JANUARY 7, 1928
VOL. LXXXVIII No. 2

THE POPULAR

15 Cents

WEEKLY
JAN. 7, 1928

The Popular

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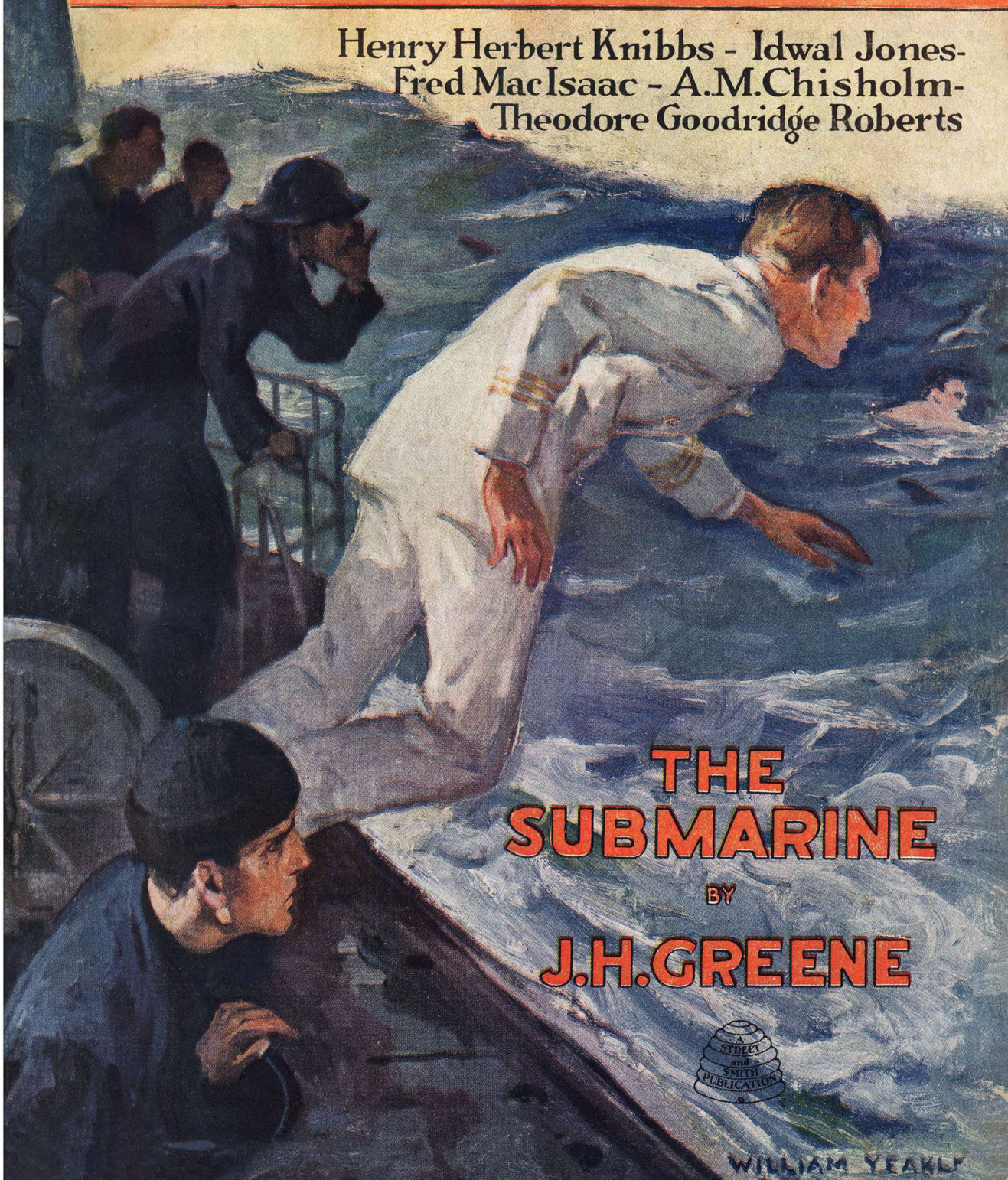

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BY

J.H.GREENE

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PICTURE PLAY, splendidly illustrated, stands for the very best in motion-picture magazines. Every month it contains special articles that take the readers into all corners of the film world, introduce them to players and show them everything they want to know about every one they want to know about. Beautiful pictures of the famous actors and actresses both at work and away from the grinding camera. It follows the screen very carefully, reflecting in its pages only the decent and clean things about the industry and its people.

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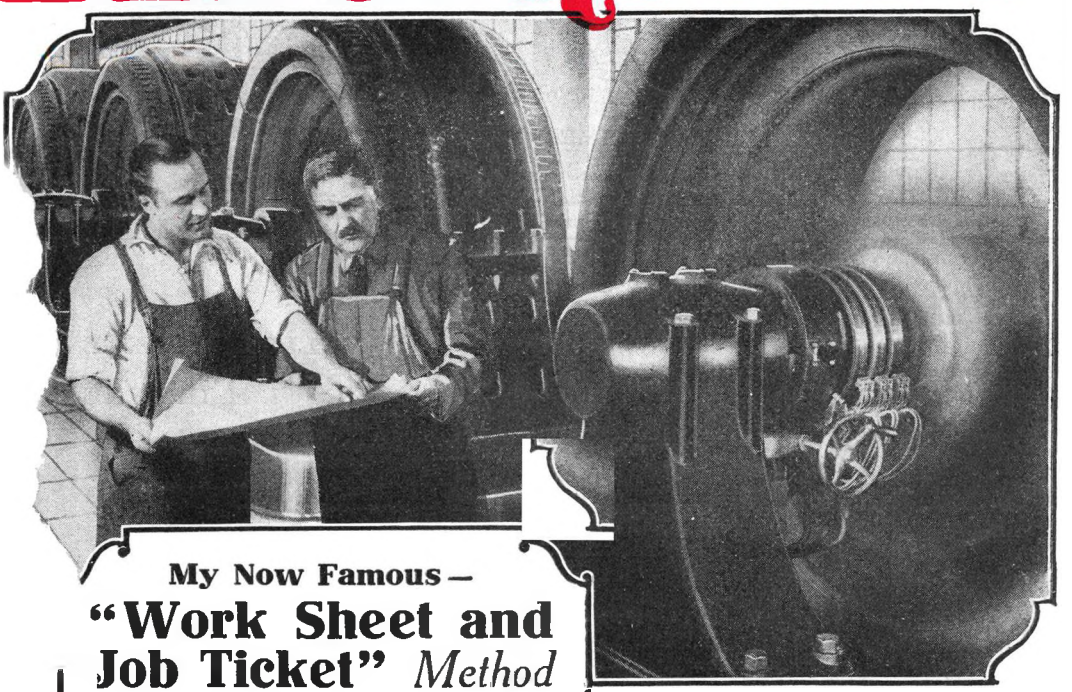

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Your copy of THE POPULAR next week will present to you several pleasing features. Holman Day's novel, "North-woods Stuff," is an unusually good yarn about the big woods. B. M. Bower's serial, starting then, is called "Haywire." There will be a short story by Henry Herbert Knibbs, and, besides that, a well-assorted group of shorts, chosen to please everybody.

Volume LXXXVIII Number 2

The Popular

PUBLISHED WEEKLY

Title Registered U. S. Patent Office.

CONTENTS FOR JANUARY 7, 1928

Weekly publication issued by Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York. Ormond G. Smith, President; George C. Smith, Vice President and Treasurer; George C. Smith, Jr., Vice President; Ormond V. Gould, Secretary.

