him wistfully, until the sound of wheels broke his reverie. Ben drew up his horses abreast of the other wagon.

"Out rather early this morning, aren't yer, Ben?" said Mr. Tobey, airily jocose.

The orchardman was beyond repartee of any kind. His unshaven face was gray, and his eyes puffy and blinking from lack of sleep.

"Better let me and the boy carry this load right through," went on Mr. Tobey. "It'll save unharnessing. Any sign of those bobcats from Henderson Orchards?" he added.

"Nary a smell on 'em!"

CARL awoke to the sound of violent argument, mingled with oaths. He thought it was Priski, and he reached mechanically for the brake. Then he saw the wagon was standing empty by the siding, and that the commotion came from three men who were standing before the door of a refrigerator car, talking wildly to some one within.

"Take them damn Colfax peaches outa that car, or we'll throw 'em out!"

"And you with 'em, Priski!"

Mr. Tobey appeared in the doorway of the car.

"'First come, first served,' is the rule of these cars. I'm sorry, but I guess you're out of luck," he said and, jumping down, proceeded toward the wagon.

"Don't stop to chew the rag," muttered one of the men. "The boss'll be down pretty soon and raise hell because we ain't all loaded. Throw out his peaches!"

"Watch yourself!"

The big snake whip, which Mr. Tobey had grabbed from the wagon, cracked menacingly, and the men drew back. Priski backed up to the car door, like one preparing to sell his life dearly. With an adroit swing of the whip, he tested the range of his weapon, and the three big "peach knockers" stood their distance, scowling belligerently. Carl jumped down.

"Stay with 'em, dad! I'm with you!"

But even in the face of disaster, Mr. Tobey still failed to recognize by tone or word kinship with his son.

"Boy!" he ordered. "Just run down the road to that yellow house and ask the station agent to come up."

When Carl returned he found the four combatants in much the same position in which he had left them. The Henderson trio were grinning mysteriously and nudging each other slyly, strangely willing to let the station agent arbitrate the point at issue. Priski watched them out of the corner of his eye, as he stated his cause to the sleepy, half-dressed official. This gentleman, who went by the name of O'Reilly, listened with exaggerated impartiality till Mr. Tobey concluded; then he shifted his morning cigar.

"Priski, it's a terrible shame—it is, indeed; but I reckon Ben's out of luck this time. Henderson has spoke for that car, and he'll have to have it."

"Looks to me you're running this siding for your friends!"

O'Reilly's face darkened.

"You'll find out damn sudden how I'm runnin' it. Get your bloody fruit out of that car! Reckon you'll help, won't you, boys?"

"Sure!" cried Henderson Orchard in chorus.

For a moment Mr. Tobey hesitated. Then his teamster's belligerency left him. He stood and looked squarely at O'Reilly in the manner of a man who is doing a lot of hard, clear thinking. Dropping his whip, he walked up to the startled station agent until he was close enough to tweak the gilt buttons on his coat.

"Read that!" he snapped, pulling from his pocket a small leather case with a celluloid face.

O'Reilly took it, his manner coloring with the respect which all his kind feel for any document or paper which smacks of officialdom.

"What's this all mean, Priski?" asked the official.

"My name's no more Priski than yours is. I'm John Tobey, sent out from the main office at Baltimore. The president's getting darn tired of the way you're carrying on up here. The road rule is that when there's a shortage of cars you're to make every effort to divide the cars proportionately among the growers. Ninety per cent of these other fellers' crops is loaded. Why should they hog a hundred per cent, and Ben Turner not get ten?"

O'Reilly shuffled uncomfortably.

"Of course, if that's what the main office wants——"

"It's not only what the main office wants; it's what they propose to see their employees get for them."

O'Reilly turned to the Henderson men.

"You're out of luck, lads: Colfax Orchards gets that car!" he said with exactly the same gruff officiousness with which he had allotted the car to Henderson Orchards five minutes before.

Carl could hardly wait for his father to get the necessary freight bills and rejoin him on the wagon seat.

"Gosh, dad!" he exclaimed excitedly, his eyes sparkling with admiration. "Why couldn't you let us know you'd been sent up here by the president of the road?"

A look of grim amusement crossed John Tobey's face.

"I wasn't," he said. "I was just bluffing to help Ben out."

"Oh!"

The boy could find no voice to say anything more. The mules went along at a snail's pace. At the creek Ben and Mr. Tobey decided to leave the horses and mules in the woods at the foot of the mountain for the day. It would have been criminal to make the exhausted animals take another unnecessary step.

"By the way, Ben," said Mr. Tobey carelessly, as the three started up the mountain, "here's the freight bills."

Ben looked at them. One thousand four hundred and fifty-three baskets had been brought down during the night!

"Priski," he said. "I—I don't know how I can make this right with you." Then his eyes filled with tears.

"Huh!" Mr. Tobey was very gruff. "Nothin' to be made right with me, Ben. I'm more'n amply paid as it is."

CARL tried to figure it out. Looking back on that dodge of pulling an employee's pass on O'Reilly, he realized that his father could not have been out of his mind at all the past two days. He must have been faking. But why? And how was he 'more than amply paid?' Dead with fatigue, the boy gave it up. When they reached the house, Ben's wife had breakfast ready for them. A quarter of an hour later the only persons awake at the Colfax Orchards were grandpap and the children.

When Carl opened his eyes, it was evening, and the empty packing shed was cool and shadowy. He lay there drowsily; it was a joy not to move even a finger. He felt his father stirring in the hay beside him.

"How are you feeling, dad?" he asked lazily.

"Right smart!" said Mr. Tobey.

As they lay there companionably comparing their aches and bruises, a soothing sense of intimacy with the man at his side came over the boy. He felt more chummy with Priski, who stayed out all night driving mules, than he ever had with the staid, reserved parent whom he used to see across the supper table. This was the time to get to the bottom of things.

"Say, dad, let's talk man to man about this! Mind?"

Mr. Tobey grunted evasively. It is not easy to quiz one's own father, but the boy went on stanchly:

"I admit when I first saw you up here, I thought you'd lost your memory or gone crazy. But, after last night, it's a cinch you haven't——"

"No-o; I guess I didn't go crazy. I—I——"

Grudgingly Mr. Tobey's mind forced itself to a retrospect of his life before he came to Colfax Orchards. The previous spring he had completed twenty years' service at the railroad offices. Twenty years of taking the car at the corner, unlocking his desk, greeting the boys as they came in, bending over the mounds of dirty, greasy bills of lading that came inexhaustibly from the freight offices. He remembered how stodgy and useless his body used to feel, as he sat there; how the four walls of the office crowded in on him. How six o'clock finally came, and he locked his desk, said good night to the boys, and took the car home again. The city, always turbulent and noisy, had engulfed him.

That evening, beside the white pole. the car had come along as usual, solid with passengers. But he had stepped into it so many times there seemed no

purpose in entering it again. As he loitered, he had seen a placard at the State Employment Office opposite. "Fifty hands wanted," it had read, "for West Virginia peach crop." Then he had seen, far down Main Street, beyond the roaring six-o'clock traffic, the hot pavements and the black acrid smoke sifting down from the steel mills, the green of wooded hills! No, his mind had not been clear. But he had not been crazy—exactly. Something else.

"I—I guess I got desperate about something," he said, then avoided his son's eyes, as though desperation were the cardinal sin of the world.

"But why not come home and tell us you were beating it?"

"Before the train left, I did come to my senses. But something made me keep on. The men shipping with me were talking of places they'd seen. Alaska—Guatemala—Australia—and places where they'd worked in wheat fields, gold mines, and on ocean liners! I felt I had something reckless coming to me. I knew if I talked it over with your mother, she'd be so cut up I'd never have the heart to go. So I called up Charlie Waldo and arranged with him to slip some money in the safe for your mother, and to keep mum about the labor gang till I wrote."

"Gosh, it's all too much for me!"

"I'll tell you what ailed me," exclaimed Mr. Toby, inflamed with anxiety to be understood. "I'd been sitting in swivel chairs and morris chairs and car seats till I thought I'd go mad if I didn't get off some place where I could stretch my muscles and yell!"

"Shake off the whole blamed works, eh?"

Mr. Tobey nodded. Through the open doors they could see the deep bowl of the valley filling up with night. Though it was the middle of August, the whine of the wind already suggested winter gales in leash; while the vast contact of star-studded sky and black earth outside seemed to bring into the packing shed something of its mystery and menace—its challenge to monotony.

"I see your point," the boy admitted. "It sure is the life up here."

"Yes, Carl," the elder Tobey said in simple honesty. "Yes, it's the life; but, at that, I guess it'll seem kind of good to be back home again, now I've got my stretchin' and my yellin' done."

A NEW VERSION

THIS anecdote has probably found its way into many adaptations, and there is no evidence to prove that the version given here is the original one. This rendition, though, sounds very plausible.

A traveler stepped from his train at a little way station in Mexico, intending to look around while the engine took on water. While rambling around the station, he was accosted by a half-breed who addressed him in hurried Spanish. The half-breed, it seems, had the original skull of Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, the priest revolutionist who took the initiative against the Spanish rule about one hundred and fifty years ago, and who is now the Mexican national hero. And here was the skull, for sale. The claim was put over so earnestly that the traveler bought the skull.

But—the eternal "but" now appears. A week later, the traveler stopped off at the same station, and was accosted by the same half-breed who sprang the same story.

"But I bought Hidalgo y Costilla's skull from you a week ago," objected the traveler.

"Si, si, señor," replied the man with the skull. "The skull I have now is that of the liberator when he was a little boy."

By

Laurie York Erskine

Author of "The Man with the Brown Eyes," Etc.

In Six Parts—Part III.

White

THE STORY.

On a crag overlooking a great valley stood Angus Royd and his son, John, the latter fresh from an engineering college. The valley, covered with forests and webbed with lakes and rivers, was a sight to delight any owner, and Angus Royd was the owner. There were vast possibilities in that tract; there was water power, "white coal." For years the elder Royd had dreamed that he might some day develop that power, but such development would require a trained mind. John, his son, now had that training. Hoping to examine the important waterways before the gathering storm broke, the two Royds followed an old trail toward Granite Falls. On their way back, the storm broke—a cloudburst that swelled the streams and lashed at the cañons. The two men were swept away into a swirling torrent. A falling tree killed old Angus. His son barely managed to save his own life by clinging to a rock. He fainted. When his consciousness returned, he was being carried into his home. His mother, Margaret Royd, stoically received the news of her husband's death, and tended the bruises of her son. A few days later, John made his way to a cabin on Bald Top, a near-by mountain, about which his father had told him. The place was littered with maps, papers, and calculations—all the data needed on which to base a scientific plan for the development of the valley. He became so absorbed in this material that it was necessary to send Martin Petterflame, a friend of the family, to fetch him home. Arriving home again, John found a letter announcing the imminent arrival of two people from the city, Harry Medrun and his sister, Frances, coming as guests—for the Royd place was a kind of hostelry. The Medruns arrived and John soon found his interest awakened in Frances. As time went on, however, he became suspicious that they were visiting the valley region for other reasons than that of sight-seeing. When T. Anthony Medrun, their father, arrived from Chicago, John's suspicions were justified. He learned that T. Anthony was none other than that great financier of that name. It soon turned out that T. Anthony was definitely interested in the valley, even to the extent of making a prodigious offer. But John Royd proved himself a match for the financier's dynamic business tactics, with the result that John was invited to Chicago, to present before a board of directors his own proposition. In the Chicago office, where it was expected he would be intimidated and possibly fleeced, John turned the tables by dominating the conference with an aggressive presentation of his vast technical knowledge. He was fighting a big battle, not only for his own sake, but for the perpetuation of his father's unselfish vision of the incalculable service the water power would be to the world.

"White coal" means water power, and John Royd was the owner of a tract of land containing immeasurable possibilities in its lakes and rivers. The development of that power brought young Royd into contact with giants of finance, and he needed every bit of the prodigious character and mental strength he possessed in order to properly cope with them.

Coal

CHAPTER XVII.

MISS FERRIS TAKES A LETTER.

WHEN John Royd had gone, and the door of the directors' room closed behind him, Banton turned on T. Anthony Medrun with characteristic directness.

"You were right," he said. "The young man certainly packed a surprise."

T. Anthony grinned appreciatively.

"The question is," he remarked, "do we want it?"

"We'll have to check up his figures."

"Of course. But I'll tell you right now, Banton, that we'll never get anything more authentic than the figures that young pugilist just gave us. He and his father have been figuring them out for years, and that boy knows what he's about. We can use him."

This last he said reflectively. It was a large part of T. Anthony Medrun's lot in life to pick out men he could use.

"If the figures are right," said Banton, "we want it."

Tyler nodded his head ponderously. The telephone rang, and Medrun answered it.

"It's Frances," he announced. "I want you fellows to hear what she's got to say." Then, into the telephone: "We'll meet you in my office directly, Frank."

"But you're not going to pay the kid any such sum as he——" blurted Tyler.

Medrun turned his twinkling, crackling eyes upon his partner.

"No!" he said. "He's got most of those acres up to the hilt in mortgages. Come on over to the office."

In the black-and-gold splendor of his office the efficient Miss Ferris still plied her noiseless typewriter, while Miss Frances Medrun sat in cool self-assurance at her father's desk. The three men greeted her with the genial reserve with which amenities are exchanged during business hours, and seated themselves in various leather chairs about the room.

"We've had him in and heard his illustrated travelogue," Medrun told his daughter in his even, dry tenor. "And I must say, he did it splendidly. Never had a proposition put up to me in better style. We can use him."

"What were the findings?" queried the daughter.

"Good! Yoemans figured out that we could get a hundred thousand horse power out of the place at an expenditure

of four million dollars for development. Yoemans isn't in it with young Royd, and he hasn't had a tenth of the time to study the matter out. Royd estimates a low return of fifty thousand horse power and has an interesting idea about extra-velocity turbines to be placed inside the spillway. He's a good man. We want him."

Frances smiled her peculiar, cold, businesslike smile.

"But I suppose you don't want his price?"

Her father grinned.

"We don't want to buy anything we can get for nothing," he said. "That's the keystone of good business, and that's how I started. What news have you got?"

Banton broke in upon her, however, before she could answer.

"I think it would be fair to Miss Medrun," he said, "if we let her know first how much Royd asked for the water rights."

"That's very kind of you, Harvey," she said, and she managed to do it without betraying how well she knew his remark had been made merely for the sake of exchanging a few words with her. "But, as T. A. says, there's no use discussing prices when you can get a thing for nothing. I've just managed to buy up mortgages covering eight thousand acres of Royd's land, and we can foreclose them at the end of the month. He'll never be able to meet them."

"Where are your eight thousand acres placed on the map?" pressed T. Anthony, withholding his approval.

"That's the catch," she said. "We've got a hold on all the land, including Long Pond and the Bald Top Mountain, and our mortgages cover most of Casket Lake—the dam site, anyway, and some of the gorge in its lower reaches. We haven't been able to buy in mortgages covering any other lots than those."

"Very useful," murmured T. Anthony reflectively. "Very useful. We've taken everything away from him but the parcel of land which is his water power!"

As he finished this remark he sat up straight in his chair and shot a baleful gleam at his daughter from eyes that were snapping with the anger which was inevitably aroused by incompetence and failure.

"I thought you and your brother would have the brains to see that the land we want is the basin of the Overflow. That's where the power lies and that's what he's got to sell!"

"I know." The girl had not quailed for an instant under the angry glitter of her father's eyes, and her voice held no note of diffidence. "And I'd like to say, father, that you should have known I know. This water power find is mine. It was I who checked up on it for you when I first came into the office, and, if you'll remember, it was not until I'd done some close figuring that you showed even a glimmer of interest. You don't suppose I'm overlooking anything at this late date, do you?"

"All right."

MEDRUN spoke peevishly. Intent as he was on dealing with his daughter as one business man with another, there was a singular element in their relationship which constantly put him at a disadvantage. She knew, he hoped, that he would fire her as arbitrarily as any man in his employ; and yet when she spoke in this manner, as he liked to hear all his people speak, he never fired back at her as he would have fired hotly back at any of his men. This it was that made him peevish.

"All right," he said. "But what have you done toward getting us the basin area?"

She spoke more calmly now—a true business woman now.

"Most of the acreage covering that basin area is mortgaged by a lumber firm named Maddox & Cobb. They, it seems, are sailing pretty close to the wind, but they're hanging on to those mortgages because the timber the land contains means a fortune to them. They are just borrowing up to the hilt, with the hope of foreclosing when the mortgages are due. Most of them mature next month, or a quarterly payment is indicated. You see, it's just a game of Royd against Maddox & Cobb; and Royd is betting on his ability to sell to us before the payments are due."

"That puts us in the position of choosing whom we are to back. Whom do we prefer to deal with—Royd, or the lumber people?" Thus Tyler remarked, portentously.

"Who is the lumber firm borrowing from?" asked Banton.

"I've covered that," she said coolly. "They have notes outstanding with everybody in the State. That's our chance. Harry and I have been doing a great business buying in their notes. They don't seem to have an idea how eager their creditors are to sell 'em. They all look for a smash."

"Better use those notes to get the mortgages," snapped T. Anthony.

"Harry's trying to swing that now. He's in Climax negotiating with them. Before the end of the week I hope to have a hold on most of the basin acreage. We ought to be able to foreclose on most of it at the month end; and if we play our hand properly we'll get just the land we want."

"How much has he got to raise, Miss Medrun?"

Banton was never able to eliminate from his speech with her an almost imperceptible acknowledgment of her sex. He tried hard to eliminate it, but he never on any occasion succeeded.

It had the effect of bringing her to a sort of quick attention; an alertness which caused her to emphasize the cold, brisk impersonality of the office.

"About seventy-five thousand dollars would enable him to cover most of his payments," she said.

"Couldn't you close your deal with Maddox & Cobb by Thursday?" snapped her father. "Royd's coming in on Thursday, and it would be nice to know."

"I'll try, but it isn't much time."

"Write to Harry now—better still, send a wire. No; write. Those people in the woods gossip too much. If you can't make it we'll put him off; but better send a special-delivery letter right away. Miss Ferris! Take a letter!"

Obediently Miss Ferris left her interminable typing and drew up a little chair beside his desk.

"You dictate!" urged T. Anthony, and he plunged into a discussion with Tyler and Banton, as his daughter's cool, modulated voice took up the dictation:

"Mr. Harry Medrun, Climax, Minnesota. Dear Harry: It is of the greatest importance that you close your negotiations with M. & C. by Thursday a. m. You must manage to do this because we expect Royd to claim our answer to his proposition on that date. If you cannot——"

Swiftly the cool, gentle voice of the girl continued her dictation; and swiftly the slim fingers of the best of secretaries turned them into shorthand. What was passing in the minds of the two women was completely hidden by the mask of calm efficiency which each one wore.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MIXED EMOTIONS.

ON this morning Isobel Ferris was disturbed. You would never have known it, for Miss Ferris possessed to a high degree the capacity for controlling herself. It is extremely doubtful if many would have detected any hint of uneasiness about Miss Ferris at any time; certainly not at this time. For T. Anthony Medrun would have been the first to do so, and on this particular morning T. Anthony suspected nothing.

It was a Thursday, and T. Anthony had come into the city with a fine feeling for the beauty of the morning and the fitness of things in general. As usual, he found his secretary quietly occupied with the mail, and he greeted her with his customary curt greeting.

"Morning, Miss Ferris," he snapped, and, as he walked through the room in which she sat toward the inner privacy of the private office, he said: "If anybody comes in, hold 'em off. Don't know if I'm in town or not. That means everybody!"

The door closed behind him and, in the seclusion this afforded her, Miss Ferris frowned. Her frown was particularly fixed upon one single letter which lay on top of the pile upon her desk. It was a letter which bore a special-delivery stamp and was addressed to "Climax." In the left-hand corner were the words: "Private—Personal."

The soft-voiced buzzer at the side of her desk notified her that T. Anthony was ready to go over his morning's mail. With a little hitch of her eyebrows, Miss Ferris gathered the pile of correspondence in her hands and slipped quietly through the door which had already swallowed her employer.

T. Anthony looked up as she entered. This was his custom, and she discovered this morning that she had always been mildly annoyed by it.

Miss Ferris took a chair which left the broad expanse of the bare desk top between them, and she passed the first batch of letters to him.

"That's the personal batch," she explained, and then sat quietly alert while he ran through the few letters which she had left unopened for his inspection. He put them all aside except the one from Climax and looked up at her with this letter in his hand.

"What else you got?" he demanded, twinkling brightly across the desk.

Then she proceeded to give him the gist of the business letters. All the time she was wondering what quality of light would have replaced the twinkle in his eye if he could have known what her attitude was toward him.

"A letter from Mr. Blake Carpenter, of the Grain Exchange Bank, says he would like to have a talk with you before he commits himself on the Chinese Railway Loan."

Here followed a moment of silence, while T. Anthony invoked the mental magic wherewith he dealt with the fortunes of men and the future of things.

"Turn it over to Tyler!" he snapped.

"Mr. Desmond Conroy says that if you don't hurry the improvements on the Albany River power works as provided in his contract, you'll have 'the damnedest mess of legal slime stirred up that ever stained your filthy fingers.' I'm quoting Mr. Conroy. And he says that he will be at this office at five minutes past eleven, in person, to give you the chance to do an honest thing. He writes as the president of the Northern Pulp & Paper Company."

This she delivered with a restrained relish that was not revealed to Medrun because it showed only in her eyes, and her eyes were intent upon the letter. Medrun considered the matter with not a whit more concern than he had shown for the banker's letter. These things were all in the business of the day.

"Don't want to see him. We're not ready to deal with him yet. Hand that letter to Banton and have him check up on costs of the work Conroy wants; he's prob'ly got the figures. Get Vandebroen on the wire and tell him we want him to hustle with the legal work. And have Dixon & Harlan sell a thousand shares of Albany Power short. That'll show a depression in the stock and give us an argument. When Conroy comes tell him I'm out of town. Had to go to St. Louis for a few days."

ALL this she coolly inscribed in shorthand before taking up the next letter which lay before her.

"Here's a letter from a man named Wilkins. He's serving time at San Quentin for playing a game which he calls the 'Pay-off against the Wall.' He says you'll know what that means. He expects to be released next Wednesday and would like to have an interview with you. He says he wants a job and wants to go straight."

T. Anthony sniffed.

"That's a con game he's in for, and he's probably planning a con game on me," he sniffed. "Well, give him an appointment. We're all liable to be found out, Miss Ferris."

He beamed upon her, and she controlled her feelings with difficulty.

"Mr. Jaffrey wants ten days' grace to take up his six thousand Central Tennessee common which you're holding against his notes."

"Can't do it. I want that stock, and I want the road. Tell him we close him out on Monday." There was a pause while she jotted it down.

"Anything else?" he demanded.

"Nothing to bother you about, Mr. Medrun," she said.

"Then take this letter to Mr. Harry Medrun at Climax:

"DEAR HARRY: You've done good work on the M. & C. notes, and I'm glad to hear

you've got them eating out of your hand. Wire me directly you have the Royd mortgages in your hands, and please notice that I'm going ahead on the supposition that you get them all. This promises to be one of the richest power properties in the country, and we must see to it that we get all the fat there is in it. Instruct the banks to foreclose without mercy, and leave it to us to handle Royd. Very affectionately,

"YOUR FATHER.

"Get that out as soon as possible, and when Royd comes in tell him I'm playing golf."

The hard note which she could not subdue in her voice should have warned T. Anthony then that his best of secretaries was not inwardly as cool as she seemed.

"But you have an appointment with him, Mr. Medrun," she said.

"Can't keep it. Tell him I'm playing golf. We got to wait till we're ready to count him out. That all?"

"That's all," she murmured and glided toward the door.

"Have a girl sent in here to take some stuff," he barked after her. "You keep nailed to that door. I'm out—all the way out!"

She resumed her place in the outer office with a disquieted heart and a rebellious spirit, and she had not finished typing the letter to Medrun's son before the sleek young man entered and announced the advent of Mr. Desmond Conroy. With a swift glance at her notes she prepared to receive him.

Desmond Conroy entered the office with the air of a bull entering a china shop. Obviously he was bent on doing damage and he seemed to sense the extent of damage in his power.

"I cannot deal with subordinates," he announced. "I want to see the old wolf himself. Where is he?"

Miss Ferris looked coldly upon the great bulk and flushed countenance of the old buccaneer of the pulp industry, and was very mildly sympathetic.

"I'm very sorry, indeed, Mr. Conroy," she said, "but Mr. Medrun isn't in this morning. He's out of town, but I have your letter, and I'll see that he gets it when he returns."

He glared at her, completely nonplused.

"Is it to avoid me that he's gone away?" he boomed.

"To avoid you?" Her eyes were intentionally perplexed. "But how could he know? You see, Mr. Medrun is out of town. He went to St. Louis for a few days on that Tennessee business. If he had been in town, I would have shown him your letter. But he is out of——"

"That's enough! Good God! Would you have me think that he has gone out of town?" He laughed bitterly. 'You tell him I was here," he adjured her. "Tell him I was here; and let the first thing he does on his return be to call me up, for there will be trouble if he fails to see me."

He left the office with the same boisterous, choleric energy with which he had entered. Close upon his leaving came John Royd.

ROYD entered so quietly that Miss Ferris was not aware of him until his shadow darkened the letter she was typing. She looked up and saw him, and the disturbance within her increased a hundredfold. She returned without a word to her typing and finished the letter.

"Will you excuse me a moment?" she asked and, without awaiting his reply, slipped through the door into the inner sanctum.

She laid the letter on Medrun's desk, noticing as she did so that he was immersed in a study of Royd's report

"Mr. Royd is outside," she said quietly.

In view of the absurdity of the attempt she was making, the firmness of her voice and bearing was admirable. Medrun looked up, puzzled. Still he did not perceive in the imperturbable countenance of his secretary a hint of the disturbance which seethed dangerously in her mind.

"You gave him my message?"

It occurred to him that John Royd might consistently have refused to accept dismissal. The formidable glitter of battle crept into his eyes.

"No," replied Miss Ferris. She stood

for a moment and gazed at him inscrutably. "I'll tell him now."

Silently she left the room; but she left behind her an uneasy doubt in the mind of T. Anthony Medrun as to whether he had been wise in his refusal to accept the services of a male secretary. There had been something in that look she had fixed upon him which he could not understand. T. Anthony was uncomfortable, because he was one of those men who believe there is nothing beyond their understanding. T. Anthony recalled that Miss Ferris knew many things he would not like the secretary of any other man to know. Could that look in her eyes have indicated a restlessness which might lead to other jobs? He decided to deal with the matter, and he made a note of it on the tiny pad he carried in his vest pocket.

When Isobel Ferris returned to the outer office she found Royd standing in precisely the same spot he had occupied when first she saw him. He waited with a deliberate firmness until she spoke. Thereby he won a certain victory, for she had been determined that he should speak first.

"Mr. Medrun is not in," she said at last.

Of course, he knew that she lied. That was, as a matter of fact, the essence of her dilemma. With the burly Conroy, with each and every victim of Medrun's ruthless diplomacy, she could deal subtly; lie to them with a nice regard for that artistic touch without which the most convincing falsehood goes for nothing. And she had always derived a justifiable pride from the deftness with which she turned them away. Conroy, notoriously the most difficult man in Chicago to deal with, was as putty in her hands; and a like success crowned her firm frustration of the most abject petitioner. She could rebuff you with a finality that shut you out forever from the presence, or she could dismiss you with a grace that had all the consoling charm of a pleasant social occasion. Yet in the face of John Royd she could do no more than blurt out her lie, with all the distaste and reluctance which brands lies for what they are.

"You must be mistaken," he said coldly. "I have an appointment with him."

Then, out of her self-contempt, she found a protective resentment.

"There is no mistake," she said. "Mr. Medrun is playing golf."

He glanced at the window, calling her attention to the murky skies and the drizzling rain.

"If you're not making a mistake," he said, "Mr. Medrun is. Tell him that when he returns from his golf game; tell him that I came here and left without seeing him, and tell him that when I come back again I shall be glad to assist him in computing the loss which his absence has cost him."

"I'll tell him," she answered coolly.

BUT she was aware of the disturbance within which made her speak with another voice.

"Be careful, John Royd!" she wished to cry. "They're cheating you! They're swindling you! They're cutting the ground from under your feet!"

And she wanted to tell him every detail of Medrun's scheme. But he stood there in front of her, unconscious of the devastation he had wrought in the heart of this best of secretaries. Bitterly she saw the depths in which she moved—a tool for the black and unscrupulous workings of T. Anthony Medrun. The mouthpiece for his lies; the buckler wherewith he turned from himself the actual contacts of his victims. She forgot in that moment how until Royd had entered the office she had never thought of Medrun's unsuccessful competitors as victims; and something blinded her to the fact that any of them needed the same help and timely warning which she now desired to give Royd.

Upon Royd, as he stood there, thinking rapidly, Medrun's rebuff had the effect which a block signal has upon the practiced engineer. The difference lay only in the fact that he couldn't decipher what the signal meant. It was evident that Medrun didn't want to see him. But why?

That was for him to figure out. That was his part of the game. That was a

play which it was up to him to make. Knowing T. Anthony Medrun as he felt he did, John Royd knew that no power on earth could help him if he blundered in his move.

He stared at the bowed head of the girl. It looked very attractive against the background of the black-and-gold curtains. Surely there could be nothing lost by questioning her a little. Yet it was hardly possible that T. Anthony would have the kind of secretary who could be pumped.

Well, what the devil was it all about? The man had been glad enough to see him when he came before. He had yielded to John's absolute demand that the interview be given in the morning, although he had wanted it in the afternoon. That hadn't suggested any lack of interest. And John knew that his figures were right. Of course, they would have studied them after he had gone. And they would have discussed ways and means of getting better terms. Now Medrun was putting him off. A signal, certainly—a danger signal.

John frowned. He had hoped to put this thing through quickly. The end of the month was very close, and there were those payments. He stood silently, while he thought of these things, and he was terribly ignorant of how ardently Miss Ferris prayed that he would go. When he came to a decision it was all against her.

He must pump this secretary. Medrun was up to his tricks, and he would mildly emulate him. Medrun would have bought the secretary, and he, John Royd, must interrogate her. After all, she was part of Medrun's machine. She wouldn't hesitate for a moment to take advantage of him if she saw a way to serve Medrun by doing so. Poor Miss Ferris!

"He's certainly chosen a bad day for a golf game," he said casually.

She didn't reply to this, but busied herself with inserting paper and carbons in the typewriter. He walked over to the window.

"Raining cats and dogs," he said, as if to himself.

No answer. The paper adjusted, she slammed the carriage over and started to type vindictively. She wished the typewriter was not a noiseless one.

"Up in the hills," he remarked, "this will raise the streams half an inch or so. Gallons of water—cubic feet of power! And he's playing golf."

With her lips shut tight, she swiftly pounded the keys, and he watched her. She felt an unbearable tension then, as though something inside her head, something which pressed upon her brows, would drive her to scream. She had not felt like that before. Why didn't he go away? Why was he standing there looking at her?

The keys jammed, and there was a torn spot in the ribbon which stuck in the guides. With her mind nearer chaos than she had ever known, she fumbled with the ribbon. With a click it snapped out of its seating, and while she fingered it, as though her hands were paralyzed, he seemed to be watching her.

AS a matter of fact, he was still gazing through the window to which he had returned, gathering words to deal with her. It was not until he heard her stifled cry that he turned toward her again; and then he saw that she had dropped the spool, and that it was rolling foolishly toward him with a trail of ribbon in its wake. He leaped forward and retrieved it. He brought it to her.