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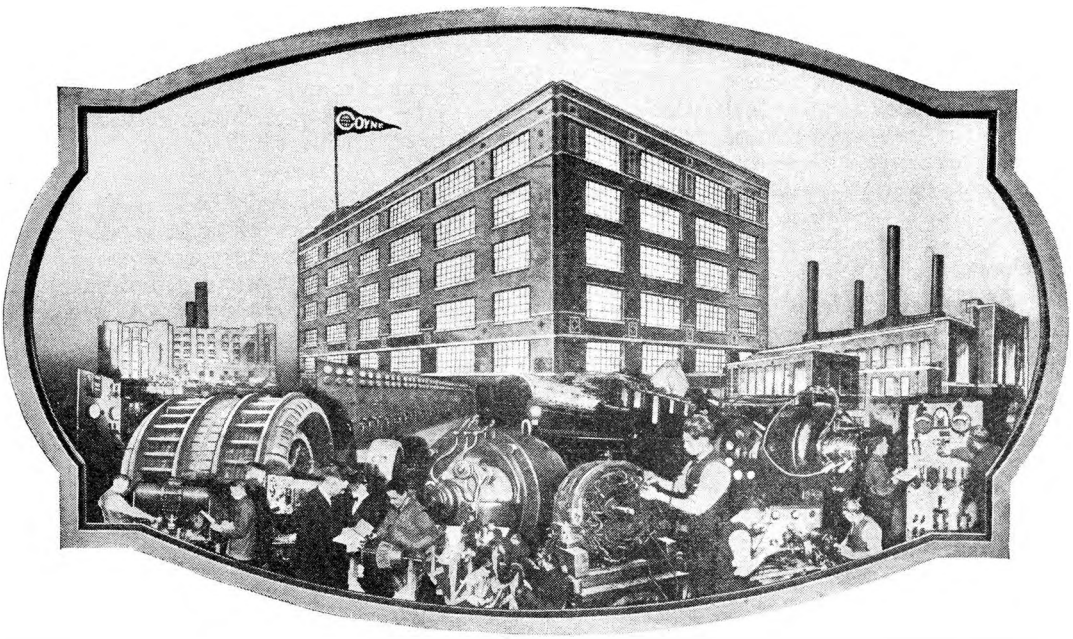

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Don't spend your life waiting for $5 raises in a dull, hopeless job. Now . . . and forever . . . say good-bye to 25 and 35 dollars a week. Let me show you how to qualify for jobs leading to salaries of $50, $60 and up, a week, in Electricity—NOT by correspondence, but by an amazing way to teach, that makes you a practical expert in 90 days! Getting into Electricity is far easier than you imagine! Act now, today!

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Send now for my big 56-page book containing 150 photographs, telling the whole Coyne story. It tells you how many earn expenses while training and all about our lifetime employment service. We are now in our new $2,000,000 school—the finest school in the world devoted to the exclusive training in Electricity.

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Due to overheated homes, stuffy offices, crowded cars, sudden changes of temperature, and exposure to bad weather, you are in constant risk of colds, sore throat or worse.

You can reduce this risk considerably if you care to. Every night when you get home, gargle with Listerine used full strength.

Many a cold and sore throat threatening to become serious has been quickly checked by this pleasant antiseptic.

Listerine immediately attacks the germ-producing bacteria in the mouth, nose, and throat.

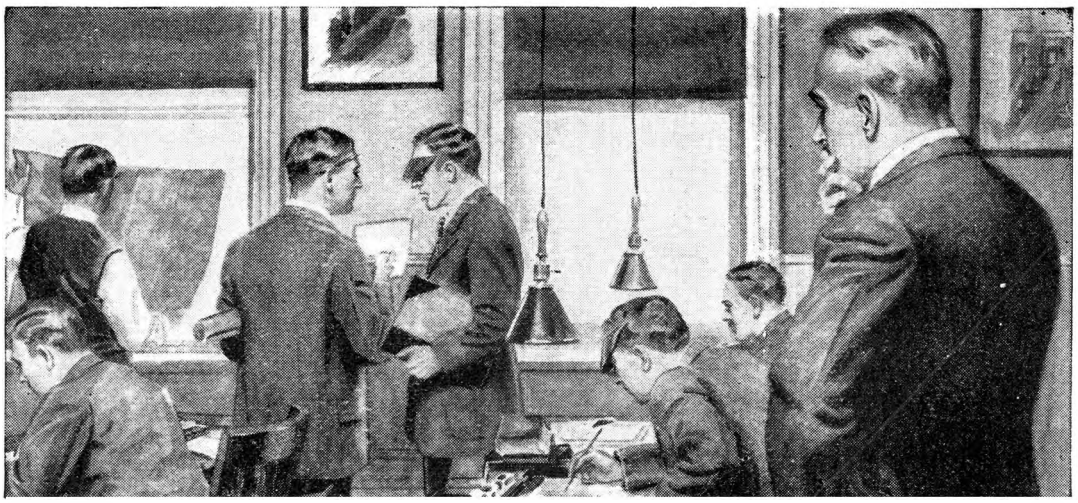
The wise thing to do, of course, during bad weather, is to use Listerine systematically night and morning. Rinse your mouth with it. Inhale it through the nose. Gargle with it full strength.

It may be, and very probably will be, the means of sparing you a long and trying siege of illness. Lambert Pharmacal Co., St. Louis, Mo., U. S. A.

Gargle when you get home

LISTERINE

-the safe antiseptic



"Which Man Shall I Promote?"

THERE is probably no one problem in business that gives an employer so much concern as this —*"Which man shall I promote?"*

He must not—he *dare* not—take chances when a position of responsibility is open. The success of his department, his business, his very reputation depends on his ability to pick men.

In every office, in every factory, the problem always is the same.

Many, many men. Old men, young men, men of middle age. A score, a hundred ordinary routine workers.

But how few whose vision of the business, or whose aptitude for it, extends beyond the narrow limits of their own particular job! How startlingly few who are equipped to handle bigger work when Opportunity calls!

What does your employer think of *you* when a good position is open? Does he pass you by as just an ordinary routine worker, or does he say—"There's a man I can depend on because he's training himself to handle bigger work"?

Do not try to delude yourself. Your employer knows more about you than you sometimes think. He's constantly checking up on your work, your ability, your ideals, your aspirations. Stored away in the back of his mind, or filed away in black and white, are his impressions of the kind of man *you are* and the kind of man *you want to be.*

There is no better way to get out of the rut and lift yourself above the crowd than to take up a home-study course with the International Correspondence Schools. In just an hour a day of the spare time that now goes to waste, you can prepare yourself for advancement and a larger salary in the work you like best.

At least find out how by marking and mailing this same success coupon that has meant so much to so many other men.

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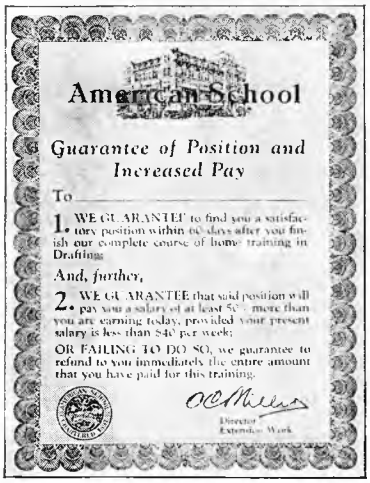
—to prove you can learn at Home, in spare time!



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Here is a word-for-word copy of the Contract which we have made with 30,000 men in the past three years. I shall be glad to make the same agreement, backed by our entire resources of $2,000,000.00—with YOU.

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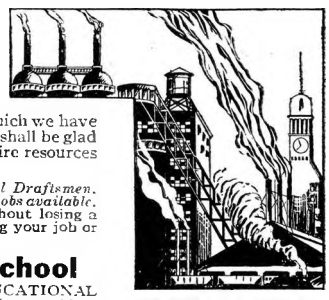

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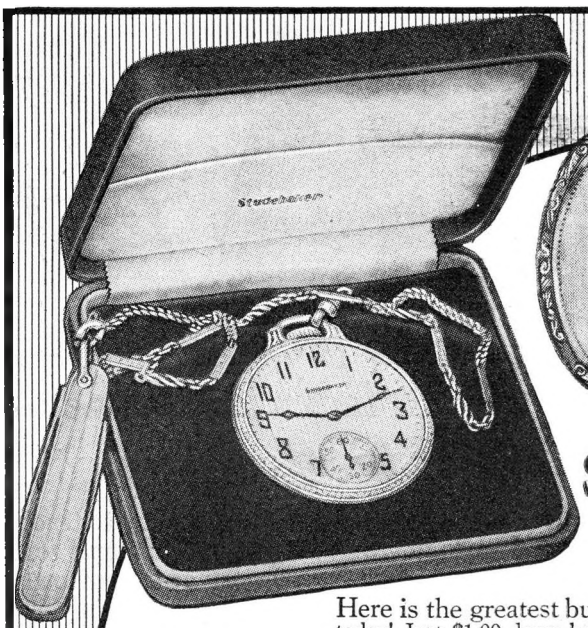

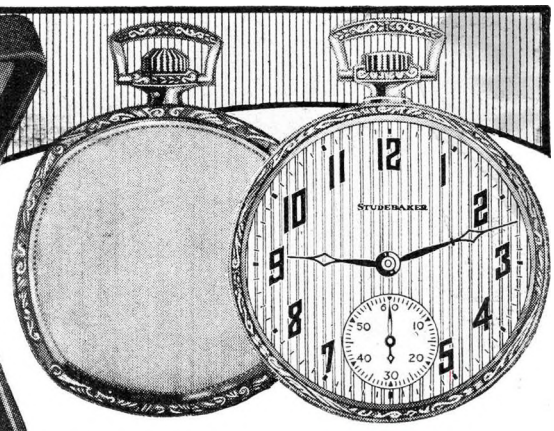

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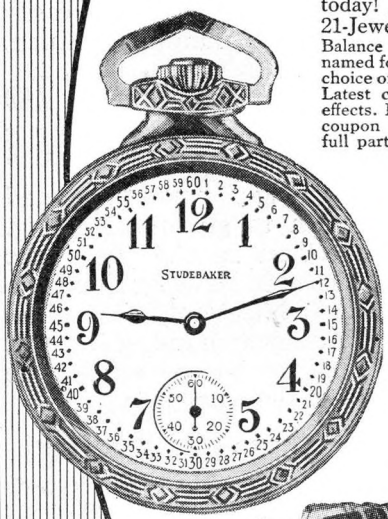

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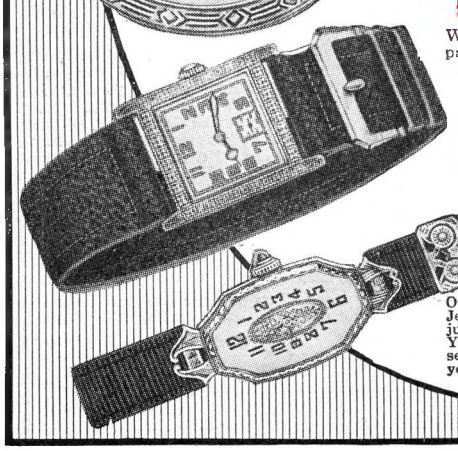

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Street or R. F. D. .....

City ..... *State* .....


1


2


3

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These Clues Will Help You At first glance all the pictures look alike, but on closer examination you will see that one, and only one, differs in some way from all the others. The difference may be in the fence, steps or even shutters. If you can find the one house that is different from all the others write me TODAY QUICK. You may become the owner of this house without one cent of cost to you.


4


8


5


9

Built Anywhere in U. S.

The one house that is different from all the others is going to be given away ABSOLUTELY FREE. It makes no difference where you live. The house can be built anywhere in the U. S., and if you do not own a lot I will even arrange to buy a lot on which to build the house. A beautiful and comfortable six-room house may be yours if you can find the different house. Certainly you have longed for the day to come when you could own your own home—this is your golden opportunity. Act QUICK.


6


10

You Cannot Lose Positively every one taking advantage of this opportunity is rewarded. Find the one house that is different from all the others and rush your name and address to me TODAY. A postal card will do, just say, "House No. — is different from all the others. Without any obligation please tell me how I can get this fine six-room house without one cent of cost to me."


7


11

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12


13


14

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TO HAVE an extra, independent income? To work whenever it suits your convenience? Make a host of new friends and gain valuable experience from contact with other people? Have money to buy the 101 things you've always wanted but felt you couldn't afford? Know the happiness that comes from doing something really worth while?

Then our easy money-making plan offers a splendid opportunity to gratify your desires. Hundreds of men and women, young and old, 95% of whom were inexperienced beginners when they started, are earning substantial profits. You can also. All you need is a few spare hours to take care of the new and renewal subscriptions for Sport Story, Picture Play, Far West Illustrated, and Complete Stories.

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You begin earning money at once—the very first hour you start. Besides liberal cash commissions, you also receive monthly bonus checks.

If you feel at all interested send the coupon below. It costs only a two-cent stamp, but may lead to a substantial income. We're so sure you will succeed that we supply everything you need free of charge. Every day you delay is a money-making opportunity lost, so

MAIL THIS COUPON NOW!

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79-89 Seventh Ave., New York, N. Y.

Without obligation to me, please send me full details of your easy money-making plan.

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STREET.....

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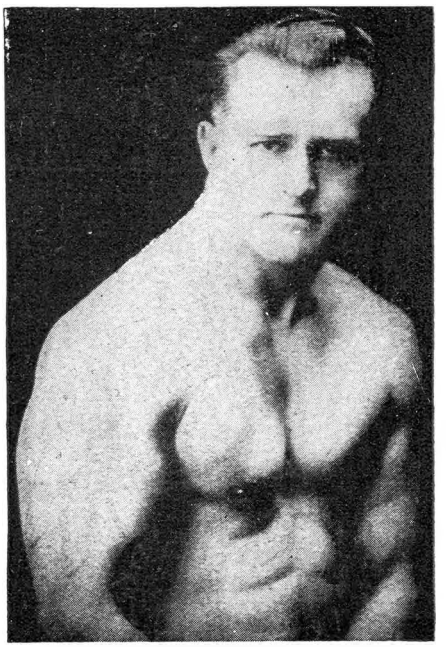

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HOW STRONG ARE YOU?
Can You Do These Things?

Lift 200 lbs. or more overhead with one arm; bend and break a horseshoe; tear two decks of playing cards; bend spikes; chin yourself with one hand.

CAN you do any of them? I can and many of my pupils can. It is remarkable the things a man really can do if he will make up his mind to be strong. I have taken men who were ridiculed because of their frail make-up and developed them into the strongest men of their locality.

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These are the days that call for speed. In olden days it took years to develop a strong, healthy body. I can completely transform you in 90 days. Yes, make a complete change in your entire physical make-up. In 30 days I guarantee to increase your biceps one full inch. I also guarantee to increase your chest two inches. But I don't quit there. I don't stop till you're a finished athlete —a real strong man. I will broaden your shoulders, deepen your chest, strengthen your neck. I will give you the arms and legs of a Hercules. I will put an armor plate of muscle over your entire body. But with it come the strong, powerful lungs which enrich the blood, putting new life into your entire being. You will be bubbling over with strength, pep and vitality.

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Many say that any form of exercise is good, but this is not true. I have seen men working in the factories and mills who literally killed themselves with exercise. They ruined their hearts or other vital organs, ruptured themselves or killed off what little vitality they possessed.

I was a frail weakling myself in search of health and strength. I spent years in study and research, analyzing my own defects to find what I needed. After many tests and experiments, I discovered a secret of progressive exercising. I increased my own arms over six and a half inches, my neck three inches and other parts of my body in proportion. I decided to become a public benefactor and impart this knowledge to others. Physicians and the highest authorities on physical culture have tested my system and pronounced it to be the surest means of acquiring perfect manhood. Do you crave a strong, well-proportioned body and the abundance of health that goes with it? Are you true to yourself? If so, spend a pleasant half-hour in learning how to attain it. The knowledge is yours for the asking.

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IT IS FREE—Don't Send One Penny—Your name and address on a postal will do

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

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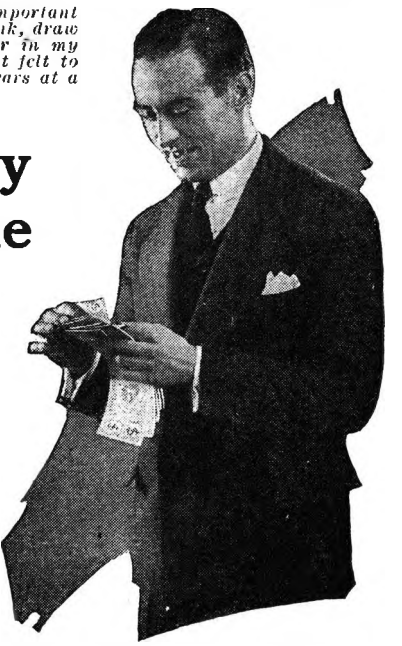
When I first started making real important money I used to go down to the bank, draw out a roll—and just thumb it over in my office and grin! That's how good it felt to get success and big money, after years at a low-paid job.



Success and Big Money Were For Others, Not Me

Believe It or Not, That Was What I Thought of Myself—Just Twelve Short Months Ago

I'M TELLING YOU, just one year ago I'd never seen a hundred dollar bill in my life outside of a bank.