"Thank you," she said, and would have taken it from his hands; but he saw here a providential opportunity, and he was not to be rebuffed.

"You need a new ribbon," he said. "Haven't you got one ready?"

"Yes, here," she replied helplessly—she who was usually so capable, so impatient of assistance.

He took the new ribbon from her and, leaning across her desk, turned the machine so that he could manipulate its mechanism. As he adjusted the new ribbon, he stood very close beside her; and she wished that he was very far away, while, at the same time, she was glad that he was there.

"This is a good machine," he said.

She noticed that his fingers were very long and strong and dexterous. The spools seemed tiny things in his big

hands, and yet he handled them with surpassing delicacy. He might have been a man trained by the company that manufactured the machine, so deftly did he handle it.

"Almost new, isn't it?"

"We got them in the spring," she said.

"Types have changed a lot," he said as he worked. "Have you ever handled a Blickensderfer?"

"A what?" she laughed.

"A Blickensderfer. It's a funny little machine with a cylinder bearing the type. Every time you hit the key the whole cylinder turns around and hits the paper with a whack. I took one up in the woods one summer. It was while I was at college, and I used to spend my summers guiding people up on the White Mountains. I'd guide all day and work my Blickensderfer at night. Used to run it until I didn't know what letter I was hitting, and I used to see that little cylinder spinning round in my sleep."

"Have you always lived in mountains and forests and such places?" she asked by way of making conversation.

"Most always. You see, my father got it into his head to buy up all the forest in the State of Minnesota, and I knew that my job in life was going to be making something out of forest lands. So I took engineering and specialized on forestry and water power because my father wanted me to. I worked out hypothetical water-power projects on every stream in the White Mountains. Got so I could turn water into power wherever I could get a supply of white paper. There! I don't know whether it's going to turn round the right way, but nobody can say that ribbon isn't in." He executed a few trial taps on the keyboard. with the back of the typewriter turned in her direction.

"Thanks!" she said. "And where did you find the power you're selling to Mr. Medrun?"

He glanced at her sharply, because it was in his mind that she might be turning the tables. Was she trying to pump *him?* The sincere interest in her eyes reassured him.

"Well, that was why my father took on all that land," he explained. "He saw it just fifteen years before you people happened in on it."

"You mean Mr. Medrun?" she asked coolly.

"Well, yes—your firm."

She frowned.

"It was Miss Medrun's find," she said.

"You mean she first discovered the possibilities of the project? I didn't know that. She must be a remarkable woman."

"She is. You know, the first machine I ever worked on was a very old and very rattly Westwood. It was made by the Western Can Company." She caught her breath nervously. "That was up in Grand Marais."

"Michigan?"

She nodded.

"Lord!" he exclaimed. "That sounds like a far cry from the office of T. Anthony Medrun."

"It is." She spoke sadly. And then, suddenly realizing the tone in which *he* had spoken: "Have you been there?"

"You bet I have. We were on a job at the Soo and had some piling coming to us from Duluth. It was shipped by boat and didn't arrive when we expected it. The chief was a fat man named Monahan, and he went up to the ceiling. He started wiring and sending letters all over the place. Threatened lawsuits and swore he'd have twenty men out of their jobs for it. But that didn't get us the piling, so I chartered a little cabin cruiser and chugged out passed Whitefish Point, following up the trail of that piling through every port along the lake. We came to Grand Marais one night just before the water turned us upside down. It was a bad night, and we ought not to have traveled that day; but we needed the piling. We found it at Munising. The boat had a lame rudder or something. I had it sent on by rail."

She was staring at him with an interest he did not know he had aroused. When he turned and met her eyes, she did not drop them; then there was a little pause.

"How did you get down here from Grand Marais?" he asked.

"Oh, just chance," she said. "You know how small and isolated it is. It's

been dead for years. I figured that running a typewriter and shorthand would get me away from there as quickly as anything else, so I did it and came to Chicago. Listen to that rain!"

It had turned with sudden fury from a drizzle to a steady downpour. The water rustled in the street and howled in the water pipes.

"That's power!" exclaimed Royd abruptly. "Power going to waste!"

He stood for a moment gazing at her darkly.

"Don't forget that!" he adjured her. "Every day that Medrun delays, he loses tangible assets—money—profit. That ought to appeal to him. I can't be sure when I'll be in again."

Without another word he strode toward the door, and she could not find the words to stop him. She saw him go with the feeling that she saw him going to his doom. She desired feverishly to warn him, but that was beyond the limit of her emotion. She was still the secretary, and while she was the secretary of T. Anthony Medrun she would be loyal. Yet she realized that now she could hold that position no longer.

The cool competence which had brought her in her twenty-third year to this high station, was not wisdom, nor philosophy. It was common sense, which is the most treacherous of counselors. For common sense deals with the commonplace and is helpless before such extraordinary complexities of emotion in which Miss Ferris was now entangled. She had not known before the disturbances which John Royd aroused in her, and, taking her unaware, they brought her to the verge of the only unforgivable sin a private secretary can commit; which is indiscretion.

The buzzer broke in on her reflections. She took up her book and entered Medrun's private office.

CHAPTER XIX.

A COUP WITHIN THE CAMP.

WITHIN the sanctum Medrun sat at his desk and conversed with a young lady who sat with a fine straightness, a calm confidence, in a high-backed chair which she had chosen with a lofty contempt for the luxurious leather armchairs which flanked her on either side. It was Frances Medrun, talking business.

Isobel Ferris responded to the nod which Medrun's daughter gave her, and, while she sat in the chair opposite T. Anthony, she calmly looked the business woman over.

She had always admired Frances Medrun, because Frances Medrun was to her, as she was to thousands of business girls who heard her speak and read her articles, the ideal woman in business. The shining example which answered the never-silent query which challenged woman's place in the affairs of men.

Nothing hard or masculine was evident in Frances Medrun; and she was never less than the thoroughbred. Yet she held her own among the shrewdest men in the hard business world which she had entered. She would no doubt have been highly indignant, and Isobel Ferris would have hotly denied it, had any one mentioned that her success was due to the fact that she did not lack a definite quality of feminine charm and beauty. She was proud that she stood alone as one woman who could cope with men in high places and negotiate large matters with them; she did not know that she coped with them *because* she stood alone. She could not estimate the effect of her cool, feminine presence in the councils of her father's associates; and he, who estimated it to the finest degree, would never tell her of it.

Isobel had admired her. But she admired her no longer. She had been proud to know the woman who had cut the ground from under the feet of the Consolidated Press Machine crowd, thereby bringing about the famous machine-tool merger. But she found herself now despising the same woman because she was engaged in cutting the ground from under the feet of John Royd. It was extremely singular, and she knew it was singular; yet she was helpless to analyze the chaos of emotions which engendered this rebellion.

She became aware that father and daughter were gazing at her very narrowly.

"We've just had a telephone conversation with Mr. Harry Medrun up at Climax, Miss Ferris." T. Anthony was twinkling at her with the geniality which always betrayed excitement in him. "That deal is as good as closed."

She nodded her head.

"Of course," continued Medrun, "it is essential that Mr. Royd should know nothing of the means we are pursuing to——"

"Of course," said Miss Ferris impatiently, and she turned her gaze upon Frances Medrun.

So this perfection of feminine efficiency knew about her secret, she reflected. It must have been the woman, for old T. Anthony could never have suspected; at least he could have gone no farther than suspicion. She felt too confident of her power to dissemble.

"You don't think there could be a leak?" she asked innocently.

"We know there *could* be, Miss Ferris." Frances Medrun spoke with the gracious, icy tone of the practiced society woman who deals with feminine opposition. "But we don't believe there *will* be."

"And how do you think there could be?" queried Isobel sweetly.

Medrun grunted a dismissal of these feminine exchanges.

"The point is," he said, "that this Royd is a fighter. He won't stop at anything. He knows just as well as I do that every man, woman or child has his price, and he'll pay it. What I want to tell you, Isobel, is this: If you find out he's trying to buy information, come and tell me what his price is. Any one who sells out for what he is offered is a damn fool!"

She gazed at him for a moment gravely, then turned to gaze at Frances Medrun.

"I wish you'd let me speak with Mr. Medrun alone for a moment," she replied.

Frances Medrun hesitated. It was plain that she did not trust her father to deal with this situation.

"Go on!" he cried brusquely. "I'll speak with her alone."

With a gracious nod, the lady of business left the room.

"Now, then!" cried Medrun. "How much did he offer?"

She stared at him icily.

"That isn't what I wanted to say. I just want to tell you that I am resigning my position."

His face fell ludicrously.

"By God!" he cried. "It's true! He's been and bought my secretary!"

"You're mistaken! He isn't the kind that has to use your methods. I'm resigning because it's the only decent way I can go to him and tell him the whole truth."

"The truth! Good Lord! You're crazy. Never tell any one the truth without asking me. It's bad business."

"Yes, bad for you and bad for me—bad for the whole sweet, honorable conspiracy. You deal in dollars and cents, Mr. Medrun, but your stock in trade is lies. I've been lying for you more than a year now, and I never objected to it, because I was only called upon to lie to liars. Now you're living your lies to a square man, and a square man can't compete with crookedness. You'll ruin Royd, but I won't be one of the tools you use. I've been trying to get up nerve enough to throw down this job for the past three days. It took Miss Medrun's devotion to the kind of thing I'm done with to crystallize my decision. You'll find everything in perfect order."

He had been gazing at her with his bright eyes gleaming beneath his bent brows. He appeared paternal and in a way sympathetic, but when he spoke it was with a sudden expression of the menace which he had for all his enemies.

"Don't be a fool, young woman!" he snapped. His voice was as sharp as the edge of a knife. "A man's secretary is the repository of his most confidential business, and of all the idiotic laws with which a fool Senate has shackled this country's business, there is one that makes it a crime to betray that confidence. I don't want to scare you, and if you're bent on leaving I'll do the fair thing by you. You'll get my check tomorrow for a month's salary and so on. But don't do anything foolish. You talk of telling Royd the truth. Take my advice and don't tell him anything at all.

Remember that! You're too nice a girl to get into trouble that way!"

"Thank you," she said and beamed upon him, as she took her leave with all the impassive calm of a thorough business woman.

CHAPTER XX.

A STRANGE INTERVIEW.

IT had been a hard day for John Royd, for the Loop district of Chicago is not a comfortable tramping ground on a wet, sticky and overwarm summer day. And when a man is in driving need of immediate concessions, it is not conducive to his peace of mind to see his most cherished negotiations lag.

There had been a distressing tension in the matter of a telephone call to the Eagle House in the Northern woods, while the most vital matters demanded his presence away from the telephone. Still, he had gained a great deal from his talk with Margaret Royd, and his mother had responded nobly to the urgent necessity for accuracy and completeness in the information which she gave him.

Altogether it had been a trying afternoon, and John felt that he had earned a half hour of relaxation after his evening meal. He indulged it in the easy-chair of his hotel room where he sat in his shirt sleeves and dealt with the innumerable details of his predicament in his mind, since he had resolved to rest from dealing with them on paper. The telephone tinkled, and he was upon it with a single bound.

"Lady to see you!" declared the voice downstairs.

"Lady?"

"Yes. Says it's important business."

"I'll be right down."

Royd pondered on this surprising development, as he adjusted his apparel. He ransacked his mind for a guess as to who this lady visitor might be. He could only think of his mother and Frances Medrun. He knew it couldn't be his mother, and he was regretfully afraid it couldn't be Miss Medrun. That would have been interesting.

The elevator brought up with a lurch at the ground floor, and he stepped out to discover that his visitor was Miss Ferris, T. Anthony Medrun's secretary. He told her that it was an unexpected pleasure.

"What did Mr. Medrun ask you to come here for?" he asked her, discovering that he was peculiarly glad that she had come.

"He didn't!" she exclaimed. "I'm not with him any more."

"What?"

"I left him to-day. I'm on my own now."

John was slightly puzzled, and almost subconsciously he was on his guard. This was conceivably a trick, yet it seemed to him that she was not apt to lend herself to trickery. Still, she was the secretary of T. Anthony Medrun.

"Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Yes," she replied impatiently. "Give me a word with you alone."

He looked puzzled; then he hesitated.

"Don't be shocked. I'm not looking for another job."

"Did I look shocked?" he asked. "Come in here."

He led her into the dim intimacy of a public sitting room, where they chose a quiet corner.

"Now don't labor under any illusions regarding what I'm going to say," she warned him.

"Illusions aren't fashionable any more."

She frowned impatiently.

"It's about that water-power deal," she began.

Immediately he flew to his guard.

"I thought you said you'd left him."

"I have. I left him so that I'd be free to come and tell you this. You know T. Anthony's methods, don't you?"

"Yes; I know his methods."

She was aware of a note in his voice which caused her to be silent and study him more closely. She began to doubt the course which she had chosen. He was not the same young man who had spoken with her in the office. He seemed harder, more formidable. There was nothing in him now of that appeal to her desire to aid him which he had possessed as an applicant for T. Anthony's attention.

"Yes, I know his methods," he said;

and it was as though he had added: "And I can take care of myself all right."

That was the truth. The difference which she noted in him was established upon just that fact. He could take care of himself, and here, in the hotel where he had made his headquarters, he was in his own citadel, laying his plans to do nothing less than that. To take care of himself! It was that which made him formidable; it was that which gave him the aspect of dominant and self-confident power which she had known before in the presence of T. Anthony Medrun.

This change in him baffled her. It filled her with misgivings. It emphasized the fact that here, in charge of his own affairs, he was not less to be respected and feared than the master himself.

"What about them?"

That question took her off her guard, and it placed her on the defensive. She was silent.

"What about his methods?"

SHE recalled her mission; she recalled the impulse that had urged her to come—the conviction that she must redeem her miserable services to Medrun; the decision she had made that, in all fairness, he must be warned. And, recalling these things, she was reassured by the knowledge that this thing which she had to do was the right thing.

"He is absolutely ruthless!" she cried. "Absolutely unscrupulous! It is his way of fighting to cut the feet from under his adversary——"

She stopped short, for with her words a certain light had come into his eyes—the signal of a certain revelation and resolve.

"Wait a minute!" he cried, as he held up an admonitory hand. "I think I know what you're going to say."

He frowned deeply, leaning forward in his chair, so that he was close to her.

"And I don't want you to say it," he declared. "You were going to tell me that that golf game with which he put me off to-day was an absurd and obvious lie. I know that."

"Yes"—she leaned toward him eagerly—"but there is something more——"

"Wait! I know that, too. Now, listen: When Mr. Medrun put me off with that puny lie, he did a very poor bit of business. He betrayed the fact that he underrated the man he is dealing with, and I think you have underrated him, too."

He uttered an exclamation which was half a laugh.

"I wouldn't have tried to hold off a blind beggar with an excuse like that!" he cried. "But he did; and in doing it he gave me the advantage of knowing how slightly he counts on getting a fight out of me.

"Now, if I was as small as that; if I was as puny a man as Medrun, and apparently you think I am, I'd be glad to have this help that you're offering me. If you ever see T. Anthony again, you can tell him that I didn't take it."

"But you don't understand me at all!" she protested.

"I understand you better than you understand yourself. Now, listen to what I'm going to tell you.

"You go back to Mr. Medrun in the morning and tell him that I wouldn't listen to what you had to say. Then he'll know that I am of the fighting kind, and it will do him good. Beyond that, and between you and me, I know as well as you do what his next blow will be."

She accepted the challenge.

"What?" she cried.

"He'll try to use all the outstanding obligations against me to wring out of me the land which my father left me. He used his son and daughter to buy up these obligations, and he hopes to tear out of my keeping the power which I have sworn to see harnessed. That is by way of realizing the dream of a man who staked all his life on its accomplishment, Miss Ferris. And because that man was my father, I'm going to see that it goes through."

He lurched about in his seat now, as he was seized by the realization that he had not revealed the real purpose of his intention. And when he did reveal it, it was not as one who seeks to justify an end or gain sympathy out of his justification. It was rather as a man sets forth the terms of combat; as a man sets forth a challenge.

"He was killed by the power he dreamed of controlling and conserving," he said. "And it is my part to see that his long vision, his prevision, if you like, is never lost. That is why I have placed a high price upon the lands he so laboriously acquired; because I have no intention of selling them. Some day T. Anthony Medrun is going to harness that wealth of power, and my father's wife and his child and the children of his child are going to hold the land which feeds it forever."

She faced him in silence after that. Presently the silence was broken by her voice.

"How did you know he was buying you out?" she asked.

"It was the logical thing for him to do," he said simply. "When he put me off, I knew he was up to some characteristic trick to outplay me. That was his best bet, and I knew he'd take it. So I got in touch with my mother, and she secured for me the information I needed."

"And now what are you going to do?"

"That would be too much to tell the secretary of T. Anthony Medrun."

"But I am not——"

"After you go to him in the morning and tell him what I have said, and how I received your proffered help, he will take you back again, because he cannot afford to lose you to any other source of capital which I might seek. I advise you to tell him that, if he overlooks it; and I advise you to accept your job again."

He smiled with the kindness of an experienced adviser.

"Tell him all that I've told you," he said. "Then he will know that he is at war with a man who can give him all the fight he wants. In spite of what the copy books say, we all live by our wits, and if T. Anthony uses his wits a little beyond the limitations of fair play, then I must make mine the sharper to cope with him. But, since I intend to take up the fight, I cannot confess to the weakness that demands the sort of help you've offered me. See?"

It was an appreciation and an apology. She arose and superbly covered the embarrassment of her retreat.

"You are more of a man than is usually met with in the course of such business as I do from day to day," she said. "There doesn't seem to be anything for me to do but say 'Good night.'"

"Yes, one more thing."

He, too, was on his feet, and as they spoke they walked to the lobby.

"You must accept my gratitude for what you meant to do," he said. "You did not realize that in offering me your help you were discounting my own powers."

She took leave of him with the businesslike coolness of the office.

"Some time," she remarked, "you may be able to offer me your gratitude without the modifying clause."

And she left him with many things in his heart that he would have liked to ask her. Among others was the question of why she had come. He suspected the answer to it, and because of that suspicion he could not ask.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE KING OF TRUMPS.

IT was three days before John Royd brought Desmond Conroy to bay; and then it was only by laying siege to the turbulent old buccaneer, and, as it were, cutting off his means of retreat.

The length of a day now meant a great deal to John Royd, just as it meant a great deal to T. Anthony Medrun. And John knew that he would get no quarter when the day of reckoning came at the month's end. Conroy, he had calculated, was his only chance. And it is typical of Royd that he selected for his only chance the one chance which, if he successfully negotiated it, would yield the imperative result most quickly. He selected this chance in spite of the fact that it was of all chances the most difficult to negotiate.

"If I go to the banks," reasoned John, "it is unlikely that I can move them, however easily I can secure their friendly interest, in time to take up the mortgages T. Anthony holds against me."

The thing to do, therefore, was obviously the strategic thing, the unexpected thing; and that was to go to Desmond Conroy.

He had laid siege to Conroy's office Thursday afternoon, Friday and Saturday, watching the end of the month approaching as he did so. Conroy had managed to avoid him, because Conroy was the kind of man that defies persistence. He walked through the anteroom in which Royd waited as though no one had been there. When John accosted him, he reminded him of the sign which hung outside the wooden edifice which contained his offices beside the lumber yard in North Clark Street: "Beggars and Peddlers Not Admitted."

John laughed at that, but Desmond Conroy made it very evident that he could only be followed by whoever was prepared to use physical force in the following, and he was very large and powerful. John quite rightly reasoned that his best approach would not be achieved by bodily throwing the pugnacious old man out of his pathway, and, retiring to his chair, patiently and persistently waited.

It brought him nothing, so very early on Sunday morning he made his way to the Conroy home which was one of many stone mansions on the North Side. A maid opened the door for him, and John entered.

"Tell Mr. Conroy that I am here," he said. "John Royd is the name." Then he waited in the dim hallway among all the dimly shining woodwork.

The maid returned.

"Mr. Conroy cannot see you," she said stonily. "He says you must go to his office."

"Tell Mr. Conroy I'll wait," said John.

"You can't wait here," said she.

Then he smiled at her.

"You're from Ireland," he said. "I'll bet on it."

She answered his smile.

"But Mr. Conroy won't see you," she assured him. "It's no use waiting."

"I'll wait, anyway."

"What makes you think I'm from Ireland, sir?" she asked him.

"Your voice and your hair," he said. "My mother had that fine black hair, and her voice is still the same as yours."

She stood for a moment and looked at him.

"I'll tell Mr. Conroy," she said.

And it was a further proof of the Irish in her that she achieved the purpose with which she returned to her employer. Conroy burst into the hallway and bore down on Royd like a cyclone.

"Get out of me house!" he boomed. "Get out! I'll have no beggars here."

"Did she say that I came to beg?" asked John politely. And his manner calmed the other somewhat, for a man cannot use the turbulence of the lumber yard in his own home, and it was Sunday morning.

"Then what have you come for?" demanded Conroy.

"Money," said John.

"Money!" roared the other. "And you do not come to beg?"

"I do not. I come with a good reason for my coming, which is the same as any man must have who approaches another in the way of business. I've come with a profitable undertaking for us both."

"I don't do business on a Sunday!" lied Conroy hotly.

"Not with strangers, surely. But you are my father's enemy, and enemies and friends have an intimacy which breaks through convention."

"Your father snatched the finest timberlands in the State out of me two hands. Is there any reason I should do friendly business with his son?"

"Yes, because Angus Royd is dead now, and it's his son who holds the timber."

A pause passed between them. During this silence the ire which gleamed in Conroy's eyes hardened because he believed what John said was true.

"Will ye come in and sit down?" he invited and accompanied the words with an awkward gesture of his burly form, which ordered John to follow him. They entered a room where many sectional bookcases and a radio set bore witness to the fact that this was a library.

"I am not in the market for lands now," began Conroy pugnaciously.

"And I have no lands to sell," answered John.

The fire gleamed again in Conroy's eyes.

"Then what in the name of——"

"It's Sunday," interrupted John, smiling, and he wrung a smile from the other because of the friendly way in which he said it.

"What is it you want?" demanded Conroy.

John took a copy of that linen map from his pocket.

"There's the land," he said. "You never forgot that my father got ahead of you when he obtained the land about this water designated, the 'Overflow.' He got the better of you because this land contains some fifteen thousand acres of black spruce timber, and it averages sixteen thousand feet to the acre. Now, your business is paper, isn't it?"

Conroy frowned in a surly manner peculiar to himself.

"I have lumber yards," he said.

"Yes; but those only take care of such hard wood as your pulp woods yield by the way. Your chief business is paper."

CONROY growled a grudging admission of the fact. Royd was puzzling him completely.

"And the reason you never forgave my father was because you reasoned that he sought to grab the pulp wood in those acres and hold them for a stiff price. For that reason you never made an offer."

"You are smart!" boomed Conroy. "You have all the fine reasoning faculty of a young gentleman from college. Well, you're right. And if you think that now your father's son can capitalize his father's greed, it is a grand mistake you are making."

"It would be just that," replied John, "but I'm not doing it. The point is that if you had offered even a fancy price for those acres in my father's lifetime, he would have refused you. And if you offered me ten thousand dollars an acre, I should refuse you, too."

"Then what in the name of sense is all this talk about?"

"It's about this: My father bought that land and struggled to keep it because he saw in it, not timber, not wood pulp, nor paper, nor money. He saw only white coal."

"White coal? And what is white coal?"

"Power, Mr. Conroy—the power of the earth itself. Power that's given by God out of His heaven to move the wheels of wretched men. There is enough water contained in that system of lakes and rivers, to say nothing of what is fed to it constantly from the skies above and held in the earth below, to make twenty per cent of the paper that's turned out in America every year. My father saw it as a gift to man, and he could not see the money in it. It was a thing he wanted to do because it had been shown him to do. The vision had been given him, and he sacrificed everything life gave him to the doing of it. He saw the machine which nature itself had made in these timbered valleys; and he saw it before any other man. It was a vision. In the end he was killed by that machine, even as he was showing me how it worked.

"That is my work, now, Mr. Conroy, and I must do it as my father trained me to do it—not for the money nor the comfort that his white coal will yield, but for the vision. His vision must be brought about and held by his children always. That is why he took the land away from you, Mr. Conroy, and that is why money cannot buy it."

"Power! Power!" roared Conroy, and he shook his head like an impatient charger. "What has this power—what has this white coal to do with me?"

"Just this: You have three pulp mills; two are in the Albany River watershed, and you run them by a water power that yields you three thousand five hundred and twenty horse power at one of them, and four thousand two hundred and fifty at the other. Neither of these plants benefits by a regulated flow, and the result is that your pulp must be ground during the high-water months for use in the low-water periods. The cost of storage imposed by this variation of flow comes to from five to ten dollars a ton, including waste and interest on your investment. The other mill is a steam-power plant. All three plants involve a large cost for the shipping of raw material. Am I right?"

"Who showed you the books?" growled Conroy grudgingly.

"The facts can be had from an intelligent study of many works dealing with water power, pulp production, and the paper industry. I use the deductive method."

CONROY was now peering at him with a gaze that combined wonder with an indubitable admiration.

"And what else do you know?" he muttered.

"I know that before we can construct the dam which is to flood eighteen thousand acres of this land surrounding the Overflow, we must cut away the timber. The man who buys that timber and cuts it out will have approximately two hundred million feet of the finest black spruce to play with. And he'll have the option of buying a constant and unfluctuating supply of electric power right at the spot where his wood is stored. Do you see that?"

Conroy was gazing with a strange fixity at his visitor.

"I see!" he muttered. "I see!"

"Later on," said John, "I'm going to show you that it is impossible for you to compute how much your steam plant costs you, for you must have a full head of steam up whether you are using four or four thousand horse power; and your labor and wastage and tools and equipment—your fuel and plant and depreciation will cost you more per year to produce four thousand horse power than it will cost us to maintain a constant output of fifty thousand."

Conroy opened his eyes wide.

"Fifty thousand!" he roared. "Where is there to be had a constant flow of fifty thousand horse power?"

"Right at the doorway of the yards where you will store your raw material," declared John. "And I'm going to show you that, in view of the saving you will make by using that constant flow, the difference in the costs of transportation between what it is now and what it will be then, will make it so much worth your while that you'll remove the larger part of your production plant up to the dam and more than double your profits."

"And why is that you come to me with this?"

Conroy was suddenly suspicious. He saw no reason for the son of the man he had wrongly hated to offer him this opportunity.

"Because T. Anthony Medrun wants to develop this project, and he wants to do it so badly that he will most certainly have that privilege if he behaves himself."

"Ah, be careful, me lad. Ye're playing with wolves when ye play with that man!"

Conroy unconsciously admitted the completeness with which John had won his sympathy by the quick, protective warning in his voice.

"I know it," replied the young man. "That is why I said at the beginning that I came for money. Medrun is now cutting the ground from under my feet. He has bought up the mortgages which are held against various parcels of this land, which include the acreage where your spruce lies. And if I cannot meet those obligations at the end of this month, he'll have it. Then you will have to deal with T. Anthony Medrun."

Conroy started with very real concern.

"The spruce will pass to him?" he cried.

"And the vision of my father will pass to him as well."

"We must stop it!" cried Conroy, leaping to his feet. "That wolf would have all the earth!" He towered above the young man with fierce resolution in his eyes. "What is there we can do?"

"We can do this," said John. He arose from his chair, and his face showed white in the dim recesses of the library, as he now staked all he had upon the final throw.

"You know the land. You know what it holds for you. And T. Anthony will be upon me before the week is over with his demands for these." He held forth a typewritten paper on which were listed the demands he would have to meet. "You see they total sixty-seven thousand nine hundred and forty dollars and some cents."

Conroy examined the script eagerly.

"I am asking you to advance me that sum," said John. "Do you see what I mean? You will have the spruce for your

security, and you can commence cutting as soon as the deal is completed. The other advantages will be at your disposal later. Even without them, you are ahead. With them, you have an opportunity which will never come again, for you are before the field. You are on the ground floor. Sixty thousand dollars, and you profit greatly—and I shall have the trust my father left to me, still in my keeping! Do you see?"

He stood there with his white face and with his teeth close together. For he was awaiting a verdict now, and God only knew whither he could turn if the verdict was against him.

Desmond Conroy strode heavily up down the room. He stopped now and then to peer at the paper in his hand, then to gaze at John Royd, who stood steadily as a rock before him. And all the time John Royd was waiting for his verdict—waiting in a suspense that tried his soul.

"I'll do it!" boomed Conroy suddenly. "By the gods! I'll do it! For there is something about you, John Royd, that gets into a man. This wild talk of visions and of trusts—this picture of yer father ye have given me—if these things are as you say, I'll do it!"

John breathed very deeply.

"Then we are secure," he said quietly. "For these things are as I have said. You will get in touch with whoever can tell you the truth of Medrun's interest in the thing in the morning; and here is a copy of my own survey. Also, here is a report of the lands which I hold and of the lumber measuration of the tracts which must be cleared. You can study them out, Mr. Conroy."

Conroy was gazing steadily into the eyes of this remarkable young man from the wilds.

"You will come to my office on Tuesday morning," he said. "If these things are as you have said, there will be a check for you there."

John Royd walked back to the city with a fine regard in his heart for the cards that had been given him to play, and for the manner in which his king of trumps had met the test he had put upon him.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN ECONOMIC DISCUSSION.

ON the twenty-eighth day of June, John Royd entered the offices of T. Anthony Medrun & Company with a sureness of tread which pronounced as clearly as speech his confidence in his mission. It was Mr. Timothy Creadick who came out to meet him.

Creadick was the living evidence that T. Anthony Medrun had lost faith in female secretaries. Creadick had been the sleek young man who formerly led the favored few into the presence of Isobel Ferris. In those days he had not possessed the slimmest chance of attaining to that young lady's place, because T. Anthony held that any man who would serve as a private secretary to another must be either spineless or ambitious. If he was spineless, his presence irked the dynamic little financier; if he was ambitious, T. Anthony had no intention of providing him with the confidences by a judicious use of which he might arise. Smarting from Isobel's desertion, however, he compromised and chose the spineless type.

"Tell Mr. Medrun I'm here," announced Royd, radiating the fire of his confidence.

Creadick felt it and was uneasy before the power of it.

"He knows you are here," he replied, "but he can't see you. He is in conference."

"That's just where I hoped to find him. Are Banton and Tyler with him?"

Creadick did not achieve the congealing iciness which he essayed.

"He is engaged in private business," he declared, falling back upon the most obvious of ruses. "If you'll wait, I'll try to arrange an interview for you."

Then he turned toward his office with the intention of letting Royd wait until he was tired of waiting. But Royd followed him. When Creadick entered the door of Medrun's outer office, Royd was close behind him. When the door closed Royd was inside. He saw T. Anthony at his massive desk, and he saw at the same time the empty chair at the secretary's desk where Isobel had sat.

"I thought I'd wait here," he said easily. "Good morning, Mr. Medrun."

Medrun glared at him, and Creadick stood helplessly aghast.

"Get out, Creadick!" snapped Medrun, and he sprang to the attack before the disconsolate secretary was out of the room.

IT was an attack of consummate artistry. It aimed at all Royd's vanity, self-confidence, and self-control. It was carefully calculated to override and to disarm.

"You took away the best secretary a man ever had," he announced genially, and there was a singular combination of camaraderie and menace in his thin, tenor voice. "This man's a damn fool, but he told you, Royd, the truth. I can't see you now, and I can't see you to-day. Can't see you till the end of the month. Too much to attend to. But I'm glad you dropped in. Good-by."

Royd grinned at him, a tight, inscrutable grin.