You'd think I'm kidding you if you saw the fine Radio business I own now. But it's gospel truth. Just twelve months ago I was only a poorly paid clerk, and I thought success had passed me by.

All my crowd in those days—the fellows I met in the pool-hall and at the bowling-alleys—said a fellow had to *have* money to make money. They claimed there was no chance for a fellow whose family didn't have money or some business to start him out in. And I'd decided they must be right.

I guess at that time I had just about given up hope. I thought there must be some kind of a mystery about making a lot of money. But I was due for a big awakening. Did I get it? Oh, boy! Read my story and judge for yourself.

IT ALL started one day last summer, when Helen, the girl I wanted to marry, was leaving for the seashore. Of course I went to the station to see her off.

As I stepped onto the station platform Bob Oakes and Wilmer Pratt had just rolled up in their cars. They climbed out with their arms full of bundles—books, expensive candy, flowers, all sorts of things. Well sir, I wished I could have swallowed in one gulp the little box of drugstore candy I had bought for Helen—it certainly looked pitiful beside all that stuff.

We three stood there talking to Helen until train time, while Helen's mother looked me up and down. Like any young girl's mother would, she had my financial standing already sized up within thirty-five cents. Cheap suit, cheap hat, she took it all in. And you could see on her face all the time what a lot of nerve she thought I had to give Bob and Wilmer a run for Helen.

Well, to make a long story short, Helen was nice, but her mother stood there looking scornful whenever she glanced my way, and she hardly spoke to me at all. I felt about as welcome as the measles, and as uncomfortable as the itch. I began to wish that I and my cheap suit and cheap hat could sink through the floor, but I stayed there and stuck it out.

WHEN Helen's train finally left, I slunk home, ashamed and humiliated. I went upstairs to my room and sat there with a lump in my throat, getting hotter and hotter and more ashamed of myself. Then I began to see red and redder.

Finally I jumped up and banged the table. "I'll show 'em," I growled through clenched teeth. "There *must* be some way for a man to make *real money!*" An idea suddenly flashed through my head.

Hastily I began thumbing the pages of a magazine on the table, searching for an advertisement that I'd seen many times, but passed up without thinking, an advertisement telling of big opportunities for trained men to succeed in the great new Radio field. With the advertisement was a coupon offering a big free book full of information. I sent the coupon in, and in a few days received a handsome book, telling about opportunities in the Radio field and how a man can prepare quickly and easily at home to take advantage of these opportunities. I read the book carefully and when I finished it I made my decision.

WHAT'S happened in the twelve months since that day, as I've already told you, seems almost like a dream to me now. For ten of those twelve months I've had a Radio business of my own! At first, of course, I started it as a little proposition on the side, under the guidance of the National Radio Institute, the outfit that gave me my Radio training. It wasn't long before I was getting so much to do in the Radio line that I quit my measly little clerical job, and devoted my full time to my Radio business.

Since that time I've gone right on up, always under the watchful guidance of my friends at the National Radio Institute. They would have given me just as much help, too, if I had wanted to follow some other line of Radio besides building my own retail business—such as broadcasting, manufacturing, experimenting, sea operating, or any of the score of lines they prepare you for. And to think that until that day I sent for their eye-opening book, I'd been wailing "I never had a chance!"

NOW I'm making real money, own a good car, stand high in my town, can borrow money at the bank any time I might want it. I'm getting some real *fun* and *enjoyment* out of life, not just *existing* from pay-day to pay-day.

And—just listen to this! Bob was in my place only the other day, and asked me for a job! Wilmer is still getting along pretty well on his father's money, but he'd trade places with me any day.

And Helen? Well—the honeymoon will be spent in Honolulu, starting two months from tomorrow!

HERE'S a real tip. Think it over—are you satisfied? Are you making enough money, at work that you like?

This new Radio game is a live wire field of golden rewards. The work in any of the 20 different lines of Radio, is fascinating, absorbing, well paid. The National Radio Institute—oldest and largest Radio home-study school in the world—will train you inexpensively in your own home to know Radio from A to Z and to increase your earnings in the Radio field.

Take another tip—No matter what your plans are, no matter how much or how little you know about Radio—clip the coupon below and look their free book over. The information it will give you is worth a few minutes of anybody's time. You will place yourself under no obligation—the book is free, and is gladly sent to anyone who wants to know about Radio. Just address: J. E. Smith, President, National Radio Institute, Dept. 1-A, Washington, D. C.

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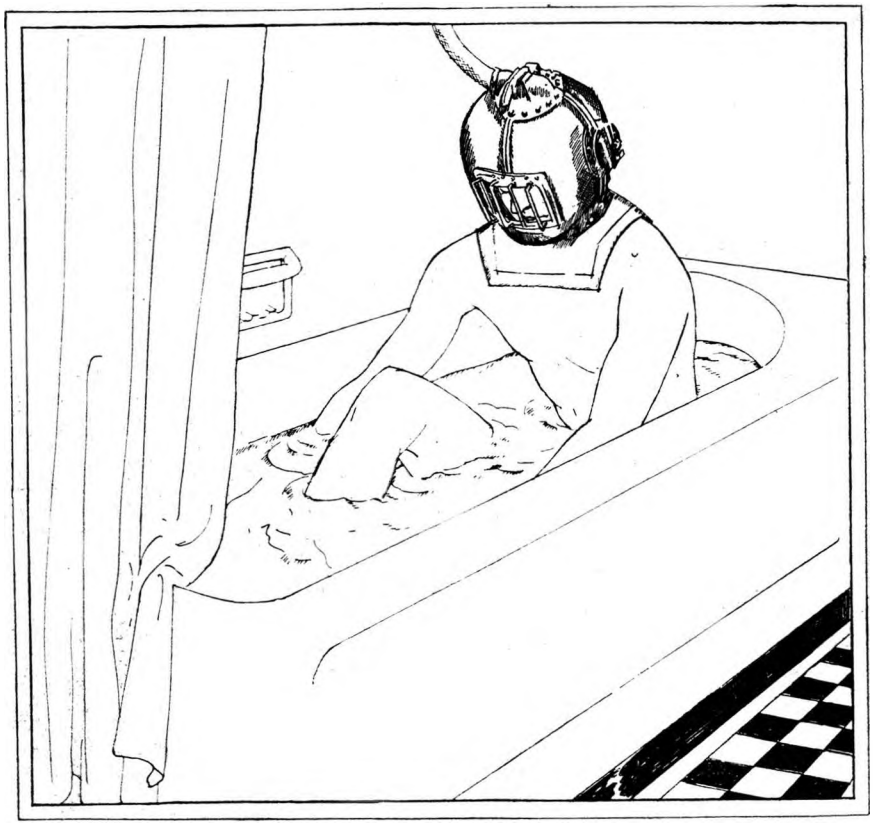

To daily divers

The desperate gentleman wearing the submarine millinery has climbed into his bath determined to go down among the molluscs and the octopi, if need be, on the trail of his cake of sinker soap.

If you have been compelled to plow along the tub-bottom in search of a cake of soap like that—

And if you do not own one of these fashionable deep-water derbies—

You can simplify, shorten and immeasurably improve the whole bathing operation by investing a carfare in a cake of Ivory.

Ivory *floats!*

Perhaps it has already occurred to you that the function of a soap in the bath is to get you clean—comfortably, luxuriously, quickly and triumphantly—and not to be the object of a feverish search every time it slips out of your hand. Well, then, you will welcome a floating cake of Ivory as a shipwrecked man welcomes the approach of a fifty-foot yacht with dinner on the table.

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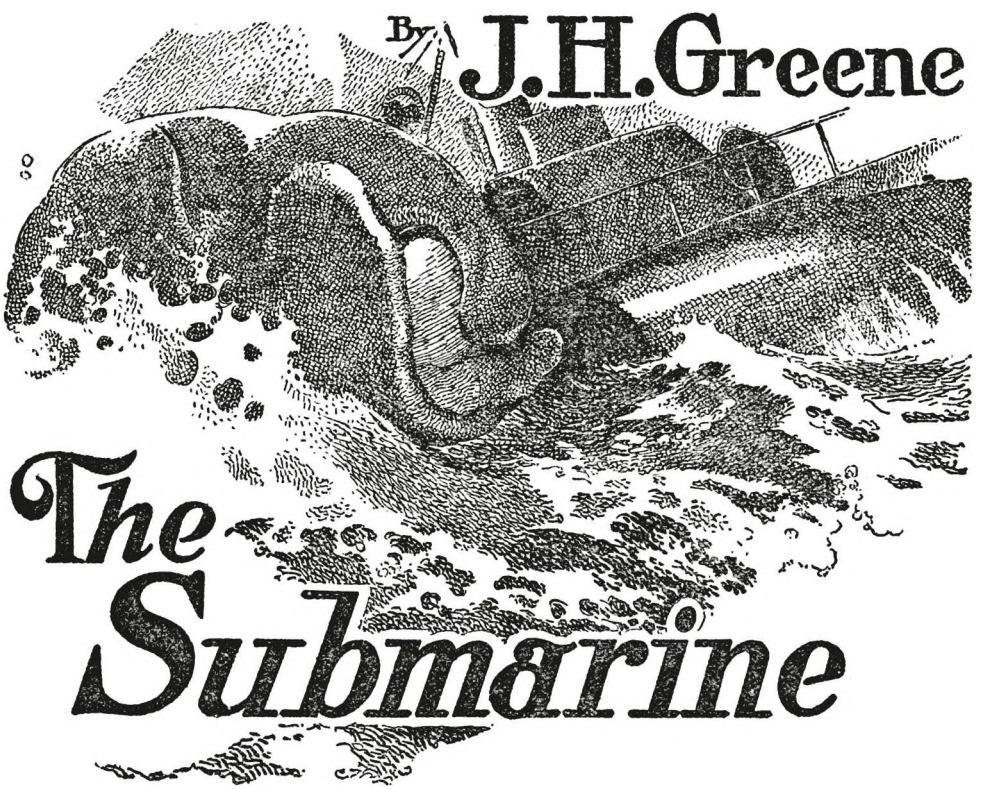


Author of "In Poison Valley," "Thirst," Etc.

Laura Grebe thought that naval officers were simply swanky, push-button men; had no use for them. But Commander Phil Durant, U. S. N., had some use for her. And when he took her and her thoroughly alcoholized friend, Lowden, down in his submarine, he showed the difference between the Lowden kind and the navy kind.

CHAPTER I.

SPARM, AT THAT!

COMMANDER PHIL DURANT had just taken his shower in the tiny bathroom of his submarine and was finishing his shaving and dressing in his stateroom preparatory to dining. He was familiar enough with the small dimensions of his vessel to conduct these operations with infinitesimal moves. One of the charms of being at sea, he always maintained ashore, was that everything wanted lay right under your hand; in a submarine your needs were at the tips of your fingers.

As he put back the razor in its drawer, he drew out a pocketbook and took out of it a newspaper cutting. Once a day at shaving time, ever since

he had left the coast, he had thus read and reread the announcement of the engagement of Miss Laura Grebe, daughter of the famous oceanographer and explorer, Frobisher Grebe, to Robert Dinsley Lowden, son of the multimillionaire, Marshall Lowden, of Lowden's Chain Stores.

All Durant's perplexed poring over that cutting, however, would not alter its tenor, and he suddenly became aware, and ashamed, of the fatuousness of his habit. He crumpled up the paper and threw it into the basket under his writing table. Then, considering how much of his private feelings were connected with that cutting and not wishing the cabin cleaner to see it, he picked it up again, intending to throw it over the side when he went on deck to let the surface air breeze up his appetite.

He passed through the curtains shielding the opening in the bulkhead leading to the forward engine room, where the watch was keeping eyes and ears on the Diesels, into the control room, where another group lounged easily—for they were only surface running—and thence up the ladder into the conning tower.

Firket, the navigator, was in the conning tower, and Tomlins, the chief engineer, was up in the little pinching bows watching the porpoises just keeping ahead of the knifelike cutwater. Of course the lookout was forward, too; and some seamen aft were drying out shirts on the long, heavily tensed jumping cable that stretched from the bows and the stern to the tower.

Durant watched the swift, glistening backs of the porpoises, and a smile erased the frown he had brought into the conning tower. Firket had noticed that frown and tactfully refrained from opening conversation.

"How about a little revolver practice on those porpoises? I'll get the guns," said Durant.

Firket had graduated with Durant; the two had watched the building of this submarine from blue prints to her last painting; they had fished for tarpon together; they had shot bears in the Rockies. This call to the democracy of sport permitted Durant to wait upon his subordinate. Durant, however, was still carrying that newspaper cutting, which was worse than an obituary to him; he tore it into fragments with the stoic deliberation of a man burning a poisoned wound, and scattered them from the tower to be blown away in the wind.

"A little shooting will do us all good," he added, as he went down.

Shore leaves had been brief since they had come West. Durant had worked his ship and his men to the limit. He had been almost churlish in refusing social engagements, inventing duties to keep him away from garden parties and dinners. The gay Phil Durant who had fluttered so airily ashore among the damsels and dowagers of Eastern ports had become a changed man. He was in danger of getting stale; he kept changing from arduous work to arduous sport, trying to forget a girl, knowing that a man's best cure for love is to go out and kill something.

But the fragments of that cutting did not all fly overboard, one small piece lighted on a drop of spray caught on the canvas covering the gun and stayed there. Tomlins coming aft saw it and picked it off. He was the sort of man who never can pass a piece of printed matter without reading it. He read the girl's name, all that the paper contained, and grinned up at Firket.

Firket pretended not to see him and Tomlins grew suddenly ashamed. He passed aft and thought he heard Firket mutter "Mustang!" over his head. If Firket had not said that, he was certainly thinking it.

Tomlins was not a regular Annapolis man, having had only six months at the

Academy when he was taken into the navy out of the merchant marine, during the war. His war record kept him in the navy as a valued officer, but the stigma of "mustang," the man who had not been duly appointed to the Academy and undergone the complete training, still remained. Firket and other Academy men, thoroughly trained in social niceties as well as naval tactics, were liable to remind him of these deficiences in his education when he made slips like this.

Durant soon returned with the service revolvers, and he and Firket began shooting. The shots brought up heads from the fore and aft manholes. Bets were made on the hits. It was as good as target practice between rival gun crews.

The two officers, however, made few hits at these erupting and rapidly disappearing targets; they would have registered better with their bullets from the bows, which were almost dry between the furrows of green water parting right and left, but both were sportsmen and wanted to give the porpoises a fighting chance. Durant grazed a couple and Firket pierced one through the back; they could see him tail up astern, sticking out of the water like a spar buoy.

"Whales on the starboard bow, sir," remarked Firket.

Durant followed Firket's glance and saw feathery spouts blown up from the sea and the lifting of the black backs of bigger game than porpoises.

"Thar she blo-o-ows, and sparm, at that!" sang Durant, recalling the old call from the crow's nest. "Let's steal on them at half speed, and I'll get out that old harpoon gun."

Durant went below. Actual and novel excitement spread through the usual officelike calm of the submarine; a tussle with the whales would do the men as much good as a day's liberty in a foreign port. This would justify Durant in going off his course and delaying his cruise. He went into his cabin and brought out that old harpoon gun and its few harpoons, which he had picked up in a salt-water junk shop in New Bedford. He had a flask of loose powder, some wads, and some old-fashioned caps, which he had managed to secure with difficulty, and which were necessary for the antique weapon. That gun would still stand powder, in spite of its rust. He had taken the risk of its bursting by firing it himself at a shark nosing alongside them off Mexico.

He passed the word for Petty Officer Snow to stand by the line that he had attached to a harpoon. He knew Snow was a Nantucket man bred of a long line of whalers. That was another advantage of serving in the submarines, he noted—you get to know all about every man on board. In battleships you do not; your own men may pass you if you're in mufti on the street, for very often they have scarcely seen you. Besides, you could not shoot sharks and whales from the deck of a battleship with that degree of intimacy which makes sport. Durant had forgotten there were girls in the world, when he tied that line to the harpoon.

By this time they were close to the whales; long pointed tails and heavy, bullocky heads were all around them, like an entrapping shoal at low tide. The air was misty from spouting; the deck was wet with the fine rain; lines of drops gathered on the jumping cables; the laundry, aft, was again wet.

Durant, urged by the romance that is game, would have liked to come to closer quarters with the whales in an open boat, but none of his delicate-fingered, gauge-reading seamen were very handy with oars; few of them could be trusted even to bring a gas-driven launch smartly up to a landing stage. He could not risk a boat and their lives, just to capture the thrill of the old whaling days. If it was only a matter of

killing, of course he could blow the whales out of the water with his gun, but that would not be sport, and the navy does not provide ammunition for such purposes; and every shot fired has to be entered in the report sheets.