"Not for the moment, Mr. Medrun," he said. "I want to talk with you first for a while."

"What about?"

"Economics."

"Haven't got time."

"That's the economic angle I'm going to take. You profess to practice economics. You publish a monthly circular which repeated that word in its last issue no less than seventy-seven times. You write articles about it, and you make speeches on the subject. Now, you speak of wasting time. I'm going to show you that the simplest principle of economics proves your statement false."

"And I'm going to show you the door." T. Anthony smiled grimly as he pressed the buzzer beside his desk. "You come in some other time when I'm not so busy."

"I mean the principle which proves a slow but sure accumulation to be more certain than the speculative possibility of abundant gain. Time, as you know, is money. To-day you can't spend five minutes of it to discuss business. Last Thursday you spent a whole day of it playing golf at ten dollars a hole."

Creadick entered and stood within the doorway, but Medrun ignored him.

"That's a lie!" he cried genially. "Any man's a fool to play for more than five dollars."

"That means," pursued Royd, "that you stood to win or lose a maximum amount of ninety dollars. Let us say you won the entire round—ninety dollars. It rained on Thursday, and almost exactly one and one half inches of rain fell in the watershed of the Eagle River project. According to the basis of my figures, that represents a horse power equivalent of one thousand six hundred and twenty-five. One thousand six hundred and twenty-five horse power, with an earning capacity of thirty dollars per horse-power year, figures out at forty-eight thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars. Deduct the ninety dollars you stood to win, and you have a clear loss of forty-eight thousand six hundred and sixty dollars. That, Mr. Medrun, is a waste of time. If you had to play golf you might at least have chosen a clear day."

Medrun frowned forbiddingly.

"You talk smoothly, young man, but it won't get you anywhere—not to-day. I've got to conserve my energies for something better."

"Conservation! Energy! That's it!" cried Royd. "I'm offering you an energy which can destroy or create with the power of a hundred thousand horses, and you play golf while it runs away! Is that conservation? Is that your idea of not wasting time?

"The power we're dealing with lies in a valley as rich as any tract of land in America, and we can't relinquish those riches while we hold it for the wealth of white coal which it contains. Is that sound economics? Is that the advice your circular broadcasts?

"You can't talk of wasting time with me, in the face of this wanton waste of the energy and wealth that the Almighty has placed at our disposal. Is the everlasting progress of the sun and rain—the precipitation, the run off, the flow and the evaporation—are all these to stop while you play golf?"

T. Anthony had never ceased to stare

at him, while Boyd's low, firm voice told out this accusation, and the little financier was fascinated by the firm smile with which Royd fronted him. The impassioned words were by that smile made incisive and convincing.

"Suppose I say I wasn't playing golf last Thursday?" queried T. Anthony Medrun. And then he turned on Creadick. "All right!" he snapped. "You can go outside again!" He didn't trust his new secretary.

"Then," said John quickly, "I'd tell you just what you were doing."

"Go ahead."

"You were engaged in buying up mortgages which are held against the watershed."

In an instant T. Anthony was transformed as a sleepy rattler is transformed by a sudden blow. His eyes became hard and cold, and his apparent smile became ferocious. He had thought he had shut the mouth of Isobel Ferris. He had felt confident that she could not have been bought.

"So the lady sold out?" he rasped bitterly.

And, even while he dealt with this young man, he began to calculate the price he would make his erstwhile secretary pay.

"I wasn't in the market," snapped Royd. "I knew that the mortgages had been taken up and in your name."

Medrun breathed more easily, as he reflected that Royd had no doubt not discovered his predicament until he received the demands for payment. Then, of course, he would have found out who held his obligations.

"You're laboring under a delusion," he said. "I have no interest in those mortgages whatever. It is a little private venture of my son and daughter. They are the Medruns who hold your mortgages."

He expected a protest then, an argument, which would terminate in futile expostulation and the door. But Royd surprised him.

"Then I know whom to speak with," he said quietly. And, to T. Anthony's amazement, he turned on his heel and left the room.

Medrun buzzed furiously for Creadick and addressed that unfortunate youth grimly when he entered.

"If that man comes into my office again without my invitation," he said, "you're out of a job."

To be continued in the next issue of THE POPULAR, *on the news stands February 20th.*

A HUMANE REFORM

THAT most repulsive incident of the bull ring, the frank exposure of the horse to the fury of the bull, will be eliminated shortly in Spain, if the suggestion of the minister of the interior is adopted. He has proposed that the horses used in bull fights be protected with thick leather armor.

It is not clear just how such a leather protection would save the horse, but presumably the Spanish minister is more conversant with the protective value of certain kinds of leather than we are. Certainly this promised protection for the horse in the ring is a thing "devoutly to be wished," and the execution of the suggestion would be a service to Northern sensibilities.

At the present time this barbarous aspect of the sport kills it for non-Latin eyes. As the rules of the ring now stand, the horse is doomed almost certainly from the beginning to a cruel death. The matador, who on foot teases the bull, exposes his life to grave danger, but if he is agile he may escape unharmed. The picador is never exposed to imminent danger. The poor horses almost never miss disembowelment. It would be little less than a service to humanity if the suggested reform proves to be practicable.

Alias Fagin

By George Parsons Bradford

Author of "When Shandal Came to Deadrock," Etc.

Rufus Thacker was an old crook. He admitted that. But when they called him a Fagin, he didn't like it. Perhaps this story proves that, from a mood of resentful shame, a really admirable kind of morality may result.

WITH a keen sense of expectation, Rufus Thacker, confidence man, swindler, and almost anything else one could imagine in the realm of genteel crime—if there is such a thing—waited patiently in his cell. He was all dressed up, and for the first time in four years he had some place to go.

"Some place to go," he ruminated. "It's been a long wait, but the happy moment is at hand."

Mr. Thacker sat on his bunk. One pale, thin hand wandered upward and smoothed his gray hair, freshly cut. The palm also ran over his lean cheeks, freshly shaved. He had just been turned out of the prison barber shop. Earlier in the morning he had been turned out of the prison tailor shop, where he exchanged his uniform for a discharge suit fairly well fitted to his tall frame, but of a quality which, in the days before the law overtook him, would have drawn a sneer from Rufus Thacker. For had he not been known along Broadway as one of its slickest and fanciest dressers?

Ah, well, time enough to recover that status when he should plant his feet again on the pavements of New York.

He was not in the least worried about the future. He had the supreme confidence of the arch crook, the brazen effrontery necessary for a bold career in crime. He suffered no qualm of being perhaps too old for the life he meant to follow. Not very old in years, true; he was about fifty; yet four years in prison had added to his age far more than four years of freedom might have done. The effects of prison had been subtle. They manifested themselves chiefly in a state of mind, a lassitude induced by long, monotonous days of unvarying routine. The successful prisoner—that is to say, the one who gets by with the least fret

and worry—is he who thinks as little as possible.

Rufus Thacker's educated mind had won him soft employment in the prison, that of a clerk. He had dropped into a rut, or rather slid into a rut, so easily and quietly that he hadn't realized he had stopped thinking. He had driven away the imaginative pictures of the outside, the dreams, for they meant nothing but worry. He had lived among the figures and trivial writings of his clerkship.

Just now, with freedom very close, he realized with a shock that in those four long years he had not framed up a single job. It had always been his idea that prison terms gave a crook time and opportunity for plots and schemes; that a discharged convict came out with a head bristling with ideas. And why shouldn't games of thievery, thought out and matured in the quiet inactivity of prison, be about as sound and fool-proof as it is possible to make them?

Yet he himself had thought out no new scheme of thievery, not even a variation on any of the games he had played in days gone by.

What had happened to him? He supposed that he was the sort of man who could best do his thinking on the field of action. There are such men. Put him face to face with a problem, and he'd soon solve it. That was it. He would go out, look around for ways to filch fortune from a reluctant world, and then he would do his thinking.

Ten o'clock, and a guard; an unlocked door, a walk into the administration building, a friendly lecture from the warden, Rufus Thacker standing there with another prisoner about to go out, too, the sum of twenty-five dollars laid into his hand, another door unlocked, and then—freedom.

After four years and twenty-eight days —freedom. Rufus Thacker stood on the doorstep of the prison, all those locked doors behind, none in front—nothing in front but the wide, wide world, filled just now with spring sunlight and a soft breeze.

"Eh, what's that?" he found himself saying.

Again the voice sounded at his side.

"I say we better be moving along, or they might think we don't wanta go, and drag us back inside."

Rufus Thacker thereupon became fully conscious of his companion, a young chap with a pleasant grin on his good-looking face. He, too, bore the telltale marks—the fresh hair cut, the fresh shave, the new suit. Vaguely the older man remembered having seen the youth on the inside; seen him among hundreds of others. He knew neither his name, nor his crime, nor the length of his sentence.

THEY were walking side by side, down the sidewalk leading to the trolley station.

"You're Thacker, ain't y'u?"

"Yes, yes—Thacker, that's my name. How did you know?"

The youth grinned again.

"I guess ev'ry fella in that joint knows Rufus Thacker. Other cons told me who y'u was."

The old crook turned this over in his mind.

"I didn't know I was such a celebrated character," he rejoined with a melancholy smile. "I suppose I should feel complimented, but I don't know that I do."

"Oh, y'u're celebrated, all right. I on'y been in about a year, but I knowed y'u by sight all along. I alluz wanted to meet y'u," he added, a trifle bashfully.

"Meet me?"

"Sure! It's a pleasure."

"Thank you. I assure you the pleasure is mutual."

"My name's Jack Finley. I—I——"

They looked at each other during the pause.

"Well, Jack, what were you saying? Go ahead; I'm interested."

"Nuthin'," Jack Finley replied, "on'y I been thinking. Well, maybe y'u know how us kids look at a man like you, Mr. Thacker. We're alluz wishing you'd take us in with y'u on sumpin. You know what I mean—learn us how to do things right. I heard yesterday y'u was going out to-day, and I hoped they'd turn us loose together, so's maybe we'd meet, and, being kinda in the same fix—well, I

didn't know but maybe we could turn some trick to git quick dough."

They plodded on toward the car line. A slight frown had appeared on Thacker's lean face.

"You think it might be profitable if we should pal up for a while, eh?" he said. "Well, perhaps so. Where were you going?"

"No place special," the youth replied eagerly. "Any place y'u say, and anything y'u say."

"I intended to go back to New York."

"Suits me."

"The railroad fare is nineteen dollars and a few cents."

"I got it. They slipped me twenty-five."

Rufus Thacker looked the young man over, with satisfaction.

"All right, Jack," he said. "We'll go to New York."

THUS was formed that strange partnership which attracted considerable attention in the underworld of the big city. It was first remarked that Rufus Thacker had lost his pep, that he couldn't seem to get anything going. Latterly it was said that he had a man to do it for him.

This was true. Young Jack Finley was a willing worker, and they were prosperous. Rufus Thacker knew the ropes. He knew how to look things over, and Jack Finley had the vigor necessary to carry out the schemes that Thacker laid. All went very well until disconcerting stories began to appear in the newspapers. One story said:

> The police are of the opinion that the Relling job was the work of Rufus Thacker, who was discharged from a prison in the Middle West a few months ago. Comparing the Relling jewel theft with similar jobs known to have been committed by Thacker years ago, the police are able to trace the methods of the notorious crook. His whereabouts are unknown.

Jack Finley, in the apartment they occupied, read this bit of news aloud. Rufus Thacker, his face lathered for the morning shave, looked out at his young companion.

"Read that again," he said.

Jack did so very slowly.

"That means we shall have to move," Thacker commented and went on with his shave.

They moved this time to an apartment in another quarter of the city. They made it up between them that no other crook, not a single one of their friends or acquaintances, would be told of their new home. Information as to their whereabouts would not seep into the ears of some stool pigeon, in turn to be relayed to the police.

"And now here we are in our new bivouac," said the cheerful Jack Finley. "All settled down, quiet and snug. What's to keep us from figgering out the Jackling stunt—eh, old-timer?"

Rufus Thacker nodded gravely.

"I suppose," he rejoined, "that we ought to be doing something about that."

"We sure had! It's the biggest thing I ever looked at."

The young man was eagerly excited. For several months he had been thrilled by his contacts with the high life in crime, provided by his association with Thacker. He was no longer a novice. He knew how to crack down in an expert manner. One thing led to another, and every job had been a little bit finer than the last, a trifle more profitable. The life so alluring to the young crook had opened up for Jack Finley.

"The Jackling job," he was saying, "looks like a trip to Europe for us—Paris and Monte Carlo. What d'y'u say we don't think about nuthin' else, eh?"

"It's probably ripe," Thacker assented meditatively.

Jack ceased to pace the room. He sat down quietly, lit a cigarette, and studied his companion.

"Rufe," he said presently, "there's sumpin been worrying me."

"Worrying you? What?"

"Y'u ain't been y'urself fer a week er so—ever since them stories come out in the papers."

Rufus Thacker studied the smoking end of his cigar.

"Perhaps not," he agreed.

"There ain't nobody can tell me," Jack went on bluntly, "that a newspaper yarn can throw a scare into y'u. Y'u ain't that kind. It's sumpin else. Just 'cause

the police got a hunch y'u're working in town again ain't nuthin' to frighten you. Well, what's on yer mind, Rufe?"

Again Mr. Thacker contemplated his cigar, lolling back easily in his chair. There was a curious look in his eyes when he turned them on his protégé.

"I'm afraid you won't understand," he said.

"What'sa matter? Think I'm dumb?"

"No—no, not dumb. But it's a difficult thing to understand. I don't see it clearly myself."

Jack got up impatiently, pacing again. "What's the riddle?" he finally demanded.

"Sit down, Jack. I want to talk to you."

Jack frowned and resumed his chair. He waited.

"It's a funny thing," Thacker told him, "but I've been thinking how fine it would be if you got a job and went to work."

IF a bewhiskered Black Hander had appeared just then on the fire escape outside the open window and thrown a sputtering bomb into the room, the effect would have been no more paralyzing on Jack Finley than were the words of his friend and mentor. Jack sat with his mouth agape, staring. Long ashes dropped from the cigarette between his fingers.

"That's a fact, Jack," the old crook pursued. "I've been thinking of that—what a fine thing it would be, before it's too late."

Jack's mouth closed with a snap. When his lips opened it was to say:

"Work! Work! Well, y'u can knock me down with a lady's parasol if that ain't—— Say, Rufe, did I hear what y'u said er am I dreaming?"

"You're not dreaming. I said work—a job."

The smoldering cigarette burned the young man's fingers. He disposed of it and lit another.

"That's a line of talk I never expected to hear from you," he announced. "It knocks me back. Git a job, go to work—and you and me with the Jackling job in front of us. Say——"

"It's this way," Rufe interrupted. "You're young. I've been thinking about you. You're smart. I've never met a fellow with a quicker brain than you have."

"Thanks."

"Oh, you needn't get sarcastic. I'm talking seriously. Trouble with you young birds is, you live too much in the present. Just now you're thinking of the Jackling job—the big haul, Paris, and Monte Carlo. You can't see ahead of that. We——"

"When'd y'u join the Salvation Army, Rufe?"

"Oh, well, what's the use? I knew you wouldn't understand, and—and I don't blame you much. I don't understand my own feelings."

They presently laughed the thing off and pitched into an animated discussion of the Jackling job.

"I met that girl in the park again today," Jack explained. "On'y thing worries me," he added with a frown, "she's a nice girl. I kinda like her—but I been trying not to think about that. A guy ain't got no business getting stuck on a girl if he's got work to do."

"Your interest in that young lady," Thacker explained, "is what made me think it might be well for you to go straight. It seems to be a chance——"

"Go straight—nuthin'!" Jack cut in. "Just 'cause I happen to like a girl don't mean nuthin'. Now listen here, Rufe. If it wasn't for Angie working in that Jackling house, I'd never go in the park to meet her when she's got that Jackling kid out fer an airing. That's a fact, I wouldn't."

"I don't know about that."

"Well, I know," Jack rejoined belligerently. "Guess I know my own feelings, don't I? Tell y'u what—I'm about due fer an invitation to call on her, and when I git inside that Jackling house!—oh, boy!—just watch me come out with a load of jewels, that's all."

Rufus Thacker said nothing.

"But what you gotta tell me," Jack went on, "is how I'm gonna open that wall safe where they keep them jewels. Course I don't mean I'm gonna do the job while I'm in the servants' parlor call-

ing on Angie. That'd git her in bad. That Jackling kid, he's seven years old. He knows me by sight, and the name I give Angie is my right name. I don't know why I done that, but—— Well, it was kinda hard fer me to lie to Angie. Y'u oughta see her, Rufe. She's a knockout—as pretty an Irish girl as y'u ever wanta see. But here, I'm fergitting myself. Business, all business—that's me."

"Just how have you laid the thing out?" Rufe inquired.

"This way. There's two or three girls work in the Jackling house. The housekeeper is a kind of a chaperon when their young men friends call on 'em. The Jacklings are fine people, way I git it—treat their servants white. Well, time'll come when Angie invites me to call. That lets me inside the house. Y'u're the man what told me Mrs. Jackling's got the finest set o' jewels in captivity. Fellas've tried to hook 'em before, but there ain't nobody figgered out a way into the house yet. It's known them jewels are kept in a wall safe. Well, I'm in the house, ain't I? I look things over, maybe I slip up to a window some place, unlock it on the sly, and leave it unlocked so's I can crawl back inside after my visit with Angie is over. That's the way it looks to me. Now, I been thinking I might take you along at the crack-down—take y'u in the window with me. That wall safe'll be easy fer you. I won't know what to do with it. It's either you go in with me er show me how to open a wall safe."

Rufus Thacker nodded.

"Your plan is all right," he said, "except that you must not be too hasty. The way you've laid it out leaves no comeback on Angie, and that's the way it should be. There will be no connection between Angie's caller and the burglary. All right. But you must figure on making several calls on Angie. One visit will lead to others.

"In going slow, you'll pick up a lot of information about the house and the Jacklings, their habits and things like that. You'll get the layout of the house, too. You'll need time, so go slow. Talk with Angie about the family. Get her to let you peep into some of the rooms outside the servants' quarters. Show a curiosity as to how rich folks live—their habits, their home. See the idea?"

"I see. I'll go slow."

All of which indicated that the extremely wealthy Mrs. Jackling stood in a fair way of losing her magnificent collection of jewels.

IN the little apartment Rufus Thacker sat alone, waiting. It was a quarter past eleven, and he knew that young men who called on the girls employed by the Jacklings had to terminate their visits at eleven o'clock. Jack Finley should return at any moment now.

There was a melancholy stare on the face of the old crook. A newspaper lay on the table. He picked it up and read again a headline that served to plunge him into even deeper gloom. It was "a head" to what is known in journalism as a human-interest story, a story written around an interesting character, but almost wholly devoid of news.

It was about Rufus Thacker. The police had not yet been able to lay their hands on Mr. Thacker, but, with the persistency of the police when baffled, they kept attributing to him various jobs. His career had been resurrected. It was a colorful career. To this had been added bits of gossip whispered to the police by stool pigeons from the underworld. For instance, it was said that Rufe Thacker no longer did his own thieving. It was known that he had returned to New York with a young crook in tow. It was suspected that Mr. Thacker was busily engaged in instructing this young crook in the methods of theft which he himself had found so profitable.

Around this, some enterprising reporter or feature man had written a story of how an old crook, broken by prison, sought to perpetuate his system of crime by teaching it to a younger man and living by the profits thus obtained. It was even hinted that Rufe Thacker, notorious swindler and jewel thief, might have under his wing more than one young crook—a dozen, perhaps—and that he might be waxing rich by sending these youths out to steal for him. The headline writer had caught the idea. The specimen of his art read: "Old-time

Crook Is Now a Fagin." And more to that effect.

Rufus Thacker read the story again, his frown indicating a more disturbed state of mind. Presently he refolded the paper so that the headline was hidden. As an afterthought he took the paper and hid it.

" 'Alias Fagin,' " he muttered. "There's a chance that Jack won't see that particular evening paper. I hope he doesn't."

He strove to whip up some enthusiasm for the work of the night. The Jackling job was approaching a climax. This was the eighth visit young Jack Finley had made to the Jackling home. He and the girl were getting on well. The necessary information had been gleaned. Jack Finley this night was to unlock one of the windows, for this was to be the night of the big haul. Paris, Monte Carlo——

But Rufus Thacker could not deceive himself. It must be age. Still, he wasn't very old, just past fifty. But why was it that the prospect of a big haul and a trip to Paris and Monte Carlo no longer thrilled him?

"Alias Fagin," was all he could think of. "Rufus Thacker, alias Fagin."

HIS mind was still occupied with the problem when Finley came into the apartment. There was a strange look on Jack's face. It was cool autumn weather, and he wore a topcoat. He took this off, turned his back to Rufe Thacker, and said:

"Kick me."

"Turn around here! What's the matter with you?"

Jack turned around. He looked sheepish.

"I've went and done it," he announced. "Now don't let out a yell till I say my say. I don't know how it happened. I musta been in a trance. I'm in a kind of a trance yet. I sat there with that girl, thinking about burglary—er I thought that's what I was thinking about. She looked more like a million dollars to-night than the money itself. Knocked my eye out, she did. First thing I knew, I'd done it."

"What?"

"Up and ast her to marry me."

"And what did she say?"

"She said 'Yes,' and listen here, Rufe—if it wasn't fer you I'd be the happiest bird in New York."

"Don't worry about me," Rufe rejoined. "Let me get this straight now. You've got yourself engaged to be married. Does this girl know you're a crook?"

"I ain't no crook."

"Since when?"

"About an hour ago. That's what I'm saying, Rufe—it's you I'm worrying about. Here you are all set for the big crack-down, and I come in with the news that I've went and got myself engaged to the lady in the case. The crack-down is all off. I go straight from now on. But I couldn't help it. Rufe. It come outa me without thinking, I swear it did. I sat there looking at her, and all to once I blurted it out. She gi' me the 'Yes,' and what could I do then?"

"Nothing! Congratulations. But have you thought it all out?"

"I can't think," Jack assured him happily. "How's a guy gonna think when his head's in a whirl?"

"I suppose you're right. But common sense isn't a bad thing to employ occasionally. Does this girl know you've been a crook."

"Yes; I told her. Details, too. So that's by. I ain't gotta face no revelations in the future. I didn't tell her my game in that house where she works at, but I come clean enough with her. I ain't cheating her. I'm going straight. I mean it. Well, why not? I ain't got no other bad habits, to speak of. Booze don't appeal to me, I never hit the hop, and I ain't much on gambling."

Rufe Thacker nodded.

"That's right," he agreed. "If you can break yourself of stealing, I imagine you'll make a respectable citizen. I hope so."

"You ain't sore, Rufe?"

"Sore? Should say not. I've been wishing you'd take a tumble before it was too late. Well," and he looked the youth over critically, "the main thing is to stick. I've seen many a fellow start out to go straight and then come drifting

back. I take it that you're going straight from this minute on. All right. We're low on money, right down to the bottom. That means that you'll have to get a job and get it quick. You can't get married on nothing. Work and save, that's what you're up against. It can be done, if a fellow's strong enough in love, but there's always the danger of discouragement. I wish you luck, Jack. I hope you don't come drifting back."

"What're you gonna do?" Jack inquired.

"Who—me? Why, it doesn't make any difference about me. It's you that counts, you being young. It's too late for me to do anything for myself. I'll just peg along. It's you that counts, the fellow that has his life in front of him. I can't do anything about the past and very little about the future."

"But, say!" Jack exclaimed. "Y'u talk like you and me was gonna split up."

"Of course we'll split up. I can't go straight. What kind of a job could I get? Think I'm going to hang around you?"

"I—I didn't think about that. I thought we'd keep on living together. I can git a job, Rufe. I don't know just what, but I can keep up my end of it."

"And be dragged in with me, eh, when the police finally close in."

"The police?"

"Certainly. They always come—sooner or later."

So Rufe Thacker, crook, sent his young friend away next morning. Jack Finley was too much in love, too filled with the rosy prospects of the accepted suitor, to appreciate the problems he faced.

"I hope he does not come drifting back," Rufe muttered.

BUT Jack Finley did come drifting back, or rather running back. In some of the haunts of the underworld, four months later, on a cold, blizzardy night, he learned the dwelling place of Rufe Thacker. It was a shabby rooming house. The very name of the street was sufficient to tell Jack Finley that things were not going well with Rufe.

And they certainly were not going well with Jack. He had no overcoat. He ran through the streets to warm the blood in his veins and to get out of the storm as quickly as possible. He stood on Rufe Thacker's threshold, cold, hungry and forlorn.

"Well, come on in," Rufe said.

Jack made for the little gas heater, thrusting his numb fingers almost into the flame. Rufe pushed a chair his way and silently began to drag out things to eat from his meager larder, delicatessen-store food. He set the coffeepot on top of the heater, then offered a cigarette to his guest.

"Where did you come from?" Rufe inquired.

"Everywhere," Jack replied; meaning by that that he had been knocking about, homeless.

"Pitch into that grub there. Coffee'll soon be hot."

Jack pitched in. Between bites he looked around.

"Rufe," he said, "you been down on yer luck, too. I can see that. Y'u look skinnier'n I ever seen y'u. Y'u wouldn't be living in a joint like this if—— Excuse me, Rufe, but I'm a friend and can say what I think. What I meant was I got a lotta nerve to come here and eat yer food."

"You're welcome to it, Jack."

"I know it, but I wouldn't have no right to eat it—take it away from you—if I didn't have a way of paying it back."

"What do you mean?"

"I got a way," he replied mysteriously, "of paying you back, with big interest. Soon's we can talk——"

"We can talk right here."

Jack drank two cups of coffee. He did not begin really to talk until he finished eating. He took another cigarette. Rufe had given up cigars apparently.

"Well," Jack said, "y'u ain't ast me no questions about what's happened to me, but I know y'u wanta know. Take a look at me. That answers it pretty well, eh? Yep, I'm down and out. Sold my overcoat yesterday. On'y got a dollar fer it. Everything's gone—all the good clothes I had when we split up. And I'm through trying."

"Trying what?"

"Trying to go straight. I'm through,

I tell y'u!" His voice was harsh. The bitterness that had been accumulating came out in a torrent, with the chance to talk unrestrainedly and to a man who would understand. "I done the best I could. I worked on dirty jobs and took the abuse of bull-necked foremen, hoping somebody'd see I was trying to work my way up. On'y once did I git a chanst, with a construction company, a kind of a clerk's job—small pay, but a chanst to work up. Then they found out I was an ex-convict. I didn't deny it. They fired me. How they found out, I don't know. How do they find them things out, Rufe?"

"It beats me, but they find out. How about the girl, Jack?"

"I don't s'pose I'll ever see her again," Jack replied mournfully. "No, we ain't had no quarrel, but I ain't went near her since I got to looking like a tramp, and I can't go back to her after what I'm gonna do."

"What are you going to do?"

"Root! That's what I'm gonna do—root!"

"Not so loud, Jack. I said we could talk here safely, but we can't shout. So you're going to root, eh?"

"Root" is the underworld's term for steal.

"That's what," Jack replied. "I got it all figgered out, on'y I don't know how to do the job. There's a safe gotta be opened. I can do everything else, git inside the joint and all that—on'y I can't open the safe. That's up to you. There's big money in that safe."

"Where is it?"

"In that office where I worked last—that construction office. Why not? Didn't they kick me out in the street when I was doing my best to make good?"

"I see how you feel about it," Rufe admitted.

"You bet I'm sore—good and sore. They didn't even gi' me notice, just handed me what was coming and told me to git out—then and there. Scared 'em to death to think they had an ex-convict in their office. Never stopped to think I was trying to go straight. Didn't care. Well, I'll show 'em."

"Want to get revenge, eh?"

"Revenge and dough. What I need is dough. I been tramping the streets three weeks now; can't git a job. Got put out of my room. All my things are there, but the landlady won't even let me have my razor. Sore? I'll say I'm sore at everybody. Here I am with this little thin suit on, in a blizzard—shoes leaking, looking like a bum. What chance've I got?"

"Thing for you to do, Jack, is to get some sleep. You can stay here. The bed's big enough for the two of us, and I can always manage to rustle a little grub. I got a deal on now that will maybe turn out big. I have to leave here every morning at seven o'clock and don't get back until late in the afternoon." He winked significantly. "I'm looking a place over. It may produce big money. It's over in Jersey, and I'm putting in long hours on it."

JACK understood. Rufe was "pegging a joint," looking it over, planning robbery.

"Le' me in on it," Jack suggested, interested.

"Can't," Rufe said. "It ain't mine. I'm just looking it over for another fellow. It's his job, not mine. But you can make yourself at home here while I'm away. I'll explain your presence to the landlady. You can get fed up. I'll see about getting you an overcoat. Later on we'll know better just what to do. Right now I got this deal on, and I can't tell for sure whether I'm going to be rich or poor."

The days passed. Every morning Rufe Thacker left about seven o'clock and did not return until late in the afternoon. On the second Saturday evening he announced that he had got hold of a piece of money, and he bought Jack Finley a cheap overcoat.

Rufe seemed to be very busy in his task of looking over some place in New Jersey. He was also extremely uncommunicative about it. Jack Finley wondered. He had never heard of a job of thievery in which it took so long to complete the preliminary details. He was impatient, endeavoring to talk Rufe into

a descent on the safe in the construction-company office.

But Rufe put him off.

"All I want is a thousand bucks," Jack said. "Just a thousand, that's all."

"Why just a thousand?" Rufe inquired.

"Y'u open that safe," Jack assured him, "and y'u can have all there is in it over a thousand. After that job, Rufe, I ain't gonna keep on stealing."

"That's what they all say," Rufe told him wisely. "'Just one more job, and I quit.' I've heard that yarn over and over. But listen here, kid: if a fellow goes back to stealing after quitting it, he keeps right on stealing. He's always saying, 'Just one more job.' Every time he goes broke he steals again. The way to quit is to quit."

"But I'm gonna lift a thousand bucks some place. I got a chanst to buy an interest in a little cigar shop. It'll take a thousand bucks. How'm I gonna git a thousand bucks if I don't steal it? First I thought I'd work and save it. But nobody'll le' me work at anything decent. I gotta steal it."

Rufe did not dispute this. It seemed that he would have to steal it if he was to get it.

After this, Rufe got to staying out nights. Quizzed, his replies were vague. It seemed that the New Jersey job required extraordinary effort and time.

"Y'u must be gonna crack down on the State treasury," Jack Finley remarked.

On the next Saturday night Rufe handed Jack a sum of money.

"Go on over to that rooming house of yours," he advised; "the one you got put out of. You say you owe that landlady twelve dollars. Well, there's the money. Pay it and get your things."

"Rufe, I don't like to take your money. Y'u seem to be just skimping along yerself. Why don't we open that construction-company safe, Rufe, and——"

"Do what I say. Go over there and pay up—get your things. And don't worry about taking my money. Don't worry at all about me. I don't count. It's you that counts."

"Y'u're allus saying that," Jack protested. "What d'y'u mean—you don't count?"

But Rufe Thacker bundled him off.

Jack Finley came back on the run. He was so excited he could hardly speak. He stood all out of breath in Rufe's room, clutching a letter, holding it out.

"Look, look!" he managed to exclaim. "Look't the letter I got over there to my rooming house. It come to-day, the landlady said. Look—look, Rufe!"

"Well, what is it?"

"Pull it out—look at it!"

Rufe pulled the letter from the open envelope. It was typewritten on a blank sheet of paper and signed by one "John Fanning." Rufe's eyes bulged when he opened the letter, for folded with it was a promising-looking slip of paper, a certified check for one thousand dollars, also signed by John Fanning.