They were now slowed down, almost drifting among the whales, which did not seem at all disturbed by their presence. Durant was so close to a great bull that he could see its suspicious little piglike eye peering up at him as it lifted above the water line. Durant lifted the clumsy, heavy gun to his shoulder and fired. The line leaped forward in unwinding coils from the feet of Snow and the harpoon struck the whale in its great, fat shoulder. The whale paid no attention to the scratch, simply threw up an apparently scornful spout of vapor and water and wallowed comfortably in the swells, like a hog in its trough. The harpoon fell out of the flesh and Snow hauled it in.

"We're not close enough," said Durant, rubbing his shoulder, which was sure to ache for a week from the heavy kick of that gun. "The harpoon has no momentum when it hits. I don't believe he even felt it."

For an hour Durant kept among the whales, taking these futile pot shots. Sometimes he missed and the harpoons went over their backs; one was lost when the line parted. He grew careful, for he had few harpoons. Once, in hauling in the line, it dragged across the black, leathery back of an emerging whale; the whale did not seem to mind that line trailing across its hide with a lump of barbed iron attached to it any more than a piece of drifting weed.

Indeed, the whales seemed to have the best of it. That ridiculous little man on his clumsy mass of drifting steel could only annoy their thick sides, so thoroughly armored with blubber. They kept on calmly swimming, spouting and feeding; they could easily outmaneuver Durant; the submarine could not be suddenly brought up against their sides, in the way of an old whaleboat pulled by iron men and steered by a man with a lone oar.

"They've got us licked," said Durant, with a true sportsman's admiration of his antagonists. "And no wonder! Look at their lines. Power and speed in every section. They can turn in half a length. They make our old girl seem like a coal barge. Look at their propellers and what engines they must have! And just meat and bone. There are brains in those fat heads—better ones than ours. I believe they're swimming in formation, and that fellow there is their admiral, signaling his orders."

He pointed to the big whale he had first grazed. The wound showing the white blubber under the black skin was plainly visible.

"I wish we could ram him, sir," remarked Snow.

"I believe he's going to ram us!" cried Durant with delight, as the whale turned toward them, its clifflike head bulging and butting through the waters.

"They will, sir," said Snow, with equal delight. "I've heard my father say that sperm whales scrap when they get mad."

Durant fired again, this time at a closer range. That mass of blubber and bone, no matter how many hundreds of tons it weighed, could not hurt his hull; but the challenge of the whale turned sport into war, for it could strain his propeller. The whale was advancing on his port bow and its powerful flukes were churning up a furious wake. The harpoon struck the great head just as it was about to stub its nose against the irresistible and immobile mass of the steel hull of the submarine. The whale stopped thrashing at once, as the harpoon went in and the flexible barbs held it. The white water turned pink from the flood of blood that showed that the harpoon had pierced deeply. Then, suddenly, the whale dived; simultane-

ously all the other whales around them dived, too; the waters that had been islanded with their black heaving backs became empty, not a spout whitened the air; not a whale was in sight. Nothing showed there had been any whales but the swift unlooping of the line over the side. That sudden and simultaneous submergence was uncanny; officers and men looked at one another in amazement.

"I'll be blamed!" said Firket.

"What do you think of that!" murmured the men.

"What did I say?" said Durant almost solemnly. "That fellow was admiral and signaled: 'Squadron, submerge.' But cut that line, Snow; no need to lose it all."

Recalled to his duty by this demand for economy, Snow slashed at the disappearing coils with his knife. He was not as adroit as his whaling forbears would have been and made the mistake of trying to cut the running rope. The knife was jerked from his hand and dropped into the sea; the rope was not severed until another knife cut it at a still coil.

"On her course, Mr. Firket," said Durant, carrying his gun, his powder flask and his caps below to put them away, along with his dreams of the days when men faced perils with bare hands, when sea fighting was flesh to flesh, when you boarded your whale—a perilous, dangerous calling, indeed.

He sighed a little; submarining without a war was a little monotonous; there was rather too much bookkeeping and routine. His years at the Academy and in the service had ingrained in him that this must be so. All the same, he sighed for the old days when a commander could do what he liked with his ship, the days when a Nelson could demand of his admiralty: "A separate command, my lords, even of a cockleshell." But to-day there are no separate commands and there are no cockleshells. Durant stepped back into the modern mood after he saw the log had the entry:

> Whales interfered with navigation, so endeavored to disperse them. Succeeded in making them dive.

Nothing but whales was talked about on the submarine till shortly after the swift dusk, when the officer of the watch reported a strange light on the starboard bow. He said it looked like a ship on fire.

From the conning tower, through his binoculars, Durant saw a mysterious and intermittent glare on the horizon. It was altogether too soon to decide whether it was a burning ship or not, for no flames were as yet visible—only that glare reflected from the low mists. No call for help had come to the submarine's aërials; no other ship was reporting the blaze. The operator, Dyson, had sent out a query giving the position of the submarine and the bearing from her deck of the fire. All he got in return was the usual promise to report anything and the usual commercial queries about the weather.

That fire might be a ship burning, Durant considered, or perhaps the flare from some volcanic outbreak in the islands or mere summer lightning of some unusual character. That he had received no radio call for help he weighed against the fact that many old windjammers and tramp steamers sailing these waters carried no radio. If such a vessel was on fire she might be out of sight of anybody but himself, as he was east of the usual trading lanes. If there had been a volcanic outbreak sufficient to illuminate the sky at this distance it would have to be an alarming one, and the air would be full of the news; there remained the possibility that it was mere summer lightning.

"How's the static?" he called down to the radio room through the tube.

"None at all, sir," came Dyson's answer.

Then that fire could not be electric. If those rising and falling flares had been electrical the operator would have heard them crackling in his phones. That the electric weather was perfect eliminated all possibilities but a ship on fire, and Durant immediately gave orders for the submarine to head toward the light.

Thus, once again Durant was lifting the curtains of the old romance of the sea, for he had never yet met a burning ship on the ocean; the only ship afire he had ever seen had been in a harbor, and had been most unromantically doused by hoses of town fire engines played from a pier. This diversion from his course promised to be as interesting as the hunting of sharks, porpoises and whales—and more in the line of duty. The delay would need no laconic camouflage in the ship's log.

"It's a schooner, I think," he soon announced to the officers and men who were free enough to crowd on deck.

"She's afire amidships, I should say," said Firket. "I wonder if she's a rum-runner with a cargo from the islands. French brandy would burn like that."

Before this they had passed frowzy schooners and fine yachts heading east with cases piled high on their decks; but, of course, they had not interfered, for they were not yet in the coast guard and had no wish to be. Noses as well as glasses were now lifted in the air to catch the possibility of floating flavors.

"We're all wrong," suddenly announced Durant. "If we smell anything it will not be like the brandy burning round an English plum pudding. We'll smell whale oil. She's a whaler. A real old-timer with trying-out kettles boiling down the blubber, flares over the side and the men working with their spades. There are a few left. I saw one last time I was in New Bedford. This is one of them."

The officers strained their eyes through the glasses. If Durant was right, they had no excuse for proceeding farther, and should be on their course. But none of them quite knew Durant except Firket. The old legends were buzzing about Durant and he was going to see what a night trying-out looked like, even if the whaler was not in distress.

"She looks like a yacht, to me," announced Tomlins. "That's not a topsail; it's the peak of a Marconi mainsail."

That a mustang, a graduate of the black gang of merchant ships, should correct the other officers in such a point started something of a dispute. Not one of those officers had had any experience in sail, though they had pored enough over models and prints to think they had. Tomlins had been in sail before he went into steam, and had visited more ports and had seen more varied rigs than any of them. He persisted that the triangular peak of canvas was the tip of one of those latest styles in mainsails, the huge triangular sail that runs to the masthead without a gaff. The big engineer stuck to his point, despite all the swank of Annapolis.

"You're right, Mr. Tomlins," said Durant at last. "She's a yacht—the *Pixie*. That's the yacht Lowden lent to Frobisher Grebe to do his dredging in."

"And he has a whale—a small one, by the bows," said Firket excitedly.

As the submarine came closer they could all make out a number of dark figures leaning over the bows of the yacht and struggling with something in the water.

"I believe Grebe is cutting out after all," said Durant.

"Only it's not a whale. It's a porpoise," commented Tomlins. "Must have picked up one of those you shot, sir."

There seemed to be considerable excitement on the yacht; men were bawl-

ing and there was much splashing alongside.

"Ahoy, there, *Pixie!*" hailed Durant.

"Ahoy, there! Hello, Durant!"

Somebody on the yacht must have been able to read the numbers on the bows of the submarine, as she nosed slowly into the dim area of light afforded by the kerosene flares on the yacht. These suddenly dimmed; and the men on the submarine heard a volley of curses. Durant recognized the bellowing voice of Lowden beside the sharp calls of old man Grebe and another man. The voice he was listening for he did not hear. He had seen only four dim figures in the uncertain light of the flares, which were dimmed at times by the great shadow of the Marconi mainstail.

"What's the trouble? Do you need help?" hailed Durant.

"Yes," replied Grebe. "The barracudas are attacking this porpoise, and I want it perfect."

Excited whispers ran along the deck of the submarine; the men had seen those terrible fish with the long clawing teeth. In shoals they are more ravenous than sharks, and swimmers are often terribly mutilated.

"Give them the searchlight, diffused," said Durant.

In a second the white cone of light focused on the top of the mainsail, scattering less blinding rays on the men on the yacht, and aiding them to haul on board the long porpoise. The illuminated waters between the submarine and the yacht were stabbed and fretted by the voracious shoal of barracudas, which, luckily, were not full grown.

"Thanks," cried Grebe. "Coming on board, Durant? I've got another argument against your man-eating sharks. A photograph of myself under water."

The gray-haired, vigorous old scientist was standing by the stays, ready to conduct one of his controversies and make a lecture hall of the ocean.

"Sorry, but we've got to get on," called back Durant. "I've got a man's skull I found inside a shark we caught off Mexico."

"That proves nothing. How do you know the man was alive when eaten?"

"Aw, come on board and fight it out here, Durant," called another voice—the rather thick voice of Lowden. "The secretary of the navy hasn't got a time clock on you, down here."

"Oh, do stay, commander."

The last invitation was in a silvery soprano—the voice Durant had been waiting to hear. And he now saw that the figure at the stern that he had mistaken for one of the hands of the yacht was that of Laura Grebe.

Durant accepted the invitation. Lowden shouted he would call for him in the dinghy, and Durant hastily disappeared below.

"I see that girl's aboard," said Tomlins to Firket.

"What girl?" asked the navigator distantly.

"Why, the Grebe girl the skipper was cruising with in Newport last year."

"I don't know anything about that," said Firket.

Tomlins wanted to answer him, as an engineer in a tramp would talk up to a snippy first mate. But he couldn't do it; such things are not done in the navy; swank forbids.

Grumbling internally at dandy lady-killing commanders and the delay that would keep him more hours from his wife and family, the engineer went below to get some sleep.

The other officers remained on deck; the searchlight was turned off, and soon the yacht's dinghy came alongside, to the little iron ladder let into the side of the submarine.

The man who climbed on board was Lowden, barefooted, in dirty ducks coiled up to his knees, loud of speech, blatant in manner, treating the officers he had met before with barroom famil-

iarity—a man sufficiently devoid of swank to satisfy a man trained in the stokehole of a coal burner, like Tomlins.

"Say, she does look big," he said, glancing up and down the wide decks of the submarine. "How many millions did this tub cost?"

"Don't know. Several, I believe," answered Firket.

"You believe?" laughed Lowden hoarsely. "First time I ever met one of you Annapolis birds who wasn't cocksure of everything, to three places of decimals."

Firket and the other officers were silent; the gibe of the newcomer was let pass, for it was distinctly flavored with the aroma of French brandy or West Indian rum.

Durant appeared, dressed in his best whites.

"Aw, what do you want to doll up for, Durant?" said Lowden, shaking hands with him. "We left all that dog in Narragansett."

Lowden got into the dinghy and took the oars, while Durant followed. Durant decided not to sit down in the after seat, for his fingers had conducted a hasty inspection of that seat. He balanced himself with a hand on each gunwale, while maintaining a crouching position.

"Why don't you sit down?" barked Lowden. "She'll trim better."

"Seat's rather dirty."

Lowden laughed scornfully.

"Lord, I forgot you dudes. Afraid you'll get your pants dirty, eh? I told you not to doll up. Serve you right. You come on board a craft that gets along without man millinery and hasn't any use for it."

Lowden's coarse geniality was distinctly offensive, but Durant made no reply; for the commander of the submarine had made a point of putting on that uniform to visit a lady who last year had scoffed at it.

CHAPTER II.

IN A DINGHY.

TWELVE months before Phil Durant was walking with Laura Grebe along that winding path cut in the cliffs at Newport. Above them were the mansions and lawns of America's plutocracy; below them was his sea; beside him was the girl he also wanted to call his. Durant was baffled by this girl who had dared to snub gay old Admiral Hawley and who had lured him into a discussion on naval reduction in which she advocated the scrapping of all warships.

Of course she was merely echoing the views of Frobisher Grebe, who had become notorious by his open letter addressed to the Naval Conference suggesting that armies and navies should be abolished entirely, fighting soldiers and sailors trained to do scientific work, battleships turned into marine laboratories. This was all right for Grebe, whose views had nearly put him into prison during the war, but that this blue-eyed, soft-featured, gentle girl should be such a drastic radical was a stinging challenge to Durant's pride in his profession. The girl seemed to regard him and his service as an anachronistic survival from a barbaric age, and to look upon his splendid vessel as a mere toy.

"I've had my orders, Miss Grebe," he stopped to say. "We sail for San Francisco early to-morrow."

She stopped, too, and looked at him levelly. Whatever she thought or felt was beyond his divining; never had a woman been so inscrutable to him.

"I am sorry," she said. "Father's going to sea, too, very soon. Mr. Lowden has let him have his yacht, the *Pixie,* for a long cruise. I may go with them."

"Are you really sorry?" he asked, trying to strike a tender note of response in her.

He had long ago decided that this college-bred daughter of a superscientist had been educated out of her femininity. Her pert, quick arguments declared that; but her beauty, her physical charm, her ease, the grace with which she moved among the fine manners on the Newport lawns, declared the opposite. It was very difficult to awaken such responses in her.

"Of course I'm sorry," she smiled. "You're the first naval officer I've ever met who could endure the navy being criticized. They either get glum or angry."

"Oh, forget the naval officer," he said rather hotly. "Can't you see me as a man?"

"Not with these," she said, lightly tapping his gold stripes.

The contempt in her gesture stung him; but it was the dazzling picture she made against the rocks overhung by a bank of wild roses that gave him the needful words.

"Yes, with this," he said. "You intellectual bolshevists simply talk a lot of nonsense. It would do you all good —yes, men and women—to serve a few years in the navy. Teach you to think straight and do something instead of talking. But never mind that. Laura, I love you! Will you marry me?"

The girl did not stir, drop her eyes, of blue. He might have been proposing to the rock behind her.

"Do you usually begin your proposals by insulting the lady's intelligence?" she said quietly. "I thought you Annapolis men were better trained. You should imitate your admiral; he was much better drilled. Go back to your ship. Play with that, not with women."

"I am not playing," he said, resenting her remark.

"Oh, yes, you are, and you've done it so often it seems earnest. You're all alike, from admirals to oilers. Jacks ashore, tired of seeing too many men. Thanks for your proposal, but you'll find just as nice walks as this around the cliffs at Sutro, and the Californian women are quite wonderful and not all intellectual."

Durant had never endured such a carpeting from a superior officer. He knew he did not deserve this.

"I tell you I mean what I say, Laura, and if it's only my profession, of course I can resign any time——"

The girl stirred now; she stiffened; a hot flush helped the fire in her eyes, and her scorn was deep and from the heart.

"If you did that, Phil, I'd utterly despise you."

"I didn't say I would. Of course I couldn't really. But I feel like it, if you hate the navy."

"I hate navies and armies and all their gold lace and goose-stepping and feathered tomfooleries. But you mustn't. You've got to stand by your foolish guns and your silly ships. I wouldn't look at you if you resigned for me."

The girl was no cold statue now, but all flame. Durant was completely at sea, more bewildered than he had ever been on any sea. He had no bearings to help him to steer close to this charming, tantalizing, clever girl. A poise that would not have deserted him in the most desperate subaqueous emergency now completely deserted him and left him as awkward as a midshipman. He fanned himself with his cap and laughed at this sudden wreckage of his manhood.