"Who's that guy?" Rufe asked, before he read the letter.

"Search me," Jack replied. "I never heard of him before."

Rufe adjusted his glasses and read the letter. Surprise, doubt, and pleasure were mingled on his countenance.

"He's certainly a mysterious individual," he commented.

INDEED, John Fanning was more or less of a mystery, although his letter explained his purpose. It seemed that Mr. Fanning was a philanthropist who believed in applying his charities without a fanfare of publicity. His pet philanthropy lay in aiding ex-convicts, for, the letter hinted, John Fanning had had in his younger days his share of trouble. Now that he was rich, he took pleasure in aiding unfortunates who found themselves up against problems such as his had been. Mr. Fanning explained that he had heard of Jack Finley, among others—learned of his discharge from the employ of the construction company because he was an ex-convict.

Mr. Fanning and his friends, it seemed, were always on the lookout for such cases. Jack Finley's predicament had come to his knowledge. He wondered if Mr. Finley would not accept this thousand dollars, to tide him over what Mr. Fanning knew to be a dangerous period

in the life of a young man so situated? He was asked to accept the money and to say nothing about it. He must not try to locate Mr. Fanning in order to thank him personally. Jack Finley's gratitude would be taken for granted. Mr. Fanning got his reward out of the satisfaction such outlays gave him.

"I've heard about guys like that," said Rufe Thacker. "Take it and say nothing. This man Fanning seems to be the right kind. He doesn't want any advertising."

"It ain't such a bad world after all," Jack Finley remarked.

"No, it ain't; that's right," Rufe agreed. "I've heard of men like this Fanning. His letter reads as though he knew what an ex-convict's up against. That seems to be a hobby of his, prowling around and digging up cases like yours. And say, Jack, that thousand dropped in at a good time, eh?"

"That's five hundred apiece."

"Now I knew you'd say that, but you listen to me, Jack. It wouldn't be right for me to take a penny of that money. Don't you see there's something working for you that we can't figure out? It's just meant that you're not to steal again. That's a thousand dollars just dropped down into your hand, right out of the sky. Didn't you say something about having a chance to buy an interest in a little cigar shop for a thousand dollars? That's some coincidence, eh? Like a fairy tale. Don't bust your luck now by giving half of it to an old crook like me—who doesn't count, anyhow. Play out your string. Buy into that business. Go back to your girl and get married. We can't buck a thing like that. There's something working for you. If you toss that away, no telling what will happen. If you go to stealing now—after that——"

He paused, pottering about the room, getting his frugal supper.

"You clear out of here," he said to Jack. "Oh, sure, I know you're grateful for me putting you up here, but don't try to pay me back, not even the money I gave you for the overcoat. I don't need it. The New Jersey job is going to turn out big. I'll be rich in a few days. You go away and don't come back to me any more. I'm a crook, always have been a crook, always will be. We can't travel together, can't have no doings with one another. Don't make it any harder by yowling that we're friends. Sure we're friends, but we're different. You can't go straight and travel with me. Now you clear out. I'm expecting company."

"Company?"

"Yes, company. I've got my own affairs to look out for, haven't I? You don't need me now. You never will need me again. You're set. You're in love, and you got a thousand dollars. It's the amount you needed to keep you straight. Well, play out your luck. Hustle away now. I'm expecting company."

Jack Finley went away. Rufe expecting company? Oh, well, his brother crooks were probably coming in to talk over the robbery job in New Jersey. As for Jack Finley—well, he was through with such things. His life lay before him in a straight line. There was a telephone booth in the corner drug store, and he soon had Angie on the wire.

WHEN his company arrived, Rufe Thacker was sitting in a huddled shape before the little gas heater. He merely called out an invitation to enter when the knock sounded on his unlocked door. Rufe was very tired.

A large, vigorous man walked into the room, did not remove his hat; he stood there surveying Rufe, with a smile on his rather hard face.

"Hello, Rufe!"

Rufe looked into the man's face.

"Randall, is it? How do you do, Randall? I've been expecting you or some of your associates."

"Expecting me, eh?" Randall rejoined in some surprise. "What have you been expecting me for, Rufe?"

"I think you know."

Randall studied the old man a moment, then sat down on the bed. It was an entirely different Rufe Thacker than he had looked for.

"That sounds like a plea of guilty," Randall suggested amiably.

Rufe continued to stare at the flame of the heater and responded without looking up:

"I guess you've got the goods on me this time."

"Shouldn't wonder. Turn around here, Rufe, and look up at me. That's better. I always like to look into a man's face when I'm talking to him. We've known each other a long time, Rufe. You've been a crook about as long as I've been a detective, I guess. I've looked for you here and there and every place, but when I was called out this morning on that puny little job on the bakery-company safe, I had no idea the trail would lead to Rufe Thacker. I couldn't believe it. It wasn't your kind of a job—didn't measure up at all with Rufe Thacker.

"A thousand dollars taken out of a safe, just an even thousand, and seven or eight hundred left in it. That didn't sound like Rufe Thacker to me. But all day long those bakery people been hammering in your description. Tall, sallow, scar on the right cheek.

"Well, thinks I, the missing bookkeeper, the eccentric old chap who's been working for the company two or three months, he's certainly a dead ringer for Rufe Thacker. So this evening I thought I'd come over and see. And sure enough, I find Rufe Thacker."

They were silent a few moments. Rufe got up slowly, heaved a sigh, and began to get into his shabby overcoat.

"Well, I'm ready, Randall," he said. "I'll turn out the gas. We'll notify the landlady on the way down—tell her I won't be back. I'll just leave my things. There's nothing here that amounts to anything, and I won't need them."

"Sit down, Rufe. Sick?"

Thacker sighed.

"Well, I've never been right, Randall, since I got out of stir the last time. I feel much older than I am. I'm not exactly sick—just tired."

Randall nodded. He understood. A crook approaching the finish, one who now stooped to petty jobs.

"It knocked me back," he said, "to think of Rufe Thacker working as a bookkeeper—actually working. I never knew you to work before, Rufe."

"Well," the old crook rejoined, "I thought I'd try my hand at it for once. I rather liked it," he added wistfully, then explained hastily: "But I'm not the working kind, Randall. I couldn't go straight. I got a look into that safe and just couldn't keep my hands off the money. I'm what you call a hopeless crook, Randall, and it won't take you fellows long to put me away."

"Where's the dough, Rufe?"

"Gone! Shot it this afternoon. Tried my hand at gambling again and lost the whole wad. I'm clean broke now, Randall. That's why I'm ready to be put away. Clean broke, a failure at going straight, and tired—awfully tired."

"I'll have to search the room, Rufe."

"Help yourself."

Rufe Thacker experienced a warm inward glow as the detective searched his humble quarters. They wouldn't find the thousand—wouldn't ever find it. Rufe had intrusted that to a friend, and the friend had bought a certified check in a bank in a remote quarter of the city. They would not trace the thousand. That was safe—Rufe Thacker's contribution to the world against which he had plotted all his life.

"It isn't me that counts," he kept saying to himself. "It's him, the young man, with his life in front. They called me Fagin—Rufe Thacker, alias Fagin. That hurt. Only one thing I could do. One of us had to go straight. It's the young man that counts—not an old rogue like me."

Randall was looking at him.

"Well," he said, "I guess you've either blowed the money, as you say, Rufe, or put it away safely. I can't find it. Are you ready, Rufe?"

"I'm ready."

Battle Honors

By Will McMorrow

Author of "Old Frisky," Etc.

"Old Frisky," the meticulous drill sergeant, reappears in this tale of the wartime battle front; but the most important person is not he, just now, but Private Sniggs, erstwhile shiner of shoes, who sincerely tries to adjust himself to the traditions of the Windsor Rifles.

HE had started out in life polishing boots in the smallest cubby-hole in the largest manor house in England. Sometimes, in a halo of glory, Sniggs had held bottles and passed glasses to the merry gentlemen who hunted the fox and chased the pheasant and dirtied the boots that Sniggs shined. Sniggs was well on his way to learn the difficult art of being a footman, under the unbending and sarcastic tutorship of an impeccable butler, and he was making a comfortable niche for himself in life, when the war came along. The merry gentlemen drained their glasses, packed their kits, and went blithely forth to Flanders, and the army reached out its long arm and plucked Sniggs from his cubby-hole.

He came away as reluctantly as an oyster from its shell.

Then the army took away his clothes that fitted and gave him clothes that didn't fit, and an iron hat that hurt his head. It gave him a number and stamped it on his clothing and boots and knife and fork and rifle, and it would have liked to have stamped it on his heart and brains if such had been conveniently at hand. It handed him over to certain hard-bitten men, square-shouldered and loud-voiced, who made personal remarks about Sniggs and chased him around a parade ground and taught him how to walk straight and shoot straight and wash behind the ears.

Then the army nodded approvingly, hung an identification disk about his neck, in case of accident, and gathered him up with many others and dumped him on the shores of France, with instructions to shoot enemies. The time and

place for the shooting were to be designated by the corporal of the squad, the sergeant of the platoon, the captain of the company, the major of the battalion, the brigadier commanding the brigade, the major general of the division, the general of the army, the general staff, and many others, including, theoretically, the king. But to Sniggs, the most important of these was the corporal of the squad.

The corporal, a thin young man with a haggard eye, introduced himself informally to Sniggs, when the latter showed up with a fresh draft from the base depot. Corporal Jones, who had come out with the first hundred thousand, had never had the good luck to be wounded nor the bad luck to be killed, and he took a jaundiced view of things.

"Blimy!" he snorted, surveying the humble Sniggs. "Wot price victory now? They get worse and worse every draft! Where the 'ell is England's man power gone to? Wot in Gawd's name made you join the bleedin' army?"

Sniggs gazed mildly about the billet. Lean, tanned men, lying and sitting in the littered straw, stopped polishing equipment and scraping muddy boots, to grin appreciatively.

"Why, for the sake of Hengland, sir." His gentle blue eyes, set in a placid, pink face, were puzzled and reproachful.

"A narsty beggar, too, when you're roused," the corporal grunted. "I'll bet the bloomin' enemy don't sleep a wink to-night when they 'ear abaht this. Like as not they'll chuck it and run."

Sniggs reddened at the tips of his prominent ears, but said nothing. It was evident that they were having him on about the kaiser running away and all that. It was doubtful if one middle-aged Englishman would seriously affect the course of the war, however stirred he might be by the wrongs of England as pictured by the recruiting sergeant. Sniggs deposited his pack and rifle in a corner and went to work polishing an extra pair of boots, whistling as he worked, as was his custom in the cubby-hole back home. In the matter of cleanliness, at least, he was a perfect soldier.

"An' wot," asked Corporal Jones later, "made you join the Windsor Rifles, when they's so many *cushy* jobs back in the Army Service Corps.

Sniggs looked owlishly wise and scrubbed hard at a speck of rust on his rifle barrel.

"Hi 'ave always wanted to see a bit of the world an' the recruitin' sergeant—a fair-spoken chap 'e was, too—'elped me considerable. 'E picked the Windsor Rifles for me. 'E said they was all pleasant chaps an' had most interestin' happenings."

"Blimy! 'Interestin' happenings,' 'e said. Listen to that, mate!"

He held up his finger for silence pointing toward the horizon. Dull rumblings, merged into a thunderous drone, came faintly over the nearest hilltop.

"I'll take my oath you'll 'ave an interestin' time when you get up there by and by," the corporal grinned sourly. "You'll see the world all right—maybe the next one, too, if you don't bob yer foolish 'ead quick enough."

ACROSS the trampled parade ground in front of the billets stalked an erect, tightly buttoned figure, gray mustache bristling, keen eyes glaring straight ahead, and silver-headed stick flashing in the hot sunlight. A lean, brown dog of uncertain lineage, trotted dutifully behind.

"There you are, mate," the corporal suggested. "One of them pleasant chaps the recruiter was tellin' you abaht—the old bloke with the dog. That's 'Old Frisky' 'imself. Like as not, 'e will talk to you like one gentleman to another when 'e gets sight of that 'ump on yer back on parade. 'E is our drill sergeant. Keep out of Old Frisky's way, or Gawd 'elp yer!"

But Sniggs was not a figure to escape the piercing eye of Drill Sergeant Frisbie, known familiarly, if not affectionately, as Old Frisky. Many years of polishing boots had given Sniggs a round-shouldered stoop that no amount of pack-carrying could straighten. Where he should have shown a soldierly concavity he was convex, and vice versa.

Old Frisky, casting his eye along the rear of the line at early-morning inspection, sighted a protruding bump of khaki.

"Get up in line—that man!" he snapped.

Sniggs edged forward a few inches. Old Frisky's heels clicked, as he stepped one sharp pace to the right and viewed the line of men from the front. Sniggs' face, jutting out beyond the line, was inoffensive enough. But to Old Frisky it was more than offensive—it was a challenge to a lifework of making the universe into straight lines and sharp angles.

"Get back in line—that same man!" he grated. "Take his name, sergeant, for 'aving a crook in 'is lazy back on parade. Straighten yer blasted knees, you swab! 'Old him up, somebody, before he falls down. Put his name down again, sergeant, for bein' slow in obeying an order!"

When he was marched in front of the company commander that evening at "small reports," Sniggs found no excuse ready that would explain how he could not be in line both back and front at the same time, so he received a pack drill from the yawning company commander. Sniggs was not ready-witted. Making an about turn to leave, he almost fell over Old Frisky who was at hand to see justice administered.

Old Frisky gripped his silver-headed cane tightly to restrain himself, as Sniggs tripped over his own feet and the drill sergeant's on the way to the door.

"A damnation lazy soldier, sir," he snapped, "but I'll wake him up."

"Seems to have too many feet," opined the company commander judicially. "Remarkable types coming in nowadays. I don't know what the army is coming to. The standard's much lower physically."

Sniggs did his pack drill uncomplainingly, though the sun was hot on the dusty parade ground back of the billets, and the pack heavier than necessary, since no one had thought to advise Sniggs to empty it of weighty overcoat and raincoat and fill it with straw as was customary.

But he was not finished with Old Frisky. The sharp eye of the drill sergeant could pick that shambling figure out among ten thousand men, and he harried him as the watchdog harries the straggling sheep, driving it into line, guarding it from the perils of undisciplined wandering. To Old Frisky, firm in his faith in discipline and order, indomitable in his determination to bend a slipshod universe into straight lines, Sniggs was what the building out of plumb is to the architect, what the piano key jangling out of tune is to the virtuoso.

If there was nothing worse to Old Frisky than a poor soldier, there was nothing finer in the world to him than the army, and nothing comparable in the said army to the Windsor Rifles. The "battle honors," that list of victories participated in that are cherished and memorized by every British regiment, Old Frisky could recite backward without missing one—and the list for the Windsor Rifles was not a short one—from the Peninsular campaign down to 1914. There had been defeats, too, for the Windsor Rifles were not invincible, but Old Frisky never mentioned them, not even the disastrous little affair at Steinkop in the Boer War, where Old Frisky, covering the retreat, got the leg wound that gave him a decided limp at times.

RAINY weather bothered the leg, so that it was unfortunate, indeed, for Sniggs that there was dampness in the air the next day on parade when Old Frisky marched stiffly along the line. The wound reminded him that he had forgotten to examine some of the new recruits on the history of the regiment, more important to Old Frisky than any of the new-fangled knowledge of bombs and gas defense and machine guns.

"Battle honors!" he demanded, pointing the silver head of his stick at the nearest recruit. "Wake up, man! You were taught them at the training depot."

"Waterloo—Sebastapol—Balaklava —Khartoum——" The man rattled off a dozen names glibly.

"Gawd!" whispered Sniggs despairingly. "If 'e should arsk me!"

"Try 'im with Steinkop, mate," suggested Corporal Jones, who had a kind of sardonic wit. "He'll appreciate that. An' yer could try 'im with the battle of Bunker 'Ill an' Hogan's Alley an' Jenkin's Nose an' Bumby's Gas Works——"

Old Frisky hobbled stiffly along the line until his silver-headed stick and formidable nose pointed straight at Sniggs.

"Let's hear from you now, my man!" he said briskly. "An' keep that blurry chin of yours up in the air. You're not a dirty civilian now. What victories 'ave we got on our colors?"

Sniggs swallowed painfully.

" 'Ogan's Bunkers, sir," he managed in a hoarse whisper.

The gray, bushy eyebrows above the formidable nose quivered. The points of the waxed, gray mustache beneath the formidable nose trembled with rage. But Old Frisky was a disciple of discipline as well as a teacher.

"If I 'ear another snicker from this platoon," he rasped, sending a steely glance along the quickly sobered faces, "I'll make you all wish you never were born. 'Ave you anything else to say, my funny man?"

Sniggs' thin neck wriggled uncomfortably inside the rough khaki collar. "All I can think of right now, sir, is Steinkop. I did 'ear abaht that victory. Then there was the battle of Nosy Jenkins and——"

"I think," said Old Frisky, with deadly calm, "that's plenty. You'll no doubt remember the others when you sit down by yourself. You'll 'ave plenty of time on your 'ands, I promise you. Gawd strike me, if you ain't fooled me, an' I thought I could tell a silly blighter after thirty years' service. I misjudged you, my man; you're more artful than I thought."

Sniggs bobbed his head toward Corporal Jones. "Hi must say, sir, that this chap 'elped me considerable. Fair is fair arfter all, an' I'm not the one to take credit——"

"He helped you, did he?" Old Frisky waited for no answer. "Fall in, two corporals here! Take this corporal's rifle, sergeant, and march him to the guardroom. Mark 'im down for casting ridicule on the king's uniform an' dishonoring the regiment. Take this man's name for bein' idle on parade an' not knowing his recruit lessons."

So Corporal Jones, white-lipped, but with a fine pretense of not caring a damn, that very afternoon was marched to the center of a hollow square formed of all the corporals of the battalion and was "dusted," as the saying is; for disciplinary justice in the Windsor Rifles was swift and sure. Old Frisky himself ripped the chevrons off the corporal's arms, after corporals had been posted at the four points of the compass to prevent mere privates witnessing this degradation. Old Frisky's mouth tightened grimly, as he performed this sacrificial rite at the altar of discipline, for he considered Jones an excellent soldier at times. But it would not have made the slightest difference if it had been Old Frisky's father.

THE adjutant clicked his shiny spurs, pasted his monocle firmly in one eye, and read a paper with his left eye, the monocle being perfectly useless for reading purposes. The gist of his rapid monotone concerned the king and Corporal Jones and the good of the service. The paper folded away, the adjutant saluted, caught his monocle neatly and strode off to tea. Old Frisky wheeled about, his stick firmly clutched beneath his arm.

"Corporals!—dis-miss! Private Jones! —about—turn! Quick—march!"

Private Jones quickly marched away to his billet and assured sympathizing friends that he was overjoyed to be rid of the responsibilities of rank and power. Having adopted this pose it would have been too plainly inconsistent to show great animosity toward Sniggs, so Jones contented himself with kicking the recruit's personal belongings the length of the straw-strewn barn and out the open door, where Sniggs found them later when he came in exhausted from drill.

"I sye," he complained, "a joke's a joke, you know. But this throwing a chap's things about is a bit thick. We never played such larks back 'ome, an' I've been in the best 'ouses."

"You'll blurry well wish you was back in one of them best 'ouses, mate," said Private Wager, who was a friend of Jones, "after 'aving a bloke stripped that way on parade, with yer silly tales. 'E'll remember it."

But if Jones remembered it he kept the memory to himself. Sniggs forgot immediately in the press of other matters. There were many things to attend to. The Windsor Rifles were undergoing a course of intensive training. Close-order drill, the joy of Old Frisky's heart, had to give way to bombing practice, trench-raiding drill, instruction in gas defense, wave attack and fortification. The Rifles spent their days rehearsing, preparing, getting ready to take their place in the "big show," the steady booming of whose circus drums could be heard off to the east, faintly rolling during the day, rumbling loudly in the stillness of the night.

For it was the autumn of 1916, and the Somme battle was on, and the lives of men were fluttering out faster than the leaves could fall from the trees in the deserted woods of England, where the merry gentlemen had hunted the fox and chased the pheasant and dirtied the boots that Sniggs shined.

He enjoyed, when Old Frisky's stern eye was not on him, standing in the door of the billet, that fronted on a much-traveled road leading to the front line. To Sniggs that road and the men who trudged its dusty length were a constant source of wonder and gratification.

Along that road came strange men from far-off countries and hidden places of the earth. They passed day after day, wraiths in a fog of yellow dust, faces toward the thundering horizon.

Gurkhas, small and wiry, barbaric Maoris in dun khaki, black-bearded horse artillerymen from Farther India, turbaned Sikhs, lean Canadians from the Northern forests, black men, with glistening eyes and teeth, from equatorial jungles, debonair Australian horsemen, yellow men from the Straits Settlements, brown men from the islands of the sea, pale men from the tenements of London and Belfast, red-cheeked men from the green fields of Ireland and Wales, tanned men from the Argentine pampas, kilted lads from the Highland glens—Sniggs watched them all go by and sucked his pipe thoughtfully and nodded his head from time to time.

Men spend time and treasure seeing the world and the races of mankind. Sniggs leaned against the door post of the billet comfortably in the sun, and the world passed by his door.

" 'Indoos, that lot," he would comment, pointing with the stem of his pipe to a battalion from British East Africa. "Darker chaps than Hi thought they'd be. Well! Well!"

AT night the steady murmur of passing men and clink of equipment lulled him to sleep. Sometimes the ground beneath him trembled, as the long guns, drawn by their ponderous caterpillar tractors, rumbled noisily by, the sleep-killing noise fading slowly into the distance, and the men of the Windsor Rifles would sigh and swear and turn over with a rustling of rubber sheets, like men who were having decidedly unpleasant dreams.

In between times Sniggs would squat in a corner of the billet, his ungainly figure more contorted than ever, and write long, misspelled letters with the stub of a much-wetted pencil, to the impeccable butler back home. Mostly they were in the form of travelogues and described the races of the earth in detail; and, although they contained no information useful to the enemy, they would have made startling reading for a student of ethnology. They caused the subaltern of the company, whose duty it was to read all outgoing mail, to exclaim several times, "By God!" Then he would slap his knee several times more and indulge in the heartiest laugh he had enjoyed since Mons. Sometimes Sniggs wrote of the Windsor Rifles and the glorious history of the regiment, and if he added a few victories to the battle honors for the butler's benefit, it was done reverently. Even Old Frisky would hardly have found fault with that.

He wrote:

I offen thogt I ad the makins of a sojer, only I shud ave started sooner. An old chap Frisby is name is who elps us out with our drillin an such like tole me so the uther day and sez leave it to im an he wud straiten me up. Thare all nice agreeabul chaps ere but given to larks we ad a kit inspeckshun yesturday an some chap marked everythin I was showin wen my back was turned in

pounds an shillins and the drill sarjent sez wot the ell is this a bazar and the majur sez put im in the book but one of our gentlemen sez some thin about a letter writin chap an the majur sez all right but take im out of my site but Drill sargent Frisby put me in anyway afterwards. Tell Miss Ruth I got the sox an thank her kindly I ope the silver is done right by that new man Miss Phyllis alwas sed I was good doin that but the candel stike is a bother. abowt our regiment I didn tell you larst time ow a chap was telling me about us lickin the Hamericans at Bullrun wen the Peruvian empror an our King god bless im was tryin to free the slaves wot was workin in the cole mines and ow we charged on bisikles fancy that.

Sniggs learned some of the battle honors by heart, repeating them over to himself, after "Last Post," in the darkness of the barn, until some restless sleeper would lob a boot within two inches of the orator's head. If Sniggs was proud of the regiment, the regiment was not particularly proud of Sniggs.

There came the day when the road outside the billet was crowded from wall to wall of the houses with marching men. Battalion after battalion rolled by, silent battalions, singing battalions, fresh battalions, and tired battalions, from sunrise to sunset, and the thunder in the night took on a menacing note, and next day there was another tide of men flowing sluggishly the other way, broken men, stumbling men, bandaged men, straggling along between the silent ambulances and herded groups of haggard men in field gray.

Later there was activity around the billets of the Windsor Rifles, and Sniggs very gratefully deposited his heavy pack in a heap by the transport wagons and received two Mills bombs and two extra bandoliers of ammunition and two days' rations of bully beef and biscuit. Following which, he lined up and was inspected carefully, from gas mask to ground sheet, by Old Frisky and the company commander who had the look about him that Sniggs had noted about gentlemen who were starting off on an especially interesting chasing of the pheasant. Sniggs was relieved to find that Old Frisky handed out no pack drills this time.

Then the company marched out into the road behind a long column of Windsor Rifles, with Old Frisky in front glaring sternly ahead, and the regimental band, stationed at the crossroads, played "Auld Lang Syne" and "Mandalay"—which was the particular battle song of the Rifles—and Sniggs was markedly out of step both times.

"Blessed if I knows 'ow you do it," complained Wager, after tripping over Sniggs' heels for a mile or so. "If they was eight different steps you'd pick the wrong one. I'd as leave be follerin' a bloomin' camel!"

Sniggs grinned a sickly appreciation of this witticism and stumbled along faster. It was hot, very hot on that winding, dusty road that led between scattered skeletons of houses, and the light, fighting pack he carried seemed to be trying to push him down under the feet of the marching column. Across his narrow chest the straps of the bandoliers seemed to be red-hot iron bands. Sniggs lacked the stamina for forced marches, and this march was a man-killer. It had to be.

TWELVE kilometers away, where that racked and shelled road ended in a snarl of barbed wire, some thousands of men in brown and some thousands of men in gray, wrestled in a murky, noisy hell of high explosives, to win or lose a little hamlet. It was a small place—just a cluster of farmhouses, hardly important enough to be mentioned on the peacetime tourist maps—and it was only a blasted heap of bricks and mortar now. But more men had died there within two days than had been born there in two hundred years, and the name of that hamlet, Roncemont, had been lettered hugely in every newspaper of the world for days.

Stormed by the British, recaptured by the enemy, taken again at a terrible sacrifice by a British night attack, it was threatened with recapture again. A battered brigade of Royal Kildares were holding on by the narrowest margin. The Windsor Rifles were wanted badly, and there was no time for halts or rest on the way.

Sniggs had never heard of Roncemont.

No one bothered to discuss rumors or *communiques* with Sniggs. Just then Sniggs was not interested in anything. As he trudged mile after weary mile without a rest, he began to suffer with a suffocating feeling in his chest. A fog seemed to float along before him. Even the sharp crack of a near-by exploding shell failed to arouse him. Once he staggered, and Wager reached forward and took his rifle.

"I'll carry it fer a while," he suggested. "You better drop out soon an' get a breather, or you'll be bleedin' well under our feet in an 'eap."

"Let 'im take it wiv the rest of us," grunted Jones sourly, through a caked mask of dust and sweat. " 'E's just skivin' to duck the show."

But Sniggs wasn't malingering. He proved it within ten minutes by toppling over on his face with a rattle of equipment.

"Drag that man to the side of the road," snapped the officer of the platoon behind. "Open his collar. March ahead, now!"

So Sniggs was left propped against the side of a barn, which had neither front nor back nor roof, and lay there for a long time after the last straggling platoon of the Windsor Rifles had hurried out of sight. No one stopped to investigate whether the man with the pallid face by the roadside was alive or dead, for, as has been pointed out before, this was not a practice march with an ambulance bringing up the rear to nurse cases of heat prostration back to life. *Time* was the essence right then, as the lawyers always say.

Roncemont, a mere dust heap now, was becoming a "hot spot" and was getting hotter every minute. The three battalions of Royal Kildares had dwindled to a scattered handful of men and had fallen back to join the Windsor Rifles. The Rifles were hurrying to the support of the Kildares and were deploying, as they came up, at double time, digging themselves in hastily, while they got their breath back and looked things over.

Meanwhile the enemy artillery fire was growing in volume, covering the country behind the Windsor Rifles to prevent reserves coming up, and searching for the main road.

If they did not immediately succeed in locating the road, they succeeded in restoring Sniggs to his senses. An eight-inch shell landed, after a shrieking five-mile journey, in a vegetable patch behind the barn and covered Sniggs with fragments of potatoes, lettuce, and barn wall, not the least of which was the barn wall.

HE struggled out of the débris of dried mud and staggered in the middle of the road. He was conscious of a splitting headache and the grins on the faces of two drivers of the Army Service Corps, who were huddled on the safer side of their motor truck.

"I say," Sniggs protested feebly, "a lark's a lark, you know, but this throwing dust over a chap is a bit——"

"Wake up, mate," one of the drivers warned, "an' get off the center of the bloomin' road before you get yer silly 'ead blown off. Get down 'ere."

Sniggs shook his head. "I've got to catch up with the company. I fell out. My legs kind of gave way suddenlike. You don't 'appen to know where the battle is going to be? I should be there, you know."

The A. S. C. man grinned. "Well, if it's a battle you're lookin' for, mate, you'll find it at the end of this road, or I'll go to blazes. 'Ark to them big uns now!"

"An' 'ow far is it, if I may arsk?"

"Like as not," answered the driver, winking at his chum, "you'll 'ave heard of Roncemont. Just keep goin' along the road 'ere, a matter of five mile. You carn't go wrong. You'll bleedin' well know it when you get there."

Sniggs hesitated doubtfully. Five miles was a long walk, especially when a man's legs felt hollow and wabbly.

"Perhaps," he said hopefully, "you'll give me a lift in the lorry. It seems to be 'eaded in that direction, an' the motor's runnin'."

"An' it'll be runnin' faster in the other direction as soon as I get turned around. I'm way out of the zone now. Blimy! But you're a cool hand. I ought to punch you in the jore——"

"Shell shock!" his companion exclaimed. "The bloke is clean off 'is perch. Wot the——"

Sniggs was climbing deliberately into the driver's seat. From his lofty position he addressed the two amazed Service Corps men.

"The Windsor Rifles," he announced, " 'ave never 'ad deserters. I fancy you chaps never 'eard of Sebastopol and Waterloo and them places. Now I've arsked you fair to 'elp me, an' I won't arsk no more!"

He threw the gears in with a grinding crash and released the clutch. The heavy truck jerked into action and rolled swiftly down the road, just evading the plunging grasp of the nearest Service Corps man.

"Stop that, you balmy blighter! Stop it!"

But Sniggs was on his way, rolling nicely if unevenly along the winding road. There was little difference between operating the truck and the little car he was accustomed to run errands in back home for Miss Phyllis. It took more strength to throw the wheel around of course, and the noise inside the driver's cab was terrific, but he managed.

Several times he had to run off the road to avoid fresh shell holes, and once to avoid a tangled mass of horses and men and gun carriage. He passed other trucks, some disabled by the roadside and others coming toward him, and the drivers shouted to him, but he only waved a hand in answer. Rounding a curve he passed a body of men deploying into skirmish order alongside the road, and a couple of soldiers tried to head him off.

"Roncemont!" he called, pointing ahead without slowing down, and they jumped clear of the wheels just in time.

Presently there were no more motor trucks. Sniggs never noticed their absence, nor the fact that there were no men marching along the road. He was busy avoiding the sprawling khaki figures lying here and there where they had fallen. A terrific explosion just behind him went unnoticed, even though a flying fragment of the shell carried away part of the canvas top of the truck.

Sniggs pressed the accelerator down and roared around a curve at the bottom of a hill to find himself suddenly in the center of a whirlwind.

Ahead of him the road, torn but passable, stretched in a straight gray line across a flat expanse of withered grass and blasted tree stumps, to what had been Roncemont, now several acres of brick and plaster and splintered wood. On either side of him lay the Windsor Rifles, a long line of khaki at right angles to the road, but not crossing it since its macadam surface was too hard for a hasty intrenchment and too exposed for anything else. A few strands of barbed wire were strung across the road instead. The heavy truck, careening down the hill, swept through the wire as if it weren't there.

There was no way for Sniggs to know that the particular line of sputtering rifles he was passing was the firing line of his own regiment. He was too busy steering the swaying truck to look around. There was no way for Sniggs to know that he had arrived at a crucial moment of a hard-fought day; that Roncemont had vomited forth two columns of enemy troops against the line of the Windsor Rifles and had failed twice to break through; that the gray-green blur that he glimpsed in the gathering dusk, as he turned the corner, was an enemy column advancing for the third time in mass formation down the road to break that stubborn British line.

ANGELS might well have hesitated to tread that steel-swept place where Sniggs was rushing in.

A passing shell ripped through the air and neatly removed the top of the driver's cab. A spray of machine-gun bullets splintered the glass of the wind shield, cutting Sniggs' face with the flying particles. A hurtling fragment of iron tore its way through the radiator and smashed the vitals of the engine into scrap iron.

But no engine was necessary with the weight and the momentum of that Juggernaut plunging down that hill. It was traveling fast and carrying Sniggs with it. It is hard to say what the enemy

column thought of it. They could have considered it neither magnificent nor war. They had only a few seconds to consider it either way.

Sniggs tried to jam on the brakes, as he caught sight of the mass of men in front, and at the same moment a burst of shrapnel overhead showered lead down on him. He fell over the steering wheel, as the truck plowed through the head of the column, crushing the leading squads beneath the wheels, scattering the rest to the four winds. Then a yawning shell hole caught a wheel, and the truck tumbled over, throwing Sniggs into the ditch, as the Windsor Rifles, wondering but grateful, rushed up in a storm of cheers and laughter, with Old Frisky in the van, silver-headed stick in one hand and an old-fashioned revolver smoking in the other. They gave the enemy no time to reform, but went right ahead, a Lewis gun perched on top of the overturned truck covering the advance and sending a deadly stream of lead into the retreating enemy.

When things had settled down, and Roncemont was safe again, the major commanding the battalion turned to Old Frisky.

"By gad! Sergeant major, that motor lorry turned the trick for us. Rather irregular, but it caught 'em just right and just in time! Bucked our chaps up wonderfully. They would have gone on to the capital if we'd let them. Most sporting thing I ever saw, by George! Who was the fellow, anyway?"

"Middle-aged party name of Sniggs, sir, one of our recruits. I recognized him going by."

It was Old Frisky that located Sniggs and hauled him out from beneath the wreck and helped carry him back to the dressing station, where Sniggs had a shrapnel bullet extracted from his shoulder and presently opened his eyes.

"I wouldn't do the regiment down," he muttered, "not even if I 'ad to run off that way with a chap's lorry. Carn't stay behind and disgrace the regiment—not after Waterloo and all that!

"Battle honors," he said, catching sight of Old Frisky's intimidating nose, "I carn't seem to get straight. Were there twenty-one of them, did you say, sir?"

"Twenty-two!" Old Frisky barked. "There's Roncemont now, don't forget. You helped a bit there yourself. You can tell your civilian friends that when you get back to England."

"Wot did he mean?" Sniggs asked the stretcher bearer, as Old Frisky stalked out.

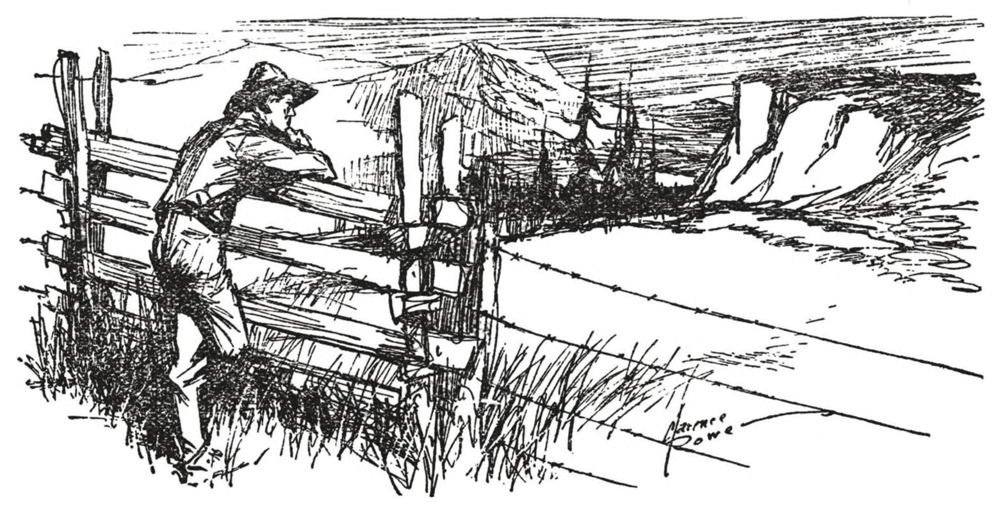
"Blimy! You should know. Aren't you the bloke that smashed into the enemy?"

"So them was the murderin' blighters!" Sniggs murmured indignantly and settled back comfortably on the blanket. "Fancy me thinkin' they was Frenchmen!"

THE BEST MUSHER IN THE ARCTIC

IF the many trophies which Togo, a husky of the North, has received in recognition of his many feats of swiftness and endurance on the icy trails of the arctic, may be taken at their face value, this splendid malemute is the best dog in the North. He has a long record for heroic feats on the trails, but his outstanding achievement was a race he made a short time ago. At an average speed of nine miles an hour, he paced through two hundred and forty miles of snow with a sled cargo of diphtheria serum.

His master, Leonard Seppala, is his driver, but Seppala declares that, while officially the trophies have been given to him, they really are the property of Togo, for the dog won them and not his driver. Seppala is regarded as the most skillful musher in the arctic.



The Life of Riley

By Kenneth Latour

I.

HIS ould man's name was Dennis; his mother was Mary O'Shay;
They were strong but the mountains were stronger yet—so they both went early away.
He made their grave in a pocket of shale, and scratched their names on a stone;
And then he went back to the lonely claim, and fried his bacon alone.

He watched the morning shadows shrink, as the sun came over the range;
And he said to himself, " 'Tis a hell of a life! I think I'll be makin' a change.
What with the toil and the lonesomeness, and the blasted hopes," said he,
" 'Tis little it holds but bitter woe! The life of Riley for me!"

He said good-by to the low-pay claim, the shack and the mound of shale;
He turned his back to the timber line and his face to the outside trail.
His pack was light and his poke was lean. "But I'll go," he said, "and see
If I can't do better—wurra!—than this. The life of Riley for me!"

II.

The boss looked up from his glass-top desk, and, "What's this, Dennis?" he said.
"We've treated you square, and we've paid you well; and now you'd be quitting
us dead?"
"I would," said Dennis. "I've served ye fair, and little it is I've made;
But such as it is 'twill see me back to the place where I should have stayed.

"I'm quittin' your smoke, and your sweaty crowds, for me first-known avatars—
The sun-gilt ranges, league on league, and the high peaks jeweled with stars!
It may be harsh and it may be lone. but it's high, and it's clean and it's free;
I'm going back to it, once for all, and I'll stay with it, glory be!"

The ranges glowed in the setting sun, and the eastern stars showed pale;
And a light sprang up in a cabin door, near a silent mound of shale.
"It's back," said Dennis, "I am again! 'Tis a bitter life, maybe;
But I know a bitterer—wurra, woe! And Riley is welcome!" said he.

The Precious Thread

By Theodore Seixas Solomons

Author of "The Honor Fool," "Plot-luck," Etc.

The perilous cruelty of an arctic blizzard is paralyzing enough to a man's judgment—but when that poor devil is forced to decide a vital alternative that eats his heart out, then he must be, well, a Steve Montrose.

FOR three days the blizzard had raged. Candle, the most northerly settlement of white men in the new world, lay buried in the rushing flood of wind-borne snow. But for a fleeting loom of gray-ghost cabin or sod-built shack, the little mining hamlet was invisible—lost in a vast landscape of scourged white hills and scourged white plain of the arctic sea.

Dreary, lorn, half afraid, Candle clung to the deep-frozen earth, day and night, against the drag and hurl of the blizzard. One cheer, one solace it possessed—the stanch poles and stout wire of its telephone line.

The line ran nearly straight over the bare hills, pierced the spruce forests of the arctic divide, and struck across the tundras of the Bering Sea coast to the big town of Nome, one hundred and fifty miles away. For three days the current had leaked. Only a strident thrum came over the wire, the voices not of men but of the fiends of the flying air, holding high carnival.

For the dozenth time since the storm began, David Barrett, merchant, mine owner, foremost citizen of Candle, put on his heavy fur parka and plunged across the mountainous drifts of the street to the little telephone office.

"Any better yet?" he asked anxiously.

Joe Fissett put down his five-month-old Sunday newspaper. "Worse! Not even a whisper now—not since last night," he answered dejectedly. "There's a break on the line, Mr. Barrett."

David Barrett stared bewilderedly at the little switchboard. How could this be? Through the worst of the storm the line had stood. Now, though the blizzard was abating, the wire was silent.

Mute was the tongue that told to Nome that all was well with its little sister perched bleakly on the rim of the

polar sea, that summoned help in need—food in time of famine, peace officers in case of crime, a doctor or surgeon for the stricken or maimed. That slender hand of brotherhood, reached across the wastes, was stilled. Snapped was the precious thread!

"Strange!" murmured Barrett.

Suddenly to his pondering mind returned the harsh and bitter talk of yesterday with one whom he deemed an enemy, cunning and implacable. Suspicion slitted David Barrett's eyes.

The thought was prophetic. When he returned to his office in the big store three men were waiting for him, miners from far up Candle Creek who had braved the diminished blizzard in a dash for the village. Their parkas and high Eskimo boots were veneered with white.

"Your line is down, Mr. Barrett," said one of them, Lester Ford. "The poles are down for a long ways."

"The *poles!* They were green and set solidly—frozen in!"

"Cut!" said Ford. "One after another they were cut with an ax, beginnin' mebbe eight miles from Candle and extendin' hell knows how fur on to'ard the coal mine and Nome!"

Barrett ground his teeth. "Let's go and see Tascott right away. Come on!"

Jack Tascott served the little settlement as a kind of deputy sheriff. They found him in his cabin, a solidly built annex to which was used on rare occasions as a jail.

"Devil's work, if ever there was!" Tascott exclaimed when he heard the news. "Any suspicions?" he asked, observing David Barrett's face.

"Yes!" In a lower tone the Candle magnate added: "Don't ask me now, though you might guess. Just *find* him. Ford will go with you."

"But how in Sam Hill can we locate him? In this terrible driftin' wind a man's tracks—sled, snowshoe or ski—don't last longer than it takes to make 'em!"

"Tell him, Lester."

"There was a nick in his ax," said Ford, crinkling his eyes. "It was filed down some when the ax was sharpened, but there was enough of the nick left to leave a little rounded ridge on every cut in the butt of the poles!"

Tascott showed white teeth. "Find the ax, and we've found the man—damn him!"

TWO hours later, before noon, Tascott and Ford, with two natives snowshoeing ahead of long strings of huskies, spied, through the dregs of the diminished storm, the first of the pitilessly felled telephone poles. Half a mile along the demolished line they encountered a solitary, limping, frozen-faced man, driving three small, fagged dogs. It was Steve Montrose, "The Coal Nut." This was luck; for Tascott knew that Montrose was the man whom David Barrett suspected.

The peace officer made short work of greeting and interrogation.

"Hullo, Montrose! What y' doin' out here?"

"If it's any of yer business, I'm lookin' for a man that was lost last night—froze."

Montrose, a gaunt, middle-aged man, himself seemed much the worse for weather.

Tascott nodded slowly, thinking: "*That's* his game—to throw it on to some mysterious stranger!" Aloud he said: "I'll search in your sled if you don't mind."

Montrose looked astonished as well as angry. "Search and be damned to y'! I'm no thief."

A quick rummage of the meager load brought to light an old but well-kept ax whose blade edge Tascott eyed with covert satisfaction. Replacing it in the man's sled, the deputy got out his own ax, cut off a short piece of the butt end of the nearest felled pole, and flung it into his sled. It was to be "Exhibit A," apparently.

"You're under arrest!"

Tascott's voice snapped like the steel bands he forced upon Montrose's wrists after he had jerked the fur mittens from the prisoner's hands.

As Tascott replaced the mittens, both he and Ford gave a quick, curious glance at Montrose, so strangely unprotesting. A dour, surly Scot, ever holding aloof at

the place he called his coal mine, Stephen Montrose was gauged as a hard-bitted, hostile, dangerous man.

"You don't ask me why," said Tascott harshly. "You have that privilege."

Montrose eyed him contemptuously. "I answered your one question. Go on, man, to Candle. I'm fair perishin' with cold!"

A crowd of men, blizzard bound for days, gathered about the returned teams at Tascott's cabin and angrily eyed Steve Montrose, handcuffed, his frostbitten face hard, his lips tight. They looked also at David Barrett who, casting one smoldering glance at the captured man, stalked to Tascott and said:

"You have the proof?"

"We have," the deputy replied and swept his man and the witnesses into the cabin. Many irate citizens crowded in after them.

In early Candle town there was no judicial officer other than the mining recorder, who came at once. He was a young fellow named Carson, and he offered to conduct an examination and hold the man for trial in Nome, if probable guilt were shown.

As he said this, Carson glanced at Barrett as though for approval; for he owed his appointment, as did Tascott and several others, to energetic, masterful David Barrett. Then the recorder turned to the peace officer.

"What's the evidence against him?"

Tascott made his statement. He told of the information brought to him of the destruction of miles of the telephone line, of the clew, of the going out to search for the miscreant, of the meeting with Stephen Montrose right there, where the poles were felled, and of the finding in the man's sled of the ax with the smoothed-out nick which had left its telltale ridge in each cut.

Every eye was turned now upon Montrose who, though surprised, was undismayed.

"What did he say?" asked young Carson.

Tascott cast upon the prisoner a glance of withering scorn.

"I asked him what he was doing there, and he said he was searching for a man, a stranger who had been out there yesterday when the line was cut down. 'He must be froze, now,' he says."

"Dirty, lyin' alibi!" ground out Lester Ford. And there were ominous, sibilant whisperings in the little cabin.

"Of course you didn't do it, hey?" the recorder asked the handcuffed man, who was gazing through the window at the hurrying snow wraiths.

Montrose glanced at his questioner only long enough to answer:

"*I* cut the poles down—yes!"

FOR a moment the crowd stared bewilderedly at the man whose confession proved that "the frozen stranger," though it might be a lie, was not an "alibi." Then, with one accord, all looked at the humiliated peace officer.

Tascott flushed. In his discomfiture he turned questioner in place of the recorder.

"What did you do it for—*you?*" Hate was in his voice.

"Ye say I lied about the stranger," Montrose answered coldly. "Y'll say I lie whatever more I tell you!" He shivered. He looked very sick. But it could not be told whether this was from excitement or fear, or from that long exposure to the blizzard which was graven in his frozen face, his maimed hands, his unsteady, frostbitten feet.

"You'd better say, anyhow," said Carson quietly. "It'll go no less hard with you if you don't."

"I might prefer to bide silent till I'm tried reg'lar," said Montrose craftily.

"You'd better give *some* reason—*some* excuse!" flared the recorder, feeling the envenomed rage of those silent men. "If you don't, there may never be a trial!"

Montrose shrugged his shoulders stubbornly.

"No use, when what proof I may have will be in Nome—proof that there *was* that man lost from his party out there when the fury was at its worst. I cut the line down—it's fair simple—to follow it to shelter—me and the others of that man's party."

Snarlings and hissings of hostile incredulity were the instant answer to the prisoner's words. Tascott shouted:

"Barrett, you said you suspected some one. You meant him. Tell us why."

David Barrett stepped forward, his jaw set, his eyes blazing into the coldly hating eyes of Stephen Montrose.

"You can judge what the truth is, men, when I tell you what happened early yesterday. To get the straight of it, I'd better remind you of what's been happening. Ever since you fellows found deep diggings on the creek last fall, and we knew we'd need fuel to thaw the gravel, Montrose has been after me, almost demanding that I stake him to grub and supplies and tools to take out coal from this claim of his—this 'mine'—and to promise him horses and sleds next spring to haul it over here on Candle Creek.

"I've been refusing. Why? Simply because he's been so mysterious and secretive about his prospects that he wouldn't let me or anybody else go down in his so-called mine for fear, maybe, we'd steal a few chunks of coal or get excited and jump his claim. I've told him if he'd let me see what was there, so I could satisfy myself he really had coal in quantity, I'd stake him, or, at least, I'd go in with him, to be sure of a sufficient output. But I didn't propose to depend on his word or his judgment. Too many men get fooled underground. He may know a lot about coal or he may know nothing.

"Yesterday I had a final talk with him. He made the same old demands and the same old refusal to do business with me on business principles. I told him straight I couldn't take chances on going it blind that way. I said: 'I've been patient, Montrose, and delayed long enough, hoping you'd come to reason. Now I'm going to see we get coal or oil from the outside!'

"'You can't!' he said in his sneering way. 'It's too late now!' Then he laughed.

"'Not by a jugful!' I told him. 'I'm going to telephone an order into Nome to catch the last trail mail to the States—a thousand tons of the best coal to be shipped in by the first steamer. I've several days yet; and the minute this storm lets up, so as my voice can be heard at Nome, I'm going to send the message!'

"'You wouldn't do *that!*' he rasped at me, just pale with anger. 'Importin' coal when I've got plenty here at yer very door—and tellin' you the truth! You wouldn't bring in coal and ruin me after two years at as hard and killin' work as a man can put in down in that hole on starvation grub. Ye'll *not* do it!' he says and shook his fist in my face and bolted from the office.

"A little later I asked one of my men to go over to the roadhouse and see if he was still in town, for I feared something like this. He wasn't there. He had started out, up the telephone line toward his mine, I suppose, though it was blowing worse than ever—so thick you couldn't half see across the street.

"Gentlemen, some time last night the poles were cut down for miles! You can draw your own conclusions."

ABOVE the hoarse execrations that followed this damning recital young Carson's voice rose—worried, almost plaintive.

"Can't you answer that? Haven't you got a better explanation?" Fear of violence made him almost a partisan of the miscreant miner.

Stephen Montrose, standing gauntly at the wall, his rough-bearded, fantastically frozen face graphic with pain, folded his arms in obstinate, stoic composure.

"As far as business goes," he said cautiously, "he's grabbed enough. I'll run me own mine. An' about this party—for whose safety I told you I had to use the wire for guidance—till I have the proof in Nome I'll say no more. I don't want ye to hurl the lie in my teeth!"

The crowd hardly waited for the last words of this insolent defiance. It surged toward Montrose; and what might have happened in that gathering of maddened men only chance averted. Suddenly a hooded head pushed open the door.

"Mail in!" came joyously from bearded lips.

At once the urge to vengeance yielded to a still stronger urge—the craving for news long delayed, the yearning for long-deferred messages from loved ones. There was a sudden exodus.

As the last man disappeared from the

cabin, Stephen Montrose swayed and fell unconscious at Jack Tascott's feet.

In an hour—it was almost dark—David Barrett, dressed for the trail, found the accused man lying on the prison cot staring at the low ceiling.

Early in the day Barrett had been steeped in anger; now he was racked by so woeful a passion of anguish and despair that his voice shook with sobbing. Looking down upon Montrose, he cried brokenly to him:

"You've done it! You've done it! My wife and little girl are on that trail somewhere. I've got her letter. She started from Nome days ago. I was afraid of it. That was the reason I tried and tried to telephone. I might have warned her—stopped her yesterday, if you hadn't done this thing! If she—if they——"

Imagination's grim visitant choked him and bereft his lips of sound.

The half-frozen man on the cot squinted up at him.

"*You! Your* store! *Your* money! *Your* telephone! You say: 'Hands off that line. *I* might want to talk over it.' Just *might,* mind ye! But I canna use the wire to save life itself! *I'm* just scum!"

In David Barrett fear had yielded to rage.

"Yes, scum—lying scum—you cruel ——" Stooping, he shook his naked, gleaming fist in the prisoner's face. "If I find them dead because of you, there's to be no lynching. Out there, on the river ice—we two! I'll strangle you with these hands!"

GUIDED by Eskimos who ran with flash lights far ahead and to the left and right, all through the hours of that night of torture, David Barrett drove a long string of picked dogs, drawing a basket sled equipped for many days of searching.

In the gray of the morning twilight they came close to the sod huts of the coal mine where Barrett would have tarried only long enough to observe the damning fact—rage stabbing him anew—that just *here* the demolishing of the line had ceased. But when he called to his dogs to mush on, a gray-bearded miner who was putting gayly tasseled harness on tired dogs came out to the trail and peered into Barrett's face. In the half light of the raw and murky dawn the Candle magnate recognized him as old Malcom McTavish, fit partner and helper of Steve Montrose, being equally dour, suspicious, and tight-lipped.

"Huh! Ye're Barrett himsel', ain't ye? Fine! Ye'll save me trouble, though it's a bit queer how ye knew!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Barrett irritably. "I can do no errands for you, my man!"

"But ye can for yersel', I make no doubt—as weel ye'll ken if ye but step to the cab'n yonder."

A cool, almost insolent confidence in the old Scot's words sent Barrett stalking to the sod hut.

In the inner room, dimly lit by a single candle, a young woman was bending over a sleeping child. She turned quickly, stared, drew one sharp, sobbing breath and flung herself into David Barrett's outstretched, hungry arms.

In the ardor of his smothering embrace his incoherent words of love and thankfulness came to her as from afar; she had almost fainted. But mother pride brought her back.

"Here she is, David! Look at her—none the worse for the dreadful experience. Hasn't she grown in a year?"

The smooth, flushed cheeks of the three-year-old child made the tenderly stooping man glance quickly at his wife, whose face was badly frozen. He took her in his arms again.

"A dreadful experience? Alice, you poor darling! I tried to warn you, but the telephone lines——"

"I know. *I* tried to call *you* from a roadhouse miles back."

"But where's your dog-team driver? And when did you get here? It must have been after that devil left, yesterday morning, when——"

"Devil? Dog-team driver?" She was bewildered. "It was Jed Smithson who brought us. He was selected by your friends in Nome; a good man on the trail, they all agreed. We must have been near here long before and passed it in the bliz-

zard. At least that is what Jed thought." She closed her eyes, and tears fell through the lids. "He must be dead, David!"

THEY had struggled onward all that morning, two days before, dogs and driver, their heads averted from the wind, their feet feeling for the hard snow of the trail. But when, early in the afternoon, the trail had drifted over and disappeared, they had become mere blind gropers in a roaring sea of pelting white. It was then that Jed Smithson said to the young woman:

"I've got to circle about to find some signs. I've got to get some direction!" He took two or three steps and was swallowed by the blizzard.

The girl got into the sled with her little daughter, Betty. She drew the robe over them and waited. The minutes were like hours. She kept peering out; but there was nothing but the fine, sandlike snow rushing madly past her face.

She began to feel cold and very nervous, and then frightened. She must do something. She had to go. For she had become almost frantic. She got out and walked forward and called to the dogs that were curled up and drifted over—five little mounds of snow. As they rose up, the wind instantly whipped them bare, and they were dark shapes again. She ordered them to mush on, and they began to pull the sled. As she stumbled along, holding to the bars, she kept calling out: "Jed! Where are you?"

When the sled hit a big slope, she tried to hold it back. At the bottom, the dogs stopped in a flounder of tangled brush, drowned in deep, drift snow, and she could not start them again. They were stuck there.

Breathless and exhausted, she went back to Betty and stood by the sled, crying and calling to Jed. Yet in her heart she believed that he was far off and either dead or dying from the shelterless cold.

Her voice grew weak and her hands and feet began to be numb, as the chill penetrated her furs. Her impulse was to creep under the robe with Betty. But she was afraid she might rob her of some of the warmth. So Alice Barrett resolved to stand up to the end—or so near to the end that she should have only strength left to draw off her parka and wrap it around her sleeping child.

The blizzard was a fearful thing to the woman. It filled her ears with a very terror of sound—the hiss of myriad serpents, the seethe of flying foam, the roar of driven fire. She and the sled were like a bit of reef submerged in a white sea that hurled itself by, flaying her with its billions of snow particles so close-flying she could not see her mittened hand, could scarcely breathe. Was she to be suffocated in that unseeing, unfeeling world of hissing white, or slowly freeze into dreams and death? She had long ceased calling; in her heart was despair and there remained to her only an inner vision of her husband and their little one, in a final clasp.

It was then suddenly like an intrusion upon sacredness she seemed to hear—"Whoa!" And before her eyes, half blind from staring into the flitting white, there formed a gray phantasm that darkened as it grew. In a moment a tall, furred figure stood before her. It was so strange, so miraclelike a confronting, that she was dazed, though blood pounded back to her heart.

The man looked coolly, almost coldly, into her face. "I heard ye call," he said. "Whure's yer man?"

Alice Barrett found breath to answer: "He—he left us to look for the trail." She had begun to sob a little with relief.

"*'Us?'*" the man asked. He leaned over the sled and, lifting the edge of the robe, saw the child. "He left ye in a weather like this?" The man peered frowningly into her face. "The ungodly fule! To leave sled and bed in a blizzard is death, young woman."

The harshness of his tones and the word "death," brought back despair. Alice began to weep again and asked falteringly: "What shall I *do?*"

"Stop blubberin', woman," he answered in a slightly kinder tone. "It'll do ye no good." He looked at the sled. "No doubt ye have yer reindeer sleepin' bag. Ye must get into it with your kid. It'll be on'y that will save ye!"

"But we have none," she told him. "We slept always in a roadhouse or cabin.

We have just the light robe that Betty is wrapped in."

"Safe fer her, well cuddled in it; but never for ye both in a long and vera cold blizzard like this."

These words were like a death sentence to her. She almost reeled.

The strange man put out a rough arm and held her, while his hard, gray eyes searched down into her face. "I was lyin' in my sleepin' bag, young woman, when I heard your woeful cry." As if to himself he said: "Yer man's gone, and the bairn will need ye bad. Ye'll have to take my bag!"

SHE stared into his eyes at those words, which, like a curtain parted, bared the heart of a *man*. And as she stared, she thought of David, her husband, and of how much she wanted to live for him and for their little Betty. The temptation was great to take for herself the life that that strange, hard-seeming man was proffering her. But she mastered it by a sudden impelling force which flowed to her. Was it from her own soul or from his? Life is sweet, it said. *His* life was sweet to him. He offered it to her—commanded her to take it. She could not!

"No! No!" she cried to him above the roar of the wind. "Who am I that I should take it? Bring the bag near us so that when I go to sleep you will be here with my baby."

The man bent very close to her and said in a half-bitter voice: "Ye're fair, ma'am—fer a woman. Ye'd better take it. It's yer best chance."

"There *is* a chance, then—another chance?" Hope sprang anew to her heart.

"Some, ma'am, if ye have pluck, and I'm thinkin' ye have."

He frowned and turned a little away and stared out into the white, imprisoning flood. "Ye'll force me to try that which I thought to do and changed my mind. It's the telephone poles, ma'am, which are fair close if we can on'y fine 'em. They'll lead us to a shelter, though it's far."

He turned and vanished in the sea of the air. But almost instantly he reappeared with his dogs and sled. Tying the teams together, his own in front, he returned to the woman to shout to her: "We'll skirmish about, ma'am, for a pole!"

In a maze of curvings and twistings, uphill and down, he led the dogs. Alice could see nothing but the back part of her own sled as she followed it; and she knew of this circling about only by the swervings of the sled and the changing slope of the snow underfoot. Suddenly they came to a halt. Groping forward, the girl found the man leaning against a bare spruce pole.

"The line!" he said almost tonelessly.

Apparently he was a man of no warmth or zeal, bitter, calculating, even, though sad and spiritless, too. These ways seemed strange, indeed, in one in whose soul burned the pure flame of self-sacrifice. She found him more than strange in what he now said and did.

"Mark ye, woman!" He was severe again. "It's taken us all this time to find the one pole. They're five hun'erd foot apart, and it may be an hour before we stumble on to the next, and three miles or more it is to the shelter of my mine. Flesh and blood will stan' on'y so much. This high wind and great cold is a vampire, ma'am. 'Twill drain us white!"

He scowled before he raised his head and looked at her with wide, staring eyes, though she felt it was not her he saw but something within himself. Then he said:

"In the sleepin' bag I wrestled with Satan—would I cut or not? I won, then!" He laughed sardonically. "But now—now I *must* cut to save us, yet him I threatened will never believe it!"

"Him you threatened?" repeated the girl bewilderedly. "Threatened what?"

But he seemed not to hear her.

"Fer you, little woman, God walks in this heartless blizzard. But for *me*, the Deil is skulkin' behind and grinnin' through his skinny claws!"

She thought fearfully that they had come to the end of all resource. The man seemed half crazed. Then suddenly, bending to his sled, he drew out a newly whetted ax and with a few blows felled the pole. To Alice it seemed an incredible, purposeless act, until he stooped to

the fallen line, raised the telephone wire from the snow, put it under his arm, and called to the dogs to follow him. Then comprehension dawned upon her, and she sobbed out her thankfulness.

When the wire, rising to the next pole, drew out of the man's grasp, he had to let it go and grope to the pole—not a difficult thing, since he was faced in its direction, and the distance was but a few steps. Again he cut down the pole.

And so, along that precious thread that ran through the blind chaos of the blizzard to shelter and life, the strange man led them—though, toward the end, the call was close, the bargain of eternity so narrow that the girl had all but stepped across it in the first dreams of the frozen.

When her strength was gone, and she fell, he staggered with her to the sled and laid her down with Betty, his fur bag around her, and struggled on alone, after muttering in her ear:

"Ye might ask yer God, little lady, for a last bit more warmth in these veins o' mine!"

Though far gone in stupor, she roused herself to pray for that valiant man and then lapsed into unconsciousness, the prayer upon her bloodless lips.

She came to herself long after, but only for a few moments. It had been dark for a long time. The driving snow was faintly glowing. An oldish man, having raised her in the sled, was holding a lantern near her face. From another man—a white, disheveled figure—came the words: "There's a young un, Malc. Look out!" The figure reeled and fell.

RAISING his head like one waking from a deep reverie, David Barrett clutched his wife's hand. His eyes seemed to pierce through the sod walls of the cabin.

"Steve Montrose!" he said in a strained voice.

"You know him—the strange man?"

"Yes!" Barrett's brows drew. "But I wonder why he didn't bring you and Betty to Candle with him next day."

"I can guess, David. We had got turned around, our team facing this way when the strange man found us, and he thought we were journeying toward Nome, not Candle. And I was still asleep —utterly exhausted, when, hours later, the strange man roused himself and went out again, telling old Malcolm he was going to search for the body of "her man," and that when we were rested and the air clear enough for travel, Malcolm was to take us to the first comfortable roadhouse on the Nome trail."

David Barrett sprang up.

"I must go!" he said in a haunted voice. "They may lynch him!"

"Lynch him!"

"Rest, my darling—sleep! I'll be back for you this afternoon—and tell you." He strode from the cabin.

Not two hours later—for he raced his dogs back to Candle on their own out trail—he knelt beside Steve Montrose, lying on the jail cot, his face, hands and feet crudely bandaged, his eyes closed.

"Steve! Why didn't you tell me there was a woman and child?" David Barrett cried out to him.

Montrose opened his eyes.

"How about my *own* life?" he muttered obstinately. "Was I to hide behind a woman's skirts?" Wearily he closed his eyes again. "Besides, after the threat I made, ye'd never have believed me—and ye know it!"

"I was wrong—wrong, Steve! I ask your pardon." Barrett thrust out a contrite hand.

The exhausted man shook his head. "Ye might not want to if ye knew what was in my mind, as I waited, with a sharpened ax, for a lull in the storm."

"But I *do* know. I know that you fought your battle, lying there in your sleeping bag—and won!"

Montrose looked at him with wide, staring eyes.

"But how *could* ye know?"

"From what you said, when you had to use the ax to save my wife and baby!"

The half-frozen man's lips moved in voiceless amazement. He sighed and put out his hand for David Barrett's clasp.

A Jazz Bearing

By J. H. Greene

Author of "Assayed," "An Intelligence Test," Etc.

"Saxy" Shay was a wizard with a saxophone, but somehow he couldn't seem to make his job, his girl, and his ambitions harmonize—and he never could have guessed what surprising events this situation would generate.

HE was called "Saxy" Shay because of his devotion to the saxophone, and he had just been discharged from the Casino orchestra. He had insisted on playing his own breaks, as he pleased and so long as he pleased, interminable strings of chromatics and hopping intervals that made the music a mere saxophone solo, that only a centipede could dance to. Cuddling his instrument, he was now outside the Casino—resting and silent.

He was waiting for Marie, the cash girl, whose too-sweet smiles to some Harvard men had provoked that blare of rebellion. His call-down by "Doc" Blumberg, the leader of the orchestra, would be a petty pianissimo to what she would say to him. Marie was the only leader whose tempo he would follow, and she found it hard to control his breaks of jealousy and jazz.

It was now well into the spring; most of the orchestras were filled; once more he might be reduced to spending his nights on a bench in Boston Common, and having his feet kicked by a policeman, unless a music publisher made a hit with one of his songs.

He walked down the pier, passing a little shack, with posters outside of neat young men in ducks, rowing leisurely, peering through instruments on yacht-like decks, and diving into warm seas. The shack was a recruiting station for the coast guards. A brown-faced, square-built man in a blue uniform, with gold, crossed oars on the collar, came out and appraised Saxy.

"Want to join up, buddy?" he asked.

"You don't want musicians in your game," replied Saxy.

"Glad to get them," said the officer. "Little music cheers the boys up on the stations. Why, we're giving them radio sets. Have regular singsongs on the cut-

ters, and you can qualify for the band. Join up for a year. It's just like a vacation, and you can save all your pay."

He passed his hands over Saxy's biceps.

"All you need for the boats is weight; you have muscle."

"Say, mister," said Saxy, indignant at this handling, "you work the traps, the xylophones, the gong, the bells—I play every instrument—and you'll get muscle."

"Well, how about it? Pay starts the moment you sign."

Saxy looked once more at the picture of those maritime picnickers.

"How about your winters?" he asked. "I've seen pictures of them fellers chasing icebergs, all snowed up."

"They're warmer than you are in your flat in a coal strike. Thick clothes and the best of grub three times a day."

Saxy hesitated; it was certainly more alluring on the side of physical comforts than sleeping on the Common.

"Besides, we have hot stations as well as cold ones. All the way down to Florida and the Keys and the Pacific coast, too."

Saxy was very tempted. He was tired of orchestra work. Those motifs, those arias, that were always coming into his head, making him irritable and quarrelsome until he had written them down, could be entertained more frequently when meals and bed could be taken for granted.

"This just came," said a girl's voice.

A large manuscript envelope was thrust into his hand, and Saxy saw Marie hurrying away from him. He ran after her.

"Hell!" said the officer, going back into his office, knowing he had lost his recruit. "We'll never make this service popular until we have flappers for yoemen and coed stations."

Saxy caught up with the speedy Marie, who would not speak *to* him for two blocks. When she came to her rooming house she turned at the door and spoke *at* him. Having entertained the possibility of marrying him, she gave him a prenuptial lecture on his temper, his jealousy, and his lack of business sense, predicting his utter and dire failure as a man and a musician.

Saxy listened, while dolefully opening the envelope, which was a confirmation of the cash girl's prophecy, for it contained the returned manuscript of Saxy's last and most ambitious composition. A letter inclosed informed him that his quartet for trombone, saxophone, concertina and xylophone, while it showed some appreciation of modern orchestral tone color, was in the main a mere juvenile imitation of Gershwin.

The letter concluded:

> But you must remember that Gershwin is a sound and accomplished musician. I advise you to spend five years at your Bach before attempting anything like this. Remember the "Florodora Sextet" was written by a man who spent years writing church music. Your melodic invention is mere imitation, and your harmony is commonplace.

"That man knows," said Marie, with a warmth that Saxy was too hurt as a musician to accept as sympathy.

"I know as much harmony as Rossini did when he wrote 'The Barber,'" said Saxy.

"You're not Rossini. You're Saxy Shay, out of a job because you got mad seeing me nice to a customer."

Saxy shrugged.

"I'll get another job."

"Then get it," snapped the girl, eager to end the interview because a traitorous tenderness was agitating her necklace. "Hold on to it—stick to it, no matter what it is. Save your money, and then —and then——"

The door shut in his face, and Saxy was left forlornly gazing at the panels that were firing him as decisively as had Doc Blumberg. He stuffed the manuscript into his pocket, picked up the saxophone case he had stood against the wall, and turned away. No music came to comfort him in this calamity; no little haunting melodies, that might be made a masterpiece of the blues, brought their usual solace. Losing a job might be something of an inspiration, for all composers have to starve, but losing Marie made his world black, empty, joyless and jazzless.

"Saxy!"

He turned and saw her smiling through an inch of the doorway.

"I didn't mean to slam the door in your

face. No, you can't come in—not till you get a job and keep it."

She shut the door again, but so softly that he could not hear the lock click. His world lit up again; once more he saw the shining sea, the bright dresses on the sidewalk; that red-and-orange sky was a brass band, with Elysian trumpets. He seized his saxophone, like a soldier grabbing a rifle for an assault, and actually marched back to the coast-guard office. His heart was beating out the rhythms of unwritten operas, as he entered and told the officer he would sign up.

SAXY was going out on his beach patrol to the westward. He trudged the hard sand close to the surf's white tongues of foam; it was a cold night in spring; the stars were clear just overhead, but the horizon was veiled.

His year of service would be over in two days, and he was glad. He had gained a surfman's physique, but more than that he had been compelled to cultivate his auditory imagination. He had learned his chords, his progressions, all the grammar of his craft by heart, as Captain Ben had made him learn his signals. What he had written he had sent to Marie for her judgment.

A long, moaning whistle sounded very close inshore, and he stopped to listen; it might be a tug signaling to its tow, or a fisherman in trouble. He could see no lights—nothing but the faint flashing of the surf on the outer bars. He listened intently; the whistle continued rising and falling in spasmodic hoots. He returned to the station delighted, for one of his disappointments in the service was that he had seen no wrecks. He clattered up the wooden steps and burst noisily into the kitchen, where Tony Rosida was tending the stove.

"Something ashore on the bar, Tony," cried Saxy.

Fat, sedate Tony was handling the coals very gently; the kitchen was dark, save for the glow from the vent holes; the station, too, was dark and still.

"Easy, boy! Did you see her?" said Tony in a low voice.

"No; heard her."

"Did yer burn a coston?"

"No; as I was near the station, thought I'd better report first."

"I t'ink you hear cow in a cranberry bog. You finish your patrol."

Saxy grew hot; these grim, quiet, graybeards were always mocking him like that.

Saxy's protests were hushed by the appearance of the keeper from his bedroom, Ben Travers, a captain by courtesy, a boatswain by rating, the hero of a hundred wrecks and rescues, but just now an irate old man in his nightgown and slippers.

"What's all this argument?" he demanded, though keeping his voice down. "Course it's you, Saxy! Don't you know men want to sleep?"

Saxy, with some of his old, quick temper, wanted to reply that sleeping and eating were the best things they did at that station, but even in his bedroom uniform Captain Ben could be impressive. He forced Saxy to restrain himself. As coolly as he could, Saxy gave his report.

"Let's go aloft and see," said Ben.

Saxy followed his chief up the steps to the lookout tower, where Burgess, an old, Bluenose sealer, was on watch with his knees to the stove. The only light was the glow from his pipe and a small lamp focused on the report desk, for stations have to be kept dark, lest vessels be misled.

"Anything in sight, Ted?" asked Ben.

Travers turned to the book in which every vessel sighted by day or by night must be entered.

"Maybe you heard this steamer. No; she passed two hours ago. Gimme the glass, Ted. Saxy's got a wreck somewhere, but somehow he's mislaid it."

The low mists that had obstructed Saxy's vision on the beach could be seen through from this height; the horizon's dark edge was plainly visible; not a light winked on the black arc of the sea.

"Green hands hear and see things that ain't there," chuckled Burgess. "Last time I was haddocking, we had a chap thought the moonrise was a ship on fire."

"There is a sail offshore," judicially remarked Captain Ben, as he peered with his glass through the open window. "It's Sam Allen's *Ellen*, but she ain't in trou-

ble, though. Back to your patrol, Saxy. You're too nervous—too much on the jump. First man I even knew that sang in his sleep. I seen yer play the pianny on yer blanket."

After he, too, had looked through the glass at the sloop, Saxy followed Ben down the stairs. The keeper continued his sedate scolding, as he hung up his coat and cap; he was yawning, as he discharged this duty; his hoarse whispers did not drown the surf or the moan of the wind in the shingles.

"You have to heed them whistles, too," he concluded, with a nod to the bedroom, sonorous with snores. "Them signals says—'sleep!' I don't want no nervous man in the station—on the boat or on the beach."

Saxy resented the imputation of nervousness, a condition that went with late hours and more cigarettes than exercise, the strained clamors of the world of jazz. If he was nervous now, after such a year's training, he was physically hopeless.

"Sorry, cap," he said, "but I did hear whistles."

Captain Ben ceased yawning, and his old, salt-stung eyes grew younger and as piercing as searchlights.

"I must believe my ears," continued Saxy.

"You mustn't. Believe nothing till you find out. Come along and show me where you heard it."

Captain Ben went back to his room and got into his elaborate clothing, thick underwear, a heavy suit, a sweater, cap, boots and oilers, with magical speed, but with no nervousness. With a few deft touches he was dressed and buttoned to the neck. He led the way down the steps to the cindered path and the trail through the dunes to the shore.

The wind had breezed up and was rustling the grass on the sand hills; the hollow gasp of the retreating ebb was louder. The two men came to the Point, a spit of sand stabbing into the surf in front of a bearing of a barrel, hoisted on a small mast, some old and abandoned aid to navigation.

"I can't make out Sam but he ain't blowing no horn, is he?" asked Ben as he listened between the waves shattering themselves on the coarse pebbles. Saxy listened from up the beach and again heard that whistle, low, intermittent, mournful and appealing.

"If that's not a steamer whistle, Captain Ben," he began, "I don't——"

Ben loosened the flaps of his cap farther from his ears and turned his head up shore. He then grunted and strode back along the sand to the windward.

"Come here!" he cried over his shoulder.

SAXY followed him, hearing the keeper's boots tramp heavily through lines of wreckage, breaking through driftwood, kicking aside barrel staves and fruit cases.

"Got it!" he cried. "Here's your whistle, young feller. Here's your fool wreck."

Ben had rummaged among the black ashes of some charred logs, the remains of some old picnic fire, and had come upon several pop bottles. The year's changes of wind and weather had uncovered them. Their glass was frosted white and opaque. They stood, mouth up, in the sand, and the wind was making whistles of them. The sound they gave forth was not unlike the hooting of tugs or the horns of fishermen dimmed by distance. Saxy recognized now that he should have been aware of this tonal difference.

"Let this l'arn yer something," barked old Ben. "You ought to have l'arned that long ago. You finish your patrol and don't get men out of bed for nothin' again. Bragging about your A sharps and Q flats."

Ben tramped away testily to his bed in the station, with the slow sliding steps of a man who knew how to walk sand.

Saxy remained on the beach, holding two pop bottles that hooted at him derisively, as he turned their mouths in the wind. He would be the laughingstock of the station. He said to himself that he did not care, as he would soon be through with them, but in his heart he knew he was lying. For he had been rather proud of his rating in Ben's eyes; Ben had complimented him more than once at the drills; just now he was more anxious to make good with Captain Ben

than to write the magnificent chord sequences that MacDowell had found for his sea pieces.

He had smashed all the bottles he could find and was starting back along the sand, when again he heard that haunting toot. First, he made sure that he had left no bottle on the beach unshattered; and then he made equally certain that this time, at least, the sound surely came from the sea. Calling up all his aural sensitivity, he strained his ears over the booming surf.

For a moment he wondered if he were not becoming demented, the victim of a delusion from too much brooding on unwritten music; maybe, the sound was only inside his head. He closed his ears and heard nothing. He opened them and again heard a hoarse hoot from the sea; it was an almost human cry.

He crept out over the wet sand till the creaming foam flooded to his knees, and his boots sank deep in the pebbles, loosened by the drag of the undertow. He could see the white crumbling combers on the bar and listened intently to sift that one sound from the thrash inshore, the roar beyond, the wind whistling in the concha of his ears, as it had in the necks of those bottles. Again he heard that cry. It was certainly human; it was the hoarse cry of a heavy-chested man shouting with his last gasp for help. And then Saxy saw a black spot tumbling in the distant, roaring surf. In an instant he had kicked off his boots, thrown off his oilers and cap, and was plunging into the black swirl of the undertow.

Perhaps the man had fallen overboard from the *Ellen*, and the crew did not know of it, otherwise the *Ellen* would be lighting a flare. Saxy, swimming half under water and rising to gasp in a lungful of air before the next comber threatened to fling him back on the beach, had not much thought for the maneuvers of the *Ellen*.

The space between the bar and the inner surf was easier and smoother. He swam with his head mostly under water. He stopped to tread water and to listen, but heard no more shouts for help. He reached the outer bar, where again alp after alp of crumbling water compelled him to breathe and dive like a porpoise. As he went under, he could hear the roaring crashes above him. His left foot was caught in one of those cataracts, and the dragging flood tore away one of his socks. As he came up, his long, tired arm struck something—something hard and certainly not human. Again he took a big breath, and again he heard that hollow gasping cry of agony. As the next breaker threatened to hit him square in the face, he fought through it, trying to keep above that boil of bubbles. Amid that swirl of hissing, spitting, white water, he saw a dark something; he struck out toward it. After the foam had passed, he found he was clutching at a floating, empty, five-gallon oil can. Its stopper was gone, and he could see its little black mouth; he heard the hooting bass it emitted, as the wind blew across its lip.

THE revulsion struck Saxy like a cramp; something failed him in his vitals; the cold pinched his limbs, and water reached his gullet. He threw his arm around the can for its support, but he could not hold to the slippery tin; so he jammed his forefinger into the orifice that had betrayed him. But, when the next wave came, and he tried to dive, the can held him up, and his finger was nearly torn from his hand. But he still kept his finger in the hole, amid that smother of foam and tear of currents, for he needed the buoy.

During the next breathing spell between waves, he removed his belt and strapped his arm to the can. With this aid and the help of the outgoing tide, he slid past the surf into the heavy, rolling, and unbroken waters beyond the bar. As he was lifted on top of the rollers he saw the far flashes of Sandy Head light; he was borne rapidly along the coast in the great drift; with the help of the can he could keep afloat.

The long cone of rays from Sandy Head, sweeping through the dark, was suddenly intercepted by the peak of a mainstail; the black reach of waters, laced with flashes, was broken by the black patch of a hull; he recognized the patch near the gaff of the sail; it was the mainsail of the *Ellen*.

He shouted to her, as he rose to the top of a very high roller, and then he lost sight of her, in the correspondingly deep hollow; when he arose again, he saw the light of her cabin hatchway, a dim yellow more like paint than light, against the pure intensity of Sandy Head.

Saxy bellowed his utmost, till a wave struck him in the face, choking back his breath; only the can held him from going under. Something like a leaping fish flashed in the water beside him. It was the bent blade of a tugging oar. He caught a glimpse of the dirty-orange planks of a dory, in the radiation from the lighthouse, and two men straining hard at her oars. Before he could recover his voice, the dory was far from him, so he struck out with his last remaining strength and managed to get his free hand around the mainsheet of the *Ellen,* that was trailing over her side. For a moment he was too weak to haul himself aboard and shouted for help. No voice answered him; no face peered over the rail; no hand was extended to haul him in.

With a last effort Saxy drew himself over the stern rail. He kept the oil can, because he wanted it as a souvenir for Marie. He unstrapped his benumbed arm and lay flat on the deck, with the boom jerking the block by his head, the canvas snapping, the hull rolling on no set course.

He was utterly exhausted; he could see the spokes of the slanted wheel against the light from the cabin, and his wits began to return—the wits he had won in the coast guards. Something was queer about this sloop. Fishermen do not row like racers and leave their vessels so near a bar on a falling tide.

"Hello, there—*Ellen!*" he faintly cried, but only rattling blocks, slapping canvas, and a rolling bucket answered him. He became conscious of a strange odor; it was the smell of kerosene. Probably a little had been left in that can, and he had spilt it on himself, as he had climbed on board. He rose to his feet, clinging to a spoke of the wheel. Perhaps the shipmaster had gone below for a hot drink. As the deck heaved, Saxy's feet slipped from under him, and, as he went down, he realized that that deck was unusually slippery, even for a flounder dragger, which scoops up the slime at the bottom of the sea. His face was now close to the deck, and that deck was wet with kerosene.

With a flash of intuition, as sudden as an idea for a song, Saxy knew now there was no keeper of the ship—that the vessel had been abandoned. Again he arose to his feet by the help of the wheel and peered down into the cabin. He put one foot on the steps and saw that they were oily, too. A stifling reek invaded his lungs; he saw that the bedding had been pulled out from the berths and was sopping, too; on the little table was a candle set on a plate and held from rolling by a heap of tarred net. The candle was surrounded by a pile of oily rags; the table was glistening; a bilge of oil was running across the vessel's floor; the candle was burning very close to the rags; that sloop had been left to burn, and the wreckers had planned thoroughly.

Saxy, growing dizzy from the gas exhaled from the cabin, withdrew his head for a breath of air before he dived into that combustible and suffocating atmosphere, when a roll of the vessel tilted the candle, and the rags caught fire. The very air of the cabin blazed blue, and Saxy just managed to escape the tongues of fire that were belched from the hatchway, as the cabin roared with the explosion of the stove.

FROM the turret of the station Burgess had observed that spurt of fire, and he could make out a human figure struggling in the flames; he reported to Captain Ben.

"Man the boat," said Ben.

All hands except Saxy, who was now far away on his patrol, as they thought—hopped out of bed, donned boots, clothes and oilers, and went below to open the doors, where the boat was housed. Old gray "Tabby," the station horse, was harnessed to the cart on which rested the boat. As they prepared to launch the boat, a hail came from the sea, and a dory appeared out of the dark and rode on the breaking surf up to the feet of the coast guards. A panting man shipped his oar, leaped out, and carried up the

shore the kedge anchor with its line, to hold the dory from the backwash.

"That you, Sam?"

"Yes. Hello, Ben!" came the answer. "Just in time to save yer a haul. The *Ellen's* gone—burning her bottom out. The stove exploded, and we couldn't do nothing."

Another man got out of the dory and corroborated the master of the *Ellen,* with much circumstantial detail of how he had been nearly blinded by the flames as he escaped from the cabin.

"Durned if I ever sail with an oil burner again," he added. "Me for wood stoves, after this."

The coast guards stood around on the sand, waiting for Ben to speak. The shadows on the faces of the fishermen in the faint starlight might be smoke, might be burns. Certainly they smelled of kerosene. No lights came from the bar; the *Ellen's* side lights must have been washed out or jerked away; perhaps her mast had gone and carried them along with it.

"She's sure sunk by this," said the fisherman, following their glances seaward. "Twenty fathoms there, and no use trying to get her up."

The owner of the *Ellen* and his mate went home across the dunes to the village; they would not wait for coffee at the station.

"There ain't no call for us to go out till morning," said Ben. "If she's on the bar, we'll take a look at the hull and, if there's anything suspicious, report it. Say, is Saxy back yet?"

Saxy was not back. But, as his patrol was a long one, and the youngster sometimes dallied on the warmer nights, this occasioned no surprise.

The station turned in and slept, excepting Tony, who lay awake for the next patrol when Saxy should return.

Daylight brought several surprises. For one thing, Saxy had not been in his bed. Captain Ben, dressing for the early breakfast, looked grave when he was called from his bedroom.

"I'm right sorry," he said. "I liked the kid; didn't think he'd desert on his last day. But he was a fly-off-the-handle chap. Couldn't take a call-down and then go on with his work like the rest of us. Why didn't they send us men?"

SIDES were taken for and against Saxy, as they sat down to eat. Saxy was all right in the drills, but they were all glad they never had to go out in a boat with him to wrecks. No man would care to pull in a bad sea with a youngster who hopped up from a meal to write music in a book, whenever he heard the gulls squawking. The discussion was interrupted when the lookout man came down to report that the *Ellen* was on the bar, with her jib and mainsail down.

"Halyards burned and parted, I guess," calmly judged Ben, as he swallowed his pint cup of coffee and cut a monstrous cube of bread.

"Looks like the mainsail is lashed," said the lookout.

"Hello? You seeing things like Saxy? Who the hell could lash it? Let's get the boat out and have a look at her."

The lookout did not maintain that he was right. When the boat was hauled to the water's edge it was a still morning, with flaws fretting the smooth sea and a light fog banked low to the north.

"Mainsail's in board, but it ain't lashed," announced Ben, from his place aft by the steering oar. "She's burned, all right. Look at that cabin hatch!"

They boarded the wreck from the weather side because the steps of the mast might be gone, and the spar liable to fall on them. Ben gave the steering oar to a man and climbed on the deck. Everything was black; he looked into the cabin; it was as dark as a coal cellar at midnight. He could barely make out the charred bunks; water, covered with soot, lay across the floor at an angle; satisfied with his inspection of the cabin, he went forward. He lifted the hatch. The hold was half full of a filthy iridescent bilge, with floating scraps of ice.

But he noticed there was a tide in that bilge; it rose and fell in time with the light rollers on the bar; it was not still, as imprisoned water should be.

"The vessel is a total wreck," announced Ben to the men in the boat. "She has a hole in her somewhere, and—and—Sam will get his insurance."

This duty over, he resumed his steering oar, and the boat was headed back to the station.

As soon as the sound of oars grew faint, and the boat was far enough away for none of the keen-eyed rowers to see him, a man, a mass of oily smuts from head to foot, poked his head out of the cabin. It was Saxy, gnawing at a ham bone he had found among the stores, and which he had been able to scrape down to edibility. He crawled along the deck, keeping his head below the rails, till he reached the water butt. Making sure that his camouflage of soot on his hands was sufficient to still keep them melted in the general mire of the deck, he lifted them above the rail to draw a drink from the butt.

He did not hear the cry from the boat, when Ben saw a pair of oilskin trousers floating past them on the waters. Ben had caught sight of the tag sewn in the back of the trousers. He ordered the oars to back, leaned over the stern, and caught at the oilers. The name on the tag was Saxy's.

Saxy was too busy on the sloop, stuffing up that hole in her hold, with the ends of blankets, barrel covers, ropes' ends, to observe what the crew did when they reached shore.

He did not know that the keeper went back to the station to report by telephone to headquarters that Surfman Shay had been drowned in a brave but foolhardy attempt to swim out to a burning sloop —the *Ellen*.

Saxy would have to stick out another day on that ham bone and that smoked drinking water, because to-day he was still an enlisted man in the service that accepts no money for salvaging. Saxy wanted that salvage.

NEXT morning a startling report came from the watch tower in the station. The *Ellen* was reported sailing north, apparently undisabled, not a mere bit of flotsam that had floated off at high water, but a going vessel, with her sails set and drawing, and a negro at the wheel.

No wreck ever brought out the crew with such speed; the boat was launched, the men hopped in, and they rowed, as they would to a heeling hull ashore in the worst of winter, with women and children aboard.

There was a fair wind for the *Ellen*, and she had speed. Ben doggedly stuck to his steering oar, saying little but thinking a great deal. The wrecked sloop had come ashore on his section of the beach. Who was that negro running away with it, and how had he got her off?

Ben could see the black face at the wheel looking back. He ordered her to go up in the wind, so that he could catch her; he wigwagged the same instructions, but the darky steersman apparently did not understand a white man's signals. If Ben had been on a chaser, he would have fired a shot across her bows.

Urged by Ben's curses, the men in the boat tugged like a naval racing crew, when the *Ellen* suddenly came up in the wind, and a hail came across the water.

"What do you want, Captain Ben? Leave me alone, will yer?"

"By heck! It's Saxy!" cried Ben.

The boat lost way and drifted, as the rowers, ignoring their training, turned in their seats to recognize their messmate under his coat of soot.

"You leave me alone," continued Saxy. "I'm on my own. This is my prize packet."

"How in thunder did you do it, Saxy?" asked Ben.

"Same as I heard you fellers always did. I stole your stuff and jazzed through with my own ideas. I cut a hole in her bottom with an ax; she was wrecked, but the fire was out. Then I plugged the leak at low water and pumped her. Here she is, ain't she?"

"But where in blazes were you when we came aboard yesterday?"

"Down in the cabin doing a black-face act. Pretty good, I think. I was lost in the scenery, Captain Ben."

Saxy took advantage of a flaw to haul in the mainsheet, and the *Ellen* drew away.

"Durn me, the little rat can sail, too," said Ben. "Say, where are you heading for? There's the harbor."

Ben pointed to the south. There, tucked inside the knuckle of the cape, lay the village bay. The *Ellen* was heading straight north for Boston.

"Don't want your harbor," came the faint answer. "I'm steering for 'Tin-pan Alley.' "

SAXY listened in the fog.

He had met the bank north of the Race; the thick drift hid the last glimpses of the cape sand and the Plymouth Hills, by which he had been steering. For the first time he looked at the compass inserted in the side of the hatchway. Those tongues of flame from the burning cabin had curled round the box, cracked the glass, and shriveled the card. He could not steer by it.

He dared not trust himself to sail through those thick gusts of vapor; it was better to drift and wait for the sun to break through; bursts of pale yellow over his head, occasionally striking a gold spangle from the ripples of the wallowing *Ellen*, promised this relief. Through the dripping silence of the fog he could hear the hoots of distant sirens.

He was very tired and almost light-headed. That last big bluff, that parade of independence before the coast guards, had left him as limp as his sails. He tried to keep up his courage by thinking how it would work out if he could sail into Boston with the *Ellen*. He saw the headlines in those papers that make front-page news of everything maritime: "Saxy Shay, author of 'Sweet Jazz-o'-mine,' 'My Boston Beau,' 'What's the Matter with Me, Kid,' saves wrecked sloop!"

It only needs something like that to start you. Such an experience beats all the song pluggers. He was right to bluff; that's half the game. All very well to talk of Bach and Beethoven; those guys had dukes and duchesses to plug for them. He was going to bluff. Never let 'em know you're down to pawning your shirt to buy music paper. It don't pay to rule your own. Smile, darn you, smile! —when they say your stuff's rotten. Starve, sleep in parks, but keep your shoes shining when you go into their offices, or they'll say your harmony is a steal from Irving Berlin. That's how the Broadway Bachs get by. That's the rule of the service of Tin-pan Alley, and it kept Saxy at the wheel.

He began to whistle one of his songs when he was answered out of the fog. He heard the faint, far music of the last song he had sent to Marie:

"I'll sell you a feller
All white and no yeller—that's me."

It was the thin, mere ghost of a tune, the harmonics of delusion played on the frayed-out nerves of an exhausted, famished man, dreaming of past starvations and future triumphs.

His heart began to pound, as if the beat of his music were trying to revive him. He remembered how he wrote it, when he was lonely, thinking of Marie, in the station, to the accompaniments of a wild northeaster, the surf pounding on the shore, and the undertow gasping, the wind in the shingles whistling like a circus calliope, tin cans scuttling round outside, and sand tinkling on the windows in little glassy notes—everything one grand orchestra, with his heart the conductor.

The fog was thickening. His hands were clammy and stiff, as they gripped the wheel; he had lost what little sense of direction he had tried to retain when the heavy fog first closed down around him.

His strength was giving out; cold and probably fever would soon finish him; his temples were throbbing; he counted their beats; they, too, were jazzing—jazzing dangerously. He must be delirious because he could hear that music again, fainter now, but somehow clearer—his music—his song. It seemed first on his port and then on his starboard; as it shifted, so he turned the wheel; he was going to obey that jazz bearing; its siren voice would lead him somewhere, if only to destruction; destruction was better than stagnating in this fog.

Suddenly, like a shot across his bows, came a woman's cry, a man's shout, and a loud burst of music. He was not mad; he was not dreaming; he was not delirious; the fog was parting; the white nose of a motor boat shot out of the mists, splitting the dark-green water and bumped into the bows of the *Ellen*. A girl's face looked up at Saxy—a girl in an oilskin coat the color of green sea-

weed. She seemed to have appeared out of the sea. A hand was reached out to him, and he caught at it. The hand and the face were real, and they were Marie's.

"Is that you, Saxy?"

"Yes. It's you, Marie?"

"Leggo, you two," broke in a man's voice, with a harshness that added actuality to the face and the hand which had materialized out of the mists. The boat backed away, and the water frothed below it realistically.

"All right, kid," shouted the same heavy voice from the stern of the boat that was dim in the fog. "You can hold hands when the sun comes out."

"Marie, I can hear my song!" exclaimed Saxy.

"Sure you can," said the man. "They're broadcasting it from WNAC. I worked that when we heard you were drowned. I brought my own set to cheer up your girl. All right now, girlie?"

"Yes," murmured Marie.

"You on your pins, Saxy?"

"Way up in G major," shouted back a resurrected Saxy.

"Then hold the picture till the sun comes out. You see this is my story; I'm on the *Post*. You keep on your own boat and don't dare wipe your face. You two ain't going to clinch till I get a photo."

And Saxy had to wait, while the set, with some additional jazz of static, broadcast his music.

THE DECLINE OF THE GORILLA

THE conclusions of Robert Yerkes, professor of psychology at Yale University after a careful study of the habits and reactions of a five-year-old mountain gorilla, are not without practical import for human beings. Granting Professor Yerkes' assumption, that the animal he used for observation exhibited "a fair assortment of gorilla emotions and reactions," one readily concurs in the professor's opinion that the gorilla, in spite of his size, is yielding the supremacy of the ape world to his fellow ape, the chimpanzee, because the latter is "much fuller of curiosity and is more imitative."

The young gorilla betrayed no interest in the world about him, but held himself aloof from his environment. He was stoically placid and good tempered, but incurious. In his relations with the human beings about him he was invariably agreeable, never angry, but always passive minded. Although the gorilla is considered the most intelligent of all the apes, this specimen showed no initiative in the solution of the problems which confronted him.

Professor Yerkes' observations confirm the findings of the late Carl Akeley. In the teeth of an ancient and persistent reputation for fierceness and savagery, the gorilla found a true friend in Akeley, who discovered the gorilla leading a peaceful and domestic life in the African jungle. After various intelligence and behavioristic tests, the gorilla emerges a benevolent, if not very intelligent, African gentleman.

This giant ape's avoidance of man is now put down not to fierceness of disposition, but to its slowness in adapting itself to "extraordinary environmental demands." It has failed to develop its peculiarly apish bump of curiosity and as a consequence it has permitted a less intelligent and more savage relative to pass it on the road to survival.

The moral for man in all this is obvious: Good-natured patience and tolerance of his environment on the part of man will not establish human supremacy, but an inquiring mind and a creative curiosity will find a solution for new problems and tap the sources of the spiritual values in human existence. More lessons for man may come from that gorilla sanctuary which Akeley set apart in Africa for the protection of these anthropoid creatures.

Ransom

By Roy W. Hinds

Author of "On the Top Floor," "Tommy Snaps the Handcuffs," Etc.

Yun Chan-yao, emissary of the sagacious Quong Sai, applied the inscrutable principles of Oriental logic to a situation which desperately tried the heart of a city business man. The Celestial saw what others neglected.

"IF a covetous man but pursue his ends far enough," said Quong Sai, "he will surely find the weak spot in his victim which, pressed, will bring forth a cascade of riches. The armor with which wealth adorns itself is not impregnable. In it somewhere is a loop through which the lance of cupidity can find its way."

The aged Chinese looked down at me from his thickly cushioned divan, searching my face with his sharp eyes.

I sat on the purple rug embroidered with a golden dragon, in "The Room with the Four Doors;" sat where I always sat while receiving instructions in the missions with which Quong Sai intrusted me, instructions so vague and elusive that I was under the necessity of picking them out of the parables he uttered and the philosophy with which he embellished his tales.

So far I had not failed either to get his meaning nor to carry to success his enterprises. Quong Sai was of the opinion that a man who had the foresight to exercise his brain in getting at the vital points of his communications was better fitted to carry out the exploit in hand.

I weighed every word, one by one. I got a hint of his meaning, a clew to the nature of the shadowy task ahead. Something in my face caused him to nod with satisfaction and to go on:

"A penalty of wealth is isolation. The poor man lives behind open windows, the rich behind shutters. One has but to traverse the avenues of the city, to observe the barred windows and grilled doors, to understand that the rich within have thrown up ramparts between themselves and a prying, envious public. In the little streets of mean houses one looks freely in upon the family circle.

"The rich man not only erects barriers about his home life, but in all his contacts with men he shrinks behind a wall of

reserve and caution. He is suspicious of motives, constantly alert to detect subterfuges by which others seek to gain access to his coffers. He becomes skilled in ways of protection.

"In Kweinang there once dwelt a rich man whose every piece of gold had been won by the shrewdness of his wits. In amassing so much treasure he had learned all the artifices of trade. It was said that he never lost. Whenever he put money into a thing he took more out. With mounting wealth he became a prey to all sorts of schemers.

"Failing to trap him in any of the channels of trade and commerce, they sought to beguile his wealth by less creditable forms and measures. They resorted to downright dishonesty and swindling, but in all their games the rich man anticipated their designs and took immense delight in leading them on, only to circumvent their schemes and leave them baffled. He was wont to recount his adventures with the swindlers, and to air his pride in the keenness of his perceptions. He boasted.

"He was assailed from unlooked-for quarters and in strange and devious ways, but in every instance his quick mind penetrated to the heart of the matter before he could be separated from any of his gold. Sometimes he swindled the swindlers. Yet in his smug assurance in his own capabilities he forgot to reckon with the persistency of poorer and less scrupulous men. Hitherto they had sought to outwit him, to match their brains with his. They struck at his mind. Then one night they struck at his heart.

"Creeping into his luxurious domicile through a window left unbarred by a treacherous servant, they seized the rich man's young and only son and bore him off. The man of wealth forgot everything except his desire to get his son back unharmed. The cold, keen calculations which had served him so well now deserted him. He ran to and fro in the streets, wild-eyed, shouting at the top of his voice that he would give a hundred pieces of gold for his son. On the second day he raised his bid to two hundred, and so on until nearly all his riches stood as a reward.

"He made no effort whatever to trap the men who had stolen his son. He raved with fear that any hint of a campaign against the kidnapers would lead them to do away with the son. He became an abject sight, a broken old man, holding out great chests of gold to any one who would restore to him his heir. The gold that he had fought so hard to win and keep was nothing without his son.

"The kidnapers let him rave, reduced him to a driveling and witless creature, and then began to work on him. By the subtle means known only to such men, they bargained. "All, all—take all, only bring me back my son." Such was his cry. The swindlers bargained for immunity from the consequences of their act. Willingly the rich man pledged it—pledged all, wealth and immunity.

"And so the exchange was effected. The rich man got his son back. The swindlers got his gold. You see, Yun Chan-yao, the brain crumbles when the heart is smitten. It was the loop in the rich man's armor. Do you not think that here in this teeming city of New York there might be men as unscrupulous and scheming as those in Kweinang?"

I nodded, looking up at Quong Sai.

"There are swindlers and kidnapers in New York," I said.

"And there are rich men, too," Quong Sai went on, "who can be struck in the heart. I have written on a tiny slip of paper an address. 'Tis not too late in the day for you to make a call."

He produced the slip of paper.

"Read the name and address," he told me, "then destroy it."

I thus became aware that my dealings in this enterprise would be with Thomas Forren, and the address, in a street in the financial district, indicated that I was to see him in his office. A man of some importance, no doubt, for Quong Sai indicated I would find his name on a suite of offices.

"You are aware," my aged friend warned me, "that ordinary cases of kidnaping for ransom are matters for the police. The police have not been consulted by Mr. Forren."

"There must be something very unusual about it then," I returned. "Mr. Forren is——"

"The head of a brokerage business."

"And when he comes to Quong Sai for relief he must be bent on circumventing some plot about which he chooses to remain secretive."

"You will find yourself pitted against men with brains."

At a sign from Quong Sai, I departed.

IT was early in the afternoon, and it was snowing. I came into Chatham Square from the little street in which Quong Sai had his habitation, and, despite the blustering weather, chose to walk in order to think as well as to take observations.

The matter of taking precautions against being shadowed had become second nature since my association with the strange old man in The Room with the Four Doors. Though his home contained several rooms, I had never seen him outside that chamber, which, hidden away from the light of day, had always been illuminated by mauve-shaded lights. It was a room hung with tapestries, and I understood that he could, by way of its four doors, have quick access to any quarter of his domicile. A curious life for an old man to live, you say? True.

But Quong Sai was a curious old man. The infirmities of age had long since driven him into an inactive life; inactive physically, but not mentally. For long he had been a figure in the shadows of the city; now he was reduced to the necessity of delegating his tasks to others. I was only one of his emissaries.

His life had been productive of strange contacts. He numbered his friends among the high and the low. There were thieves and crooks who knew Quong Sai; there were others in the business life of the city. I did not presume to explain these friendships, but I did know that all of Quong Sai's activities were not centered on pelf and plunder. He paused often in the midst of his affairs to render aid to friends in distress.

Of such a nature I took the present task to be.

I am a Chinese myself, Yun Chan-yao. I have never been in China. Born in London, educated in a British university, I am what is called a modern Oriental, for my habits of dress and life conform to the West. I am a young man, slight of build, but the necessities of the life I had chosen made me quick and active. I had sometimes to get out of a tight hole in the twinkling of an eye.

A man cannot be active in the underworld without piling up a long list of enemies. There were many who would take pleasure in striking me down. Of that I was forever aware, never losing sight of it day or night. Even in that windy, snow-filled street, bearing south through Park Row, I did not regard myself as safe and secure. I studied every face that loomed closely in the storm. I often looked behind.

For had not Quong Sai, in his own way, let me know that I would find myself pitted against men of brains who had engaged in some sort of conspiracy against Thomas Forren, head of a brokerage house in the financial district of New York? When a crew of swindlers, operating some kind of a kidnaping game, set out to squeeze a broker, the stakes must be large. What was the life of a young Chinaman, butting into their venture? Nothing. They would wipe me out, if opportunity offered, as quickly as they would blow out a match.

And one has only to read the newspapers to be aware that crimes of violence in crowded streets have become common. A dark alley is no longer necessary for murder. Daylight, crowds, have become but adjuncts to a fast motor car filled with gunmen; a car glides up to the curb alongside and roars away after the fatal fusillade has been fired. Or a shot from a dingy doorway, which looks blank and uncommunicative an instant later. Of such things I was in danger.

I came into Broadway just below the post office and kept on to the southward. The spire of Trinity Church was lost in the snow. Pedestrians hurried along, huddled, heads bent against the wind. I paused in the doorway of a skyscraper to shake the snow from my shoulders and hat, to turn down the collar of my over-

coat, remove my gloves, and take one last look into the street.

I got no hint that I was being shadowed, so went inside the building and up to the eleventh floor.

When I sent in a note to Thomas Forren that I had come from Quong Sai, I was instantly admitted to his softly carpeted private office. He was an elderly, rugged man with a strong, heavily jowled face, brisk in talk and gesture.

While I was removing my overcoat and getting ensconced in a big chair at the side of his desk, Mr. Forren was rattling off instructions to a subordinate for the transaction of some piece of business, in a manner that indicated that he intended to devote considerable of his time to me. Presently we were alone.

HE swung in his chair, looked at me shrewdly, and drew a breath so long that it resembled a sigh.

"Well," he said, "I am pleased."

"Thank you," I returned.

"For some reason or other," he explained, "I have great confidence in the Chinese—in an affair of this kind. You seem to see clear through a thing. I don't know whether you do or not, but you seem to. I hadn't talked two minutes with Quong Sai before he ventured a few suggestions that had never occurred to me. I went to him with my troubles. He said he would send a young man to help me; he didn't give his name. I am glad that he picked a man of his own race. For this," Mr. Forren added, with a troubled gesture and a grave frown, "is something that has got me stumped. I don't know which way to turn."

He studied me again with his alert, shrewd gaze.

"Quong Sai told you all about it, of course," he added.

"He merely gave me your name and address," I told him, "and suggested that I call."

He looked surprised, then smiled.

"I might have known," Mr. Forren said; "I might have known. Quong Sai wouldn't do it the way I would, so I suppose I shall have to tell you the whole story."

"Quong Sai," I suggested, "had no reason to tell me a story that would later be repeated by yourself. I will have a much better understanding of things if I hear your story. Information loses some of its vitality and accuracy in repeated narrative."

"I never thought of that," Thomas Forren assented, with a nod. "I'm afraid there are many things I don't think of in a case like this. I can't seem to think. If it were a matter of business, I'd know exactly what to do. But my son is involved in this."

I thought of Quong Sai's tale of the rich man in Kweinang, so astute in business, so futile when the swindlers struck at his riches through his son.

"He's only a boy," the father said, in the tone with which all fathers try to explain the shortcomings of their children. "He's my only son—named Thomas, like myself. He's been pretty wild, I guess, from what I hear, but I've been a busy man and did not realize it until this trouble came up. Perhaps I've been negligent; yes, I know I have; but I shall make up for it, if I can get him out of this scrape—get him back."

In my mind was an idea of a son kidnaped. The words of the father were a trifle confusing, but I held my tongue and awaited the story.

"Thomas 'Junior' is twenty-four," Mr. Forren was saying. "He's been pretty much away from home for a year or so, but wrote to his mother frequently. He had his own automobile and seemed to have a mania for long-distance tours, taking other young fellows with him. I sort of let him go, because he had made a promise to me that when he was twenty-five he would settle down, come into my office here, and buckle in. I thought it all right for him to have a year or two between college and business, to do pretty much as he liked. Never had the slightest idea of—of what he was getting into."

He was very nervous, fumbling his match in lighting a cigar. I lit a cigarette.

"It's hard for me to come to the point," he went on. "I hate to mention it, even to a man who's trying to help me. I

even hate to think of it. My son," he said bluntly, "is in jail, charged with highway robbery."

I merely nodded when he looked at me.

"In jail," he explained, "bound for the penitentiary, unless something can be done for him. And they're giving highway robbers long terms in prisons these days. If they convict him, and I'm told there isn't a doubt of his guilt, up he'll go for ten years, perhaps twenty or more. A thing like that means the boy's finish."

He drew his face into grim lines, repressing his emotions, and proceeded:

"He's in jail in a little town out West. I shall give you the name of it, together with other data before you go. Just now the main story interests us. It seems that Junior—we've always called him Junior—was on an auto trip to the coast and got mixed up somewhere with a bad bunch. They committed a highway robbery—a holdup. They were nabbed. I have a clipping from a newspaper out there, which I shall show you. All have been identified by the victims of the holdup. It doesn't seem that they have a chance to escape the penitentiary. Of course my son did not give his right name, has never even hinted his true identity. Yet he found a way to communicate with me through a jailbird who came from out there.

"A couple of weeks ago this fellow came to see me—got into my office here by sending in word that he had important news about my son. He calls himself Josephs. A strange-looking chap—looks just like what he claims to be, a crook. He made no bones about it to me. Came out flat with the statement that he was a thief and a jailbird, but for once he was playing straight, trying to do something for a kid, he said, who'd been decent to him while he was in jail. He brought me a letter from Junior."

Mr. Forren unlocked a drawer in his desk and fetched out various papers, among which were a newspaper clipping and a letter. He permitted me to read both.

Young Thomas Forren was certainly in for it. He was one of the bandits named in the clipping. They had been caught red-handed in the holdup, and there was no doubt as to their guilt. In his letter Thomas Junior told of his predicament, identified himself under one of the names in the clipping, and beseeched his father for help.

But Junior, in trouble, facing a long term in the penitentiary, was nevertheless a cautious young man. He did not forget the honor of the family name. He felt that his father's first impulse would be to send his lawyer out there. That, as he pointed out, would mean publicity. If a New York lawyer went to that little town to defend a bandit, folks would wonder who the bandit might be. One word of the truth, even a hint, and the news would be broadcast that Thomas Forren, Jr., was in jail charged with highway robbery.

NOT only that, but Junior begged his father not to consult his lawyer. If one single man in New York, he said, knew of his disgrace, he would never return to that city. He would do his time, but his father would never hear of him again. Anyhow, there was nothing a lawyer could do—the kind of lawyers known by the father. The bearer of the letter, Josephs, could fix things if he but had the necessary money. That meant that Josephs could be depended on to get a lawyer who would frame a tight and complete alibi. It was his only hope.

It was plain to the father that the young man was right. Even an acquittal would not lift from his shoulders the disgrace of the thing. All efforts must be bent on keeping the secret. The father had no desire to tell the story to any lawyer of his acquaintance. If only he could get his son out of the scrape, and keep absolutely secret his identity, it was worth his fortune.

To whom could he turn? The crook, Josephs, who seemed to be a decent sort, was ready with the answer.

The underworld.

Yes, it was a job for the underworld. There was no way in which the thing could be handled lawfully without run-

ning great risk of publicity. All the newspapers needed was a hint. As matters stood, Thomas Forren, Jr., was an unimportant young man under arrest in the West for a holdup. The fact wasn't even known outside the community where he was in jail. But let it come out that he was Thomas Forren, glaring headlines, photographs, and all the paraphernalia of sensational newspaperdom would be called into play.

That meant the end of young Thomas Forren. Crushing disgrace, perhaps abandonment to a life of recklessness.

"And so I turned to the underworld," the father said. "Josephs was full of his own schemes. He has a lawyer who's willing to do anything for money. His fee is heavy. I've held them off. I've been advancing Josephs' expense money, but I've held off closing with the lawyer, telling him to go ahead and frame his alibi. I haven't given my consent to that yet. I don't know that I will." He drew a long sigh. "If any one had ever told me I'd even think of hiring a crooked lawyer to frame an alibi, I'd have said he was crazy. I couldn't imagine myself doing such a thing. But that was before my son got into trouble. A man never knows what he will do until he's driven to the wall.

"But if there is some other way out of it, I want to take it. Josephs doesn't know that I am acquainted with Quong Sai. His name has never been mentioned between us. I did Quong Sai a service once, protected him on a stock deal. You know, of course, that the old man is rich, and that he is an inveterate gambler. He'll wager on anything. He thought he would play the market for a change, looking for some fresh game. He played it. He was being gouged in a bucket shop. I happened to be in position to know of it, and I warned him.

"Later I found out more about Quong Sai. I know something about his activities. So I went to him. If I'm going to dicker with the underworld, I said to myself, I'll get the best there is. I think Quong Sai has a reputation for brains and shrewdness. But I haven't told Josephs that. You see, Josephs seems to be interested only as a chance of helping a square kid, as he calls my son, out of jail. Of course I shall pay Josephs for the time he has spent, and I suppose he will collect something from the lawyer, if I give him the case. That's none of my business. But I'd like to see if something else can't be done. I don't know of a thing myself, but Quong Sai—— Well, I have a feeling that the underworld knows how to go about a thing like this."

"Mr. Forrens," I said finally, "it is necessary for me to see the man you call Josephs."

"He's coming here late this afternoon."

"Good! I shall try to have a look at him."

"That can be arranged."

"And he isn't to know about me."

"Of course not," Mr. Forrens agreed. "And now let me tell you not to let money stand in the way of anything. Just name what you want and spare no expense. Ah, when do you think you might leave for the West?"

"The West?" I rejoined. "I hadn't thought of going West."

He stared at me in amazement.

"But it is better for you to be on the ground out there," he said, in the sharp voice of a man used to issuing commands. "We can't take any chances on account of distance. I want you to go out there, use your own methods of seeing my son, then let me——"

"Mr. Forrens," I said, "I shall not go out there. I shall not leave New York."

He looked at me sharply, saw something in my face and my confidence that gave him a sudden rush of hope.

"Beg your pardon," he said, "for butting in, but I am used to direct methods. I've always found the shortest road to be the best when speed is necessary."

"And so have I," I rejoined. "The road out West would be a long distance out of the way."

He was still staring at me quizzically, bewildered, when I turned to go.

FOR several days I kept my eye on the crook, Josephs, and one night I found myself in a strange place, performing even stranger duties.

Had I muttered incantations while at my work, I may have been celebrating some rite of outlandish worship, for the paraphernalia of my task lent such an aspect to the proceedings. I was in a dimly lit underground room, off which were several smaller chambers, even more faintly illuminated. A brazier burning a purplish flame stood in the center of this room, and over this I presided.

I was what the underworld calls a "putty cooker." In the bowl of a long-handled warming spoon was a little brown pellet, and this I was toasting. It was freshly moist, like putty, and when done and transferred to the bowl of a long, cool pipe and ignited, it would glow like a slow, subtle coal. A pill of pleasant dreams, infinitely soothing to a tortured mind, an allayer of distraught nerves, a producer of fancies which for the time make a poor man rich and a rich man happy. Opium.

Peaceful sighs came from some of the little rooms. From others, where the languorous drowsiness had for the time passed off, came demands for my presence and ministrations. Once or twice I was cursed for the slowness of my attentions.

But I did my best, serving one and all as well as I could, providing them with the toasted pellets, igniting them, steadying the instruments through whose stems they drew in the vapor of infinite bliss. Always I watched them, yellow men and white, pitied them for fools, poor fools thinking to cheat a miserable world with a whiff of smoke. From it they would emerge more miserable than ever.

Grotesque shadows fell, warped and twisted by the nodding flame in the brazier, as some of my patients became importunate and came to my side to feast their eyes on the toasting pills and to bid me make haste. There were often two or three standing over me, nervous, gesticulating, and their shadows on the floor and walls and ceiling were like a dance of evil spirits. Gaunt eyes stared at me in the dim light, haggard faces, twitching, floated about me.

I was clad in the robe and sandals of the trade. Those who seek joy in dens like that demand the proper atmosphere in the attendants. They come expecting to find an Oriental clad as an Oriental.

Through Quong Sai I got this job. Sooner or later, I was sure, the situation which I wished would develop.

Josephs came in, this time with a friend. I observed his friend closely, from the tail of my eye, as I bent over the brazier. He came up to the specifications.

Josephs looked at me and saw that I was a stranger in this den which he frequented. He was a lean man with the flabby face of an addict, flashily dressed in the way of an East Side sport.

"New cook, eh?" he said.

I merely nodded.

"All right," he ordered. "A flop and a drag for two."

By that he meant beds and pipes for himself and companion.

I accommodated them. They went into a little room, in which there were two couches, and prepared for their excursion into the realm of pleasant dreams. They removed their overcoats and donned the slippers and robes provided for customers. They stretched out on the couches.

The young companion of the crook was not nearly so far gone on the drug as Josephs, if outward appearances counted for anything. Yet he was an addict. He understood the preliminaries to a night of blissful languor. He watched me, dreamy-eyed, while I applied the lighter to his pill. Josephs was already inhaling the vapor.

I left them there. In the entrance hallway, at the foot of a stairway leading down from the innocuous tea shop above, I whispered a few words into the ear of a young Chinese stationed there. He set out hurriedly on my mission.

I returned to the brazier and waited there for the first sign of commotion in the room in which I had left Josephs and his friend. It was not long in coming.

FIRST, there were grumbles of discontent between them, then an abrupt command for me to present myself before them. I did so. Nearly an hour had

elapsed. I was surprised that I had been able to deceive them so long, but the power of psychology is strong.

"What kinda mud y'u cooking fer us?" Josephs demanded.

"Mud?" I repeated.

They were sitting up on their couches, frowning at me. Their pipes lay on the little stand between them.

"That's what I said—mud," Josephs asserted. "That's all it is—mud. There ain't a dream in it."

"Surely," I rejoined, "you must be mistaken. I gave you the double-leafed Canton, and you must be aware——"

"Yeh, yeh!" the crook cut in. "Cut out the bunk. That ain't no double-leafed Canton we be'n smoking. I know my berries, see. It don't hit me right. We be'n laying here waiting fer the slip-off, and it don't come. Dragging away, and we might's well be smoking corn silk. The slip-off don't come. We dropped asleep at first, kidding ourselves, but I know by the way I woke up I ain't got no Canton smudge in my noodle. Now come clean. What'sa idee, chink?"

It was the phraseology of the opium smoker, his way of informing me that he thought I was giving him an inferior grade of opium, if not a substitute for the drug. He meant me to understand that he was well acquainted with the brand known as double-leafed Canton, because of the emblematic trade-mark of the stuff—two petals of the poppy—and that he was certain he had not got it. They had smoked a little, then fallen asleep. That was where psychology came in. Certain that they were smoking opium, they succumbed, but only for a short while, and with none of the fanciful dreams attending a sleep under the influence of double-leafed Canton. Awakening, they tried it again, but could not induce the passage into dreamland—the "slip-off." Then they had bestirred themselves to lodge a protest.

"Perhaps," I suggested, "your nerves are highly strung to-night. Now if you took a little liquor before you came in, it takes the poppy some little time——"

"We haven't had a drink," Josephs' companion informed me.

"I will show you the tin from which it came," I said.

"Cut it out!" Josephs insisted. "The tin don't mean nuthin' to us, see? It's the slip-off we want—the right slip-off. Now y'u see't we git it. Fetch in some more berries and kindle 'em up. If they don't ease us out—well, there'll be a new cook around here. Nag Wan's a friend o' ourn, see? We're old customers here."

Nag Wan was the proprietor of this den.

They were extremely nervous, wild-eyed. They paced their room, muttering imprecations on my head, while I worked slowly at the brazier, toasting little pills of harmless wax, specially prepared, of a color and smell like opium, which Nag Wan kept there to deceive addicts to whom he did not wish to give the real stuff. Nag Wan himself was nowhere about. He trusted me implicitly, for was not I a protégé of the estimable Quong Sai? Nag Wan, fat and amiable, was engaged in a philosophical discussion with Quong Sai, in The Room with the Four Doors, a little farther down the street—and no doubt Quong Sai was discoursing at length, and Nag Wan listening in rapt attention, for it was desired by Quong Sai and myself that Nag Wan be kept away from his murky den.

Before the fresh pills were ready for the pipes there was a stir in the hallway. My messenger had returned with Thomas Forren. The elderly broker came in with some trepidation; failed to recognize me in my present habiliments, then did so, as I looked him squarely in the face. He looked relieved.

He knew to what sort of place he had been brought, yet he bolstered up his courage, for he felt that this journey had something to do with the mission he had intrusted to me. I acted swiftly.

"Prepare yourself," I said, "for a great surprise."

He studied my face intently.

"Bad news?" he asked.

"Bad—and good, too."

I pointed to the room wherein Josephs and his friend impatiently awaited my coming with fresh pills.

Thomas Forren hesitated a moment,

then stepped boldly into the room. Dead silence, followed by an agitated flurry.

THE other denizens of that warren kept still, frightened, thinking a police raid was in progress. Their doors were closed surreptitiously, as though those flimsy barriers might keep out intruders.

Josephs, in terror, cringed on his couch. Thomas Forren dragged his son out into the big room, stood there with his hand on his shoulder, trying to make the young man look at him. The broker turned to me.

"How did you get him here so quickly?" he asked.

"Get him here?" I repeated. "He came of his own accord. I don't think," I added, "that he has ever been out of the city."

The father stared from one to the other. Josephs, hustling into his shoes and overcoat, thought he was slipping something over on us, when he glided out of his room and into the hallway. We merely let him go. His confidence game had fallen flat.

"Then—then my son wasn't in jail out West?" Mr. Forren said.

"Of course not," I assured him.

"But he is a drug fiend and an opium smoker."

Thomas Junior kept his eyes on the floor. His hands twisted nervously.

"That," I said, "is a problem for your physician and a sanitarium. I can be of no further service to you."

"But you've been of sufficient service," the father said gratefully. "I have him in my hands, and I shall never let loose of him again. And he wasn't a holdup man! That's worth everything. I don't care if he did conspire with crooks to swindle me. Drugs will make a man do anything. He—he isn't going to prison! He's not a thief!"

He said all this in the tone of a man emerging from a horrible nightmare. It was enough to make a man break down with happiness. But he did not break down. In time he would get a confession from the young man and would know as much as I did about how Josephs and two or three other addicts got the youth in their clutches, got a clipping of a holdup out of a Western newspaper and based their confidence game on it. It was a scheme to milk Thomas Forren for all the game would stand.

But, as I said, neither Quong Sai nor myself could be of any further service. When it came to delving into the affairs of the underworld and disturbing the mechanism of some shadowy plot, Quong Sai and I were at home. But to break a young man of his craving for drugs—that was beyond us.

The gratitude which the Forrens later expressed, however, told us that the outcome had been all they could wish.

I came out of it with a substantial fee from Thomas Forren and with two or three more bitter enemies in the underworld.

THE ARKANSAS DIET

EVER hear of the Arkansas diet? It's a good one to remember, but not one to practice. No one knows just when it was employed, but the general idea is that it is the most frugal way of living ever discovered. Here it is: A half dozen dried apples for breakfast; a quart of water for lunch—and let it swell for supper! Don't try it.

SEMIPRECIOUS STONES IN CANADA

AN interesting discovery was made some time ago in connection with mining activities in northern Manitoba, Canada. About a hundred miles from Winnipeg, on the Bird River, beryl, a semiprecious stone was found. Beryl closely resembles the diamond, and after it has been cut and polished it is valued at from five to twenty dollars a carat.

Day Labor

By Berton Braley

IT'S not because I am brave
That I sing when the world goes wrong,
But only that I am slave
To the workaday job of song.

And unless I quit and die,
Which would be a craven thing—
Why, a man must live, and I
Know nothing to do but sing!

If I troll you a merry stave
Of carols that lilt and glow,
It is not because I am brave
But because they are all I know.

So the songs that I make are gay
Like all I have ever made,
For a man must pay his way—
And song is my only trade!

The Brown Derby

By Joe Longino

Bobby Foster, the jockey, had an odd philosophy to soothe reflections of his hopeless racing record. "The sport of kings and crooks," he would say, "is fraught with uncertainty." The strange experience he had down in Argentina in the "Derby" was an example of that truth.

OUT at Jefferson Park, while the bangtails were running and leaving me poorer after every race, Bobby Foster told me this story.

Bobby is one of the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." A discredited jockey, he has been ruled off practically every track in the States, and he has since ridden up and down the world at large, throwing races in every country he visits and spreading desolation and destruction to those so unfortunate as to fancy the particular mount that he happens to be riding.

Savagely I tore up six dollars' worth of tickets at the conclusion of the fourth race and heaped malediction upon the ancient custom of racing horses for pleasure or gain. Because my denunciation was an old story to Bobby, and because the familiar scene recalled still others to his mind, he was stirred to the point of loquaciousness.

"The sport of kings and crooks," said he, "has ever been fraught with thrills and uncertainty. I am reminded of a little affair that took place down in Brazil several years ago. I turned honest from necessity and won a race and five thousand dollars.

"I decided to visit South America after several races had been lost in a rather mysterious manner at one of the tracks near New York. A sea voyage looked better to me than a lot of explaining to a bunch of unsympathetic racing officials. The district attorney was also getting inquisitive as to my whereabouts when I turned my thoughts toward Brazil. I also turned my feet and made the boat, just as she was casting off at her pier in Hoboken. It was lucky for me that I wasn't left, because the flat-footed man, with the square-toed shoes and the warrant in his inside pocket, wasn't far behind.

"I landed in Rio twelve days later with ringworm and seven dollars. I brought the money with me, but the disease was acquired from a fellow passenger in the steerage. This was my first peep at the monkey countries, so I took a good look around. The sun was shining, the army was revolting, nobody was working, and coffee was up two cents a pound. A boy with a *café-con-leche* complexion, informed me by the use of impromptu signs and gestures that the American colony could be located at the Palace Bar, so I hied myself thither at once.

DESPITE the stories in some magazines about the picturesque lives the beach combers live on these tropical strands, being insufficiently funded away from the old U. S. A. is no joke. Money weighs just as much in Terra del Fuego as it does in Terre Haute. The big coffee-and-coconut man blows into Rio to see the elephant, just the same as his fellow dealer in poultry and produce does in little old New York, and it takes the same sort of green stuff to paint the town red in one country as in the other. Red paint and poison are red paint and poison the world over.

"I was handicapped from the beginning. Professors down on their luck can turn their hands to palmistry, plumbers fall naturally into piracy, and absconding bank cashiers can grow whiskers and change their names, but the chap that follows the racing racket is just like an actor. He has got to hang around the hay burners or quit work. There ain't no other way out for him.

"Upon inquiry, I found that while lots of the Brazilian coffee kings owned stables and liked to see the horses run, only two Americans made any pretense of coming from Kentucky. One was a man named Sadler, who lived in Sao Paulo, and the other was a Colonel Cochran, who raced at the Jockey Club in Rio. There was a strong rivalry between them, and either would go to any length to get the decision over the other. They watched each other like a crook and a dick in a jewelry store.

"Sadler had the reputation of being a good sport, but the colonel was no bargain. He had six dollars for every case of hookworm in the State of Mississippi, and he wouldn't spend a dime to see the white elephant of Siam. He was a rubber prince, a banana baron, and a coffee king; on the side, he trafficked in safety-razor blades, well buckets, and cashiers' checks, besides maintaining a stable of sorts. At all the celebrations, like the Fourth of July and election day, he would get himself up in a long-tailed coat and read the Declaration of Independence and Tom Watson's speech to the soldiers of Rome—Georgia—to the assembled expatriates. Nobody liked him, but they all owed him money, and this covers more crimes than Sing Sing. The surest way to clinch a feller in your home town is to lend him money.

"I didn't have the money for a ticket to Sao Paulo to see Sadler, and I couldn't speak enough of the thing that goes for language down there to try for a place with one of the 'spicks,' so I gathered up my courage and braced Colonel Cochran for a job.

" 'Colonel,' said I, 'I understand that you are a racing man. Such being the case, I've come to offer you the services of the best man that has forked a horse since Paul Revere alarmed the Back Bay folks that the Prince of Wales was on his way. My name is Foster,' I goes on. 'I weigh one hundred and ten and I ain't lost a race since I quit voting for Bryan. I'm willing to start for three hundred a month and a cut in on all the profits. You'll find that I'm the best all-around man for——'

" 'You're the Foster that was kicked off the turf in the States for crooked riding,' he interrupts. 'I've heard of you, and what I've heard ain't going to help you any. You may be able to ride, but your reputation is bad. You're a tramp because you can't be trusted. You're an unfaithful servant, a *"mal creado,"* as we say in the Portuguese, and I don't mix with your kind.'

" 'I'm not interested in any pork and cheese,' said I haughtily. 'I came here to ask for a job, and I thought enough of my own name to use it and not a consumed one. I won't stay here to be in-

sulted,' said I, backing out, pretending to be highly insulted.

" 'Wait a minute,' said the colonel. 'I ain't through yet. I'm on to your curves, but happily I'm in a position to use your services. It so happens that I stand ace-high with the local *delegado,* which same may be likened to the judge of the police court back in the States. One nod from me, and I am sure that my friend, Senhor Moraes, would place you in jail and keep you there until I asked that you be liberated. Justice follows a different course here from the way it does back in the States."

" 'It ain't so different as you seem to think,' said I, sort of flustered; 'but I can't see how your friendship for the judge alters my case any.'

" 'Like this,' he replied. 'You will take charge of my stable to-morrow. You will exercise the horses and feed and water and curry them and sleep with them; and on Sundays, which is the only day we race here, you will ride them, and you will bring them in ahead of the field, too. And the first time I see anything out of the way, my friend Senhor Moraes will attend to you. You will be wise to avoid his attention.'

" 'Don't you want me to shoe them, too?' I asked.

" 'No,' he came back. 'You won't be required to do any heavy work. You see, I can only pay one hundred milreis a month for your services, and I don't want to ask too much of you.'

" 'How much is that in real money?' I asked.

" 'At the present rate of exchange,' he said, looking at some figures, 'it amounts to exactly nine dollars and eighty cents in American money."

" 'Is there any danger of the exchange rising in my favor?' I wanted to know sarcastically.

" 'No,' he said, 'there ain't. Things look bad now, but they're going to change and get worse. You've led a wild life, Foster,' he went on, 'and you've a lot to answer for. This is where you start to pay, and I believe that I am safe in saying that before you are through you will agree with me that honesty is the best policy.'

" 'You said it, colonel,' I remarked. 'It's true I've had a hand in much mischief. I've got a lot to atone for, and I suppose I start here.'

DID I take the job? Sure. I had to eat, you know. And right there is where I turned honest. He certainly had the Indian sign on me, and for the next six months I made up for the sins of a misspent youth.

"His stable consisted of three wooden-legged cab horses that would make an eighteen-year-old selling plater on an Oklahoma county fair track look like easy money. He did have one nice piece of horseflesh though, a big Argentine stallion, about three years old, named Campista. Old Cochran had imported him in order to have an ace in the hole the next time he raced Sadler, and he was undoubtedly the best race horse in the country of Brazil.

"No horses ever received better attention than I gave those misfits. I was afraid not to, you see. Simon Legree was as mild as the good Samaritan compared to the colonel. He had a lantern jaw, like an undertaker, and after one look at what he called his face you wished you'd left your money back home in the savings account, and that your Aunt Elsie had the pass book. I'd hate to meet him on a dark night.

"Every Sunday, when the races were held out at the Jockey Club, the old man would saunter up, while we were weighing in, to give us the once-over. And he never failed to impress on me what was going to happen if I came in behind where he thought I should. He used to carry around a picture post card of the local jail and flash it on me just before they would spring the barrier, just as a little reminder.

"Say, you've heard of this boy Sande? Well, his record looks like the won-and-lost column of the Boston Braves to the one I hung up during the six months I served Colonel Cochran.

"At night I used to lie awake and review the situation. I planned to escape a thousand times, but my spirit was crushed. When I should have been strong and made a dash for freedom, I would

get an impression of what the inside of a Brazilian hoosegow would be like. The red capsules in my blood would turn to quinine, and I finally admitted to myself that I was buffaloed. After careful ratiocination, I decided to do just as I was told, and I hoped that maybe the colonel would take pity on me after ten or twelve years and let me go of my own free will.

"I worked like a Trojan, rode like a Cossack, and ate like a jailbird. Black rice and blacker beans was what I got, and that ain't a diet to make a man worry about a torpid liver or the gout.

"One day the old man rushes out to the track, all out of breath and as excited as a kid going through his Christmas stocking.

" 'I've hooked him,' he cried, 'as sure as they bake beans in Boston.'

" 'Hooked who?' I asked, sticking my head up over a horse's back, where I had been earning my nine dollars and eighty cents with a currycomb.

" 'Sadler,' he said. 'He's going to race his little red filly against Campista on the Fourth of July. He has bet ten thousand on it, and he ain't got a Chinaman's chance, and, what's more, he knows it.'

" 'Why did he do it then?' I asked innocently.

" 'Because I outsmarted him,' replied the colonel.

"He flopped down on a bale of hay and explained the whole proceedings to me. It seems that a bunch of Paulistas came up to Rio the night previous, and Sadler was among those present. A poker game was started down at the Pan American Club, which was a place where the live ones used to gather to play poker and pan the Americans, and Sadler was the big loser. Old Cochran was raking in all the big pots and trying to get Sadler's goat.

" 'You poor sap,' said the old man, 'if there's any game you know how to play, speak up, and we'll give you a chance. You are as helpless among grown people as a Republican living in Selma, Alabama.'

"Sadler was a decent sort of fellow, and he tried to overlook all he could; but the old man rubbed it in, and it is no wonder that Sadler lost his head finally.

" 'You can talk a dog off a meat wagon,' shouted Sadler, 'but nobody ever saw you bet a dime on anything less than a full house. You think you've got the world bluffed about your horse, too, don't you? Well, I'll just bet you ten grand that I've got a horse that will outrun your Campista anywhere, any time, and any distance. That horse of mine would make a jack rabbit look like a mud turtle.'

" 'What horse do you mean?' asked the colonel.

" 'My little filly, Spanish Flu,' replied Sadler.

" 'You're on,' said Cochran gleefully. 'We'll race on the Fourth of July out at the Jockey Club. We'll make the distance a mile and a half, and the result ain't even going to be close.'

" 'Just a minute,' said Sadler. 'There's a question of weights to be decided. I don't want any handicap as far as the horses go, but your man, Foster, don't weigh an ounce over one hundred and ten, while my Pedro scales at one hundred and twenty-six. You'll have to carry sixteen pounds at least to offset this advantage.'

"The colonel agreed to this, with a show of temper, but secretly he was getting an awful laugh out of the whole thing. Campista could have carried fifty pounds at that distance and won as easy as Al Smith. The filly was a running piece of furniture, but too light to go up against the big stallion, especially for a race of that length, and every one, including Sadler, knew it. The race was won before it began.

"The bunch was sorry for him and resentful toward Cochran, for they knew that Sadler had made a fool bet on account of losing his temper at the old man's ragging, and had been snapped up like batter cakes at a boys' boarding school.

HE was as game as they make them, and he refused to back out, so the money was posted that night at the club. The race was set for the Fourth of July, which was a bit over a month away, and an old Scotchman, named Angus Mac-

Intire, was decided on to judge the affair. Old Angus was a fine judge of whisky and as honest as they grow, so both principals thought he ought to be able to see that justice was done. This suited the colonel right down to the ground, because he was so crooked himself that he suspected those around him, and he was delighted to settle on one whose honesty was as well established as old Angus MacIntire's.

"Cochran was awful chesty about the way he had caught Sadler, but he was worried about one thing.

" 'Foster,' he said to me one afternoon, 'this race is a pipe, and the money's as good as mine right now. You know both horses, and you know that I've got this race in my pocket. There's just one reason why I'm not going to sleep as sound as I might,' he goes on, 'and that's you. I shall constantly be afraid that you will not prove dependable.

" 'If I thought for one minute that you might be persuaded to slip into your former habits, I would have the minions of the law upon you now.'

"I hastily assured the colonel that I was as faithful as a bill collector, and that he need not have the slightest cause for worry.

" 'The only thing that can keep us from winning is to get struck by lightning,' I said.

"This seemed to reassure him a trifle, but he continued to make threats and drew on his imagination for my benefit. The colonel believed in impressing the matter on my young mind.

" 'If I see one thing that don't look right,' he said, 'or if Campista develops any sort of trouble or complaint between now and the race, I'll nail your hide to the stable door,' he threatened. 'I'm not afraid of the race at all. My horse can win, and old MacIntire will see fair play after we get on the track; so, if I do lose, I will know just whose fault it is, and what methods to use to punish the guilty party,' he concluded.

"I choked and assured him again that my conduct would show that he would not be forced to use those methods.

"He believed I'd play square because he figured I'd be afraid not to, but nevertheless he started coming down to the stable every night to sleep. He was suspicious of everybody, and it afterward turned out that he had reason to be on the lookout.

"One, day, about a week after the bet was posted, I was in town to see about some feed stuff for the ponies. On my way back I stopped in the Palace Bar for a bracer, and I ran smack into Sadler, who should have been down in Sao Paulo, getting his filly into condition for the race. He seemed glad to see me; for he took me by the arm in a friendly manner and ordered the drinks. I scanned the horizon to see if Cochran or any of his crew were in the offing, and the coast being clear, I sat down to see what he had to say.

" 'Foster,' he said, 'you know what I'm up against. If I lose that race I'm as dead as fifty pounds of salted mackerel. It's too late to back out, and, as things look right now, I ain't a hundred-to-one shot. I know you can't have any affection for that old pirate, and so I don't hesitate to make you a proposition. Here,' he said, pulling out a roll of bills as big around as a beer keg, 'here's five thousand of the real stuff, and here's a little bottle of blue pills. All you've got to do to earn this jack is to drop a couple of these into Campista's feed the night before the race. Spanish Flu has got to win, or I'm sunk,' he finished.

" 'Spanish Flu or Spanish beans,' I said, 'there's easier ways to break in jail than that. You can just put your money back into your pocket, along with your little blue pills. There ain't going to be any knock-out drops in Campista's victuals, or any cotton stuffed up his bugle, or any shots of high life of any kind inveigled into his system, while I'm on the job. I like you fine, Mr. Sadler,' I went on, 'but there's a ball and chain up at the big rock that ain't working right now, and I know whose leg it's going to be welded on if we come in second in this race. I'm taking no chances.'

"He saw there wasn't any use pleading, so he paid for the drinks and left. I felt sorry for him, and I hated to see him in such a fix, but I wasn't going to risk twenty years in stir for five grand, when

I know I wouldn't have any chance to spend the money.

THE day of the race dawned bright and fair, as the news papers addicted to such events state, and it found us ready. Campista looked as good as ready cash, and he was trained to the minute. We were all set for the purse.

"All the fauna and flora of the land was out to see the 'Derby,' as they had got to calling the race, and most of the Brazilians were hoping that some way could be found whereby it was possible for both horses to lose. Campista was quoted at about thirty to one, but it was claimed that some of the so-called 'wise money' was going down on Spanish Flu at those odds. It was a gala occasion, anyway, though every one seemed to be sort of sorry for Sadler.

"His filly was looking fine, too, and I could see that it was going to be a race for the first quarter or so, but after that I knew our superior strength and endurance would tell.

"Just before we weighed in, the colonel came up to give me his last instructions and the once-over, before he took his place to watch the race.

"'Don't play around,' he warned. 'Get the jump and keep it. It may be a race for the first hundred yards, but after that its duck soup. And remember what's going to happen to you if I see any stalling or pulling on the back stretch.'

"'Cause yourself no uneasiness, colonel,' I said. 'You've heard of this guy Sheridan's ride. I'll be more surprised than those Hessians at Trenton if we don't win by six lengths at least.'

"I would have said more to reassure him, but just at this point up comes one of the officials with the weights for me. This consisted of sixteen pounds of shot sewed up in a chamois bag, which he tied to the rear of my saddle. Crude equipment, but racing ain't got to be the science down there that it has here in the States. We rode by the judges' stand and then immediately took our places at the barrier, ready to leap into action when the starter gave the sign.

"There ain't no use in telling you how I felt. It's the same before all big races when something important is at stake, and I knew just how much was at stake.

"'Bobby,' said I to myself, 'unless you want to retire permanently from circulation and find yourself so far under the jail, that only a miner can dig you out, you had better ride like one possessed of a devil!'

"Both horses were nervous and not too well trained at the gate, but we finally got away after a couple of false starts. It was anybody's race to the first turn, but the little filly put up as game a fight as you would want to see. She ran her heart out in the first quarter, just as I knew she would. and when we turned into the back stretch I was a length to the good. Pedro, Sadlers' Chilean jockey, began to use his whip at this early stage, but I never placed a hand on Campista. I left her choose her own speed.

"We came into the home stretch four lengths to the good, and, as we thundered down to the wire, it looked like the result of a presidential election, with the Sadler entry voting a straight Democratic ticket.

"There wasn't much cheering because the crowd was solid for Sadler, and outside of a few cheers here and there, we were let pretty much alone; but old Cochran made up for the frigidity of the spectators by the effusiveness of his own greeting. It was his one big moment. Besides winning ten thousand berries, he had put it over a hated rival, and the victory was doubly sweet. He was the happiest man I ever saw, and he so far forgot himself as to shake hands with me."

BOBBY stopped his story at this point and gave his attention to the fifth race.

"You needn't finish," said I. "That's a dead steal from some story. I know you were rewarded for your honesty and old Cochran made you his partner after the race."

"Wait," said Bobby. "You didn't let me finish. You see there is a little matter of weighing after a race is completed, and when we climbed back on the scales we lacked just sixteen pounds of

being as heavy as we were when the race started. In some unaccountable way that bag came open and scattered shot all the way to Buenos Aires. Old MacIntire adhered strictly to the rules of racing, and of course he had to disqualify Campista and declare Spanish Flu the winner. It was a regrettable accident, but one that I believe is not unique in the annuls of racing.

"I didn't wait to change clothes after the race, but passed the old man while he was still arguing the matter with MacIntire. I was still dressed in the Cochran silks. Sadler was waiting for me in a taxicab, and he seemed well pleased with the outcome of the struggle. He split his winnings with me in a way that left nothing to be desired, and also presented me with a one-way ticket for the States on a ship that sailed that afternoon.

"I never saw Colonel Cochran after that, though I understand that he would have liked to have seen me and talked the whole thing over. I imagine that he would have liked to talk about the hole in the chamois bag and ask my opinion as to whether it was caused by the natural wearing of the fabric or by a knife slit, as some suspicious-minded person suggested. Anyway, I'm glad that I didn't see him again, for he was a most unpleasant man, and I don't naturally take to his kind."

THE DESTRUCTION OF WILD LIFE

THE American Game Protective Association, which recently held its thirteenth conference in New York City, meets annually to discuss ways and means for conserving wild life in America. At the recent conference, delegates were present from every State in the Union as well as from Canada, Mexico and Europe. In the opinion of these experts on game protection, three things are contributing to the extermination of wild life in America: the cultivation of woodlands, barbed-wire fences, and vermin. The last item includes skunks, raccoons, opossums, snakes, rats, crows and hawks.

The cultivation of millions of acres of land throughout the United States, according to William C. Adams, of the Massachusetts Game Commission, is starving game to death. If his contention is to be believed, the plow is proving a more deadly menace to wild life than firearms. Barbed-wire fences wound and frequently kill frightened animals that are caught on the barbs in their precipitous flight from the man with the gun or larger and more powerful animals which prey upon them. The head keeper of the Hempstead House Estate on Long Island declared that vermin were gradually exterminating quail and that eighty per cent of all quail nests were destroyed by predatory animals.

Public sentiment in America is still coldly indifferent, in spite of private and governmental agencies working in the interests of conservation, to the rapid disappearance of wild life in this country. The denuding of our forests will eventually duplicate the situation in Europe, where in many parts there is no room even for the birds.

Ten years ago in Westchester County, which is about twenty-five miles from New York City, one could enjoy the sight and fragrance of miles of wild flowers. To-day the trail of the tin lizzie has brought about the obliteration of this once-beautiful wild garden, which was free to every man. This condition is said to be repeated not only in the environs of New York but is tragically true throughout the country from coast to coast.

The wholesale destruction of the giant redwoods in California is one of the big blots on man's stewardship of our natural resources. In a brief space of years man's greed and shortsightedness have destroyed these noble trees which nature took from fifteen hundred to two thousand years to produce.

A Chat With You

WITHIN a few days after this magazine reaches you the anniversary of the birth of Lincoln will be celebrated in a great many of these, our United States. The fact that he managed by stratagem, by diplomacy, by common sense, by force of arms, by devotion and self-sacrifice, by every device consistent with honor, to keep these States united and one country, gives him his great place in history. The British folk have their Westminster Abbey, where many of their mighty dead are interred or commemorated. There is a greater edifice, one not built by hands, there is no stone or mortar in it, nor carved gargoyle, nor any of the tricks of masons' craft. It is made of human aspiration, hope, idealism. It is the true Pantheon of the Higher Gods, and Lincoln has his place there.

* * * *

HISTORY is a difficult study. The facts are various and complicated. Of all those who revere Lincoln's name there are few who have been able to trace and follow the windings of his strange and romantic career and the still stranger windings of his earnest and original mind. History and fable, however, have a way of telling the essential truth in words of one syllable, so that any one may understand the essential facts. It is quite likely that George Washington never had a little hatchet, that never as a child did he chop down a cherry tree, that never did he exclaim to his father: "I cannot tell a lie."

But, for all that, the fable is, in its essence, true. George Washington was first, last, and all the time a veracious and honest man. Parson Weems, who apparently devised this story about him, may not have been too honest a man himself, but he knew an honest man when he saw one, and perhaps his child's story conveyed the real essence of the great Washington, the real rectitude of mind and character that made him the founder of a nation, better than a more literal and curious analysis of his personality.

* * * *

THERE are enough biographies of Lincoln to fill a considerable alcove of a library. There are plays about him and movies. There are innumerable articles in magazines by men "who knew Lincoln." It is quite probable that in the days when they knew him he did not seem such a considerable character as they think now. And yet, in spite of all the writing about him, the Lincoln of flesh and blood fades out before our eyes and leaves in its place the real and better Lincoln, the eternal Lincoln, the Lincoln of the spirit.

* * * *

FORMAL and written history will give him his credit. He conducted to its close a great civil war, he consolidated and regenerated a nation, destined to be one nation as long as any one may look into the future. But the thing that makes a truly great man is something more than this. He only reaches the highest rank when he becomes a symbol. There are very few such men in all history. The Founder of our religion stands first and above all. Then there is Cæsar. How many kings in Europe have used his name to signify that they were kings, knowing little of him or his life. There is Shakespeare. How many people pay him respect as a great poet who have never taken the trouble to read one of his plays. Alfred the Great, Joan of Arc, Christopher Columbus, George Washington—there are not so many of them who have arisen to be universal symbols. Perhaps this is what the ancients meant when they said that their heroes, when dead, became constellations of stars in the skies.

Lincoln, within one generation after his death, has achieved his apotheosis and

already shines, a constellation in the heavens. He is a symbol. One of the kindliest, homeliest, most hopeful ones in all the starry pageantry.

He stands for optimism—being a man of the people, who from the humblest beginning rose to the highest office that any people can bestow. He stands for practical, homely common sense, having been a shrewd man after his fashion and a practical man in his conduct of a most difficult war. He stands for kindliness and humanity, for who pardoned more deserters and forgave more injuries? He stands for that great heritage of honest laughter, shared by the rich and poor alike, for he was so fond of harmless and apparently futile humor that he brought it in with him to the gravest councils of state. They called him "Honest Abe." He was an American through and through. And now he is an eternal symbol of something especially manly, sensible, noble and humane.

The Popular Magazine

In the Next Number, February 20, 1927

Faked Evidence	HENRY C. ROWLAND
The Stray	HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS
New Fists for Old	WILLIAM HEMMINGWAY
In One Corner	ROY W. HINDS
White Coal A Six-part Serial—Part IV	LAURIE YORK ERSKINE
The Thoroughbred	JOHN MILLER GREGORY
Leguerre of the Lost Division Miss Allison's Elopement	HOWARD FITZALAN
In the Poor-fish Navy	J. H. GREENE
An Epic of the Pampas	CAPTAIN A. P. CORCORAN
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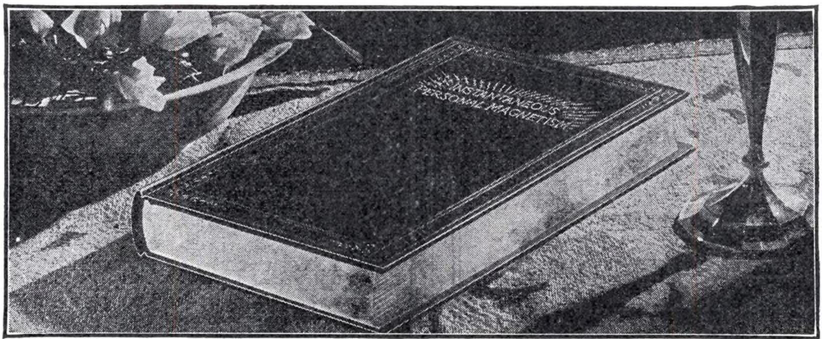

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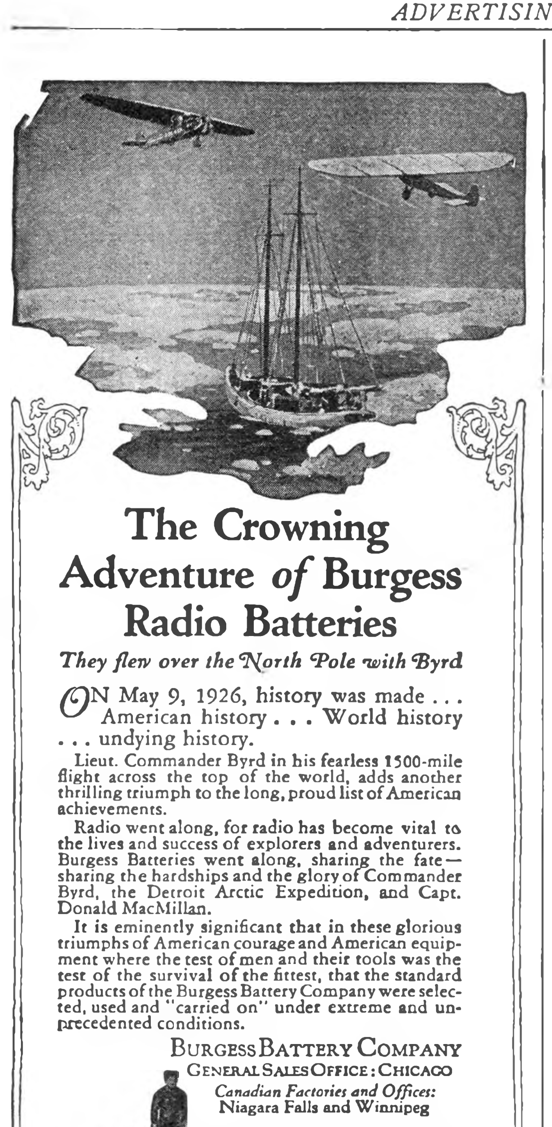

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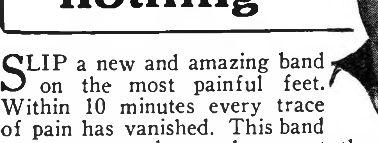

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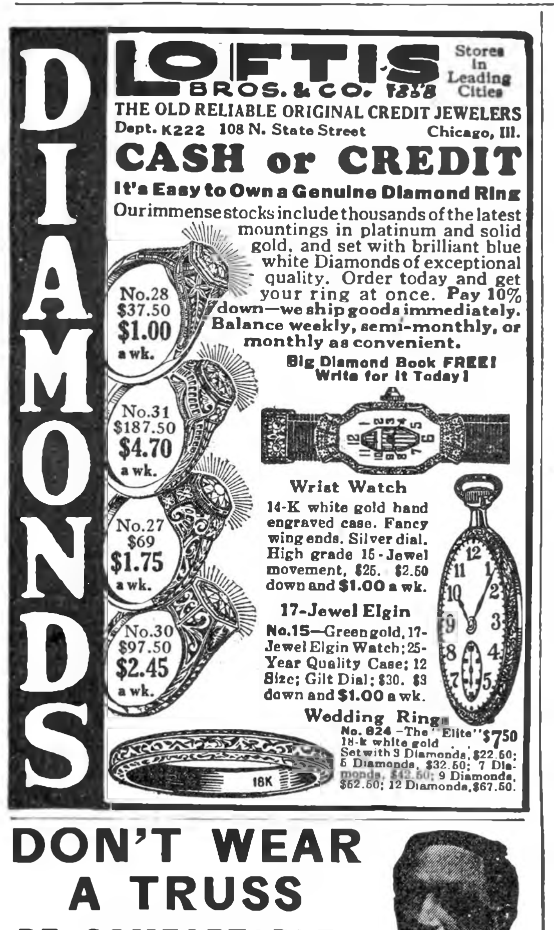

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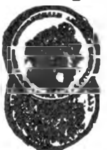

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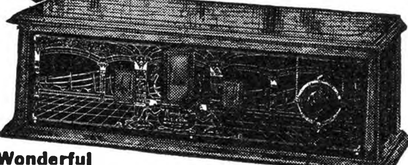

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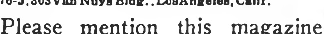

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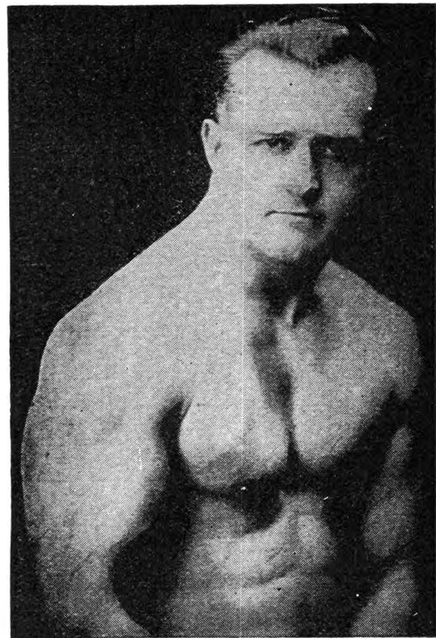

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Thank your lucky stars you have another man inside of you. He's the human dynamo. He fills you full of pep and ambition. He keeps you alive—on fire. He urges you on in your daily tasks. He makes you strive for bigger and better things to do. He makes you crave for life and strength. He teaches you that the weak fall by the wayside, but the strong succeed. He shows you that exercise builds live tissue—live tissue is muscle—muscle means strength—strength is power. Power brings success! That's what you want, and gosh darn your old hide! you're going to get it.

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The Perfect Writing Instrument

$2.98 FREE 10 DAYS TRIAL

Answers the purpose of both pen and pencil combined. Its point is shaped like a fine lead pencil point and writes with ink free and easy without a miss, skip or blur. The steady uniform flow of ink actually improves your handwriting. Won't blot, scratch, leak or soil hands.

Combines The Best Features

of pen and pencil, minus the weak points of both, plus improvements not found in either. The lead pencil smudges, the point breaks and its writing soon is obliterated. Most fountain pens skip, scratch, flood, clog, leak, blot, soil hands and clothing. The old stylographic ink pencil dries up, balks, blots, writes heavy, flows unevenly and is never reliable. The Inkograph feeds as fast and uniform on the 20th page as it did on the first.

Cannot Leak

Not the tiniest drop of ink will spill although one filling is sufficient to write thousands of words.

Makes 3 to 4 Carbon Copies

at one time with original copy in ink. Bear down as hard as you like, without fear of bending, spreading, injuring or distorting its 14Kt solid gold point.

Draws Lines to a Ruler

without smearing, smudging or blurring the paper. Writes with any color of ink.

Requires No Blotter

The ink dries as fast as you write, because the flow is fine, even and uniform.

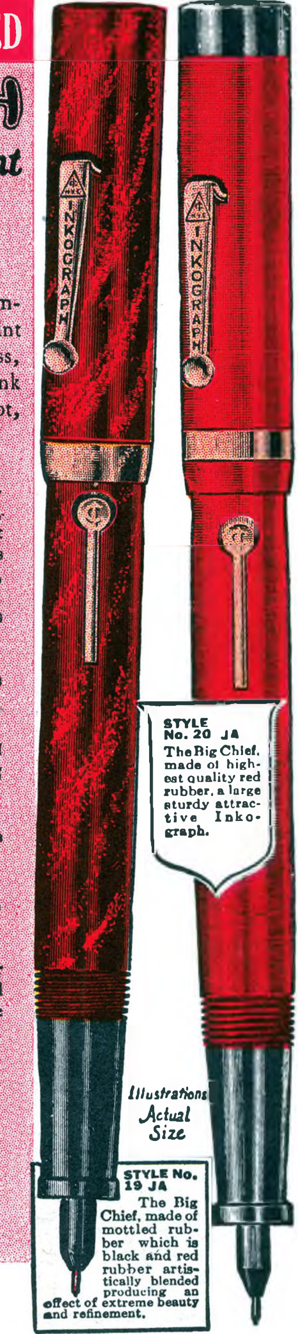
Patent Automatic Feed

Prevents clogging. No complicated mechanism to clean or get out of order. A year's guarantee certificate with full directions accompanies each Inkograph and is your absolute protection.

An Instrument of Refinement

In appearance it is extremely attractive. It's beautifully highly polished finest quality of hard rubber, its **14Kt Solid gold point and feed, gold band on safety screw cap, gold self filling lever and gold clip** makes it an in strument of distinctive elegance and refinement. The equal in size, workmanship and material of any $7, $8 or $9 fountain pen. Also made in ladies' size.

INKOGRAPH CO., Inc.
191-85 Centre St., New York City



AGENTS Sell Inkographs, make bigger profits, more sales, without investment. Quicker commissions, popular prices, no competition. Send for an Inkograph or write for special sales plan booklet.

DEALERS Send for catalog and trade prices.

The Writing HEMISPHERE
The INKOGRAPH ACCOMPLISHMENT
That 14kt solid gold ball like point which is hard, round and smooth, glides with ease over the coarsest paper and makes it possible to write in ink as rapidly as with the softest lead pencil.

SEND NO MONEY

Your name, address an style number of the Inkograph of your choice are sufficient. Pay postman $2.98 plus postage on delivery. Specify if you want ladies' size. When cash accompanies order Inkograph will be sent postage prepaid. If within ten days the Inkograph does not prove satisfactory return it and we'll refund your money.

INKOGRAPH CO., Inc., 191-85 Center St. N.Y.C.

Gentlemen: Send me Inkograph Style No.________
I will pay postman $2.98 plus postage on delivery.

Name..

Address..

City .... State ....

The happiest words in the world

A SAYING becomes universally popular if its expression recalls an experience of pleasure. "Have a Camel!" are the three happiest smoke words ever uttered because no other cigarette ever gave the world so much enjoyment. To millions of experienced smokers, Camels are contentment realized.

Camel has become the most popular smoke of all time because of quality. Camels contain the choicest Turkish and Domestic tobaccos that nature grows. Then these superb tobaccos are given a blending that can be found in no other cigarette. The largest tobacco organization in the world puts its all and its best into Camels. You could smoke, end to end, a mile of Camels—they will never tire the taste, never leave a cigaretty after-taste.

We invite you now to introduce yourself to the finest made.

Millions of friendly voices are calling you to the mildest, mellowest fragrance that ever came from a cigarette. Once you know what they mean, no words can compare with

"Have a Camel!"

R. J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO COMPANY, WINSTON-SALEM, N. C.

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