He did not know it, but that laugh, that reversion from his trim, navy tightness actually attracted the girl. She softened as the taut lines in his face graven there by grim responsibility were wiped out by his perplexity. She laughed, too. The sky was laughing; the waves churning on the rocks below seemed to chuckle; if Durant had been the lady-killer—the mere Jack ashore with a girl in every port as she thought

him—he would have known that this was his moment for action. But Durant did not know; he simply went on grinning.

"Say, you're the limit," he said. "If this is what always comes out of Wellesley——"

"You'll sail there next week," she retorted. "You've never proposed to a girl like me before, have you?"

Durant frowned at this.

"See here, you've got a wrong idea of me, of us fellows. Of course we do flirt and swank a lot ashore, but I believe our fellows are the best on earth——"

Durant recovered his fighting poise. He grew as solemn and as purposeful as he used to be under the great rostrum of the Academy absorbing the great tradition of his service.

"I believe the navy's the greatest service on earth. I won't stand for a word against it. Miss Grebe, permit me to withdraw my proposal."

Stiff-necked, as if at inspection, Durant made this astounding change of front. Laura's face melted; she drew a deep breath; she fought to contain herself. It was again a strategic moment for Durant, but for that moment the love of his profession was dominant in him.

She saw she was safe; she patted him on the cheek lightly, saying, "You're really a nice boy," and ran away from him along the path, to rejoin the garden party she had deserted.

Memories of that unforgetable interview raced through Durant's brain as Lowden pulled him to the yacht. In a few minutes he was on board, sitting in its cabin with Laura and her white-haired, but eternally youthful and enthusiastic, father. Any embarrassment that might have afflicted Durant at meeting the girl was covered by Frobisher Grebe's plunging at once into that old controversy he had had with Durant as to whether sharks ever attacked living men. Lowden was not in the cabin; he had gone forward to his own cabin, after making some excuse. Grebe claimed that he had photographs of himself taken under water by a camera of his own devising showing himself moving unharmed among man-eaters, but he had some difficulty in finding the prints. The cabin was very untidy; there certainly was as great an absence of swank on the yacht as Lowden had claimed; notebooks, labeled bottles of sea water, sun-dried skeletons of fish, lay among expensive foreign periodicals and the reference books of Grebe's library. Even Laura, whose golden shingle had grown wild, looked something of a marine specimen herself, in her heavy tan and crumpled clothes.

Grebe departed into the next cabin, which Durant could see was their sleeping apartment, divided by a fore-and-aft curtain, to find the missing photographs. Durant was alone with the girl.

"May I offer my congratulations, Miss Grebe?" he said.

"Oh, yes—father's election to the Academy of Science."

"No, Miss Grebe; your engagement to——"

"I'm not engaged to any one," she said swiftly. "How dare those society reporters make up such things out of nothing?"

"I beg your pardon," said Durant, equally swift to dismiss the subject.

Inwardly Durant was congratulating himself that he still had a fighting chance to win her. Behind his set, immobile face, plans of action were being formed. He could not directly propose to her again, just then, but as he was a man of action he would not rest long on mere feeling. All those miserable doubts and that sense of failure he had carried West gave way before the knowledge that she was free. But he did not betray any elation, because this girl he had learned was not the kind of prize to be carried away by mere emotion. He did not want to be called

a nice boy again; he had to win her as a man. His thinking was interrupted by the approach of two bare feet appearing in the little cockpit by the wheel. They were Lowden's; he entered noisily and blusteringly. It was perfectly plain why he had gone forward; for he brought in a breeze that was alcoholic. He began asking for "Pop," as he called Frobisher Grebe, addressing the girl as "Laura," with a crude air of possession that made Durant tingle. If Laura was not engaged to Lowden, it was perfectly plain that it was not Lowden's fault.

"Say, Laura," he bellowed, "you got to board that sub in mid-ocean to see how big she is. She deceives you in a harbor. Why, she's as roomy as a big ship."

"We really have more deck space than a destroyer," said Durant. "Suppose you all come on board? We might have a dance."

Durant had no definite plan when making this suggestion beyond the human desire to have the girl under his own floating roof. He was thinking hard how to make up to her. It was impossible to do that in the narrow confines of the yacht. He might get his chance on the roomier submarine.

Both she and Lowden accepted the invitation.

"We'll give Miss Grebe a chance to get ready," said Durant, rising.

"I am dressed," said the girl. "This is the only party gown I brought. But Bobby, you'll have to put on your shoes and trim up a bit; I won't go with you to a dance, like that."

Lowden came on deck grumbling.

"That's the worst of women. Always want a fellow to doll up. I go to sea to get away from all that tosh."

He lurched forward, steadying himself by the stays.

"I go to sea to do as I like, but when you have a woman aboard——" He growled as he disappeared down the forward hatchway.

Durant began to feel his problem more difficult. Laura was kind, almost tender to this young, lubberly money bag who had provided this magnificent if somewhat neglected yacht for her father's researches. He knew of her devotion to her father and his science. She was a Ph.D. herself. From his twelve months of thinking about her, he had come to see that she was probably as devoted to her service as he was to his; and that devotion might lead her to like Lowden more than he deserved.

While thinking of her, he took a look at the long, sleek beautiful lines of his command, lying a hundred yards off. As usual, the sight of her gave him that deep thrill which he knew would always keep him in the submarines. The light yacht was rolling rather heavily, but he knew the submarine rested like a rock mortised in the sea's bottom. Just forward of him sprawled the long body of the porpoise, awaiting Grebe's dissection. Durant slipped on the slimy deck and found an arm slipped under his to support him.

"Excuse our decks, commander. Can't keep 'em shipshape."

In the starlight Durant saw a small, squat hatchet-faced man with a walrus-like gray mustache.

"I'm the master, Treadway," said the man.

"Glad to meet you, Captain Treadway," said Durant. "I suppose you'll have to stay here as ship keeper, captain, or I'd be glad to have you join us in a dance on the submarine."

"Thanks, commander. Guess I'll take the chance to slush down these decks and give her an overall. The old man leaves his muck everywhere. I'm master, but engineer and deck steward as well. You see, we're short-handed. There's really only me and the boss, and he sometimes——"

A glass tinkled up from the hatchway of the forward cabin, followed by the sizzling of seltzer.

"You see how it is, sir," said Treadway.

"I have smelled and can hear," said Durant.

But he turned away. It was not according to his ideas of maritime ethics for the master of a yacht to expose its owner's vices. Durant had had enough experience of drunken yachtsmen to despise them; men lolling on their wicker chairs, aft, refusing him the right of way in narrow channels and shooting in a complaint to the navy department if his swell swamped their dinghy. But all the same, Treadway should not have spoken thus.

"Beg your pardon, commander," said the old man, following him and persisting in his confidences. "I want to talk to you, sir. I know I shouldn't and I know you think I got no right to spill the beans. But the sight of your uniform and that ensign on your jack staff kinder gets me. You see, we've been sailing in and out of foreign islands, and islands with no government at all, for weeks. What am I to do with a drunken owner crazy with liquor, crazy with money, crazy for a girl? She's got nobody but me and her old father to protect her."

All Durant's suspicions came to a head, and he said sharply:

"But you're master and in absolute command?"

"Yes," said Treadway, "but he's younger than me and as strong as a gorilla. Her father is blind half the time, over his microscope, and don't see nothing. Worst of it all is the girl herself."

"Be precise, Captain Treadway," snapped Durant.

"What I mean, sir, is she's got a fool idea she can reform him. She's the whitest, cleanest kid I ever met, but as innocent as a lamb about men. She don't know how men without stamina can go to pieces in the tropics. Nothing but swizzle, swizzle, swizzle all the time, with rotters ashore just going back to beasts. Honest, commander, I don't know what to do."

"Haven't you got arms? You can shoot him if——"

"Yes, but what chance would I have if I did? His people's money against my word. The girl, too, would go against me. You can't make her believe he means any harm."

Durant's problem was now more difficult than ever. The girl he loved was in the power of a brute gradually slackening all the restraints he had been brought up under, and the girl was foolishly blind. All Durant's faculties were called at once into battle trim, but he knew that the situation demanded the most delicate strategy. She was a free-thinking, independent woman, and would resent outside interference. Perhaps the old windjammer sailor might be exaggerating, perhaps he had some fancied grievance against Lowden.

His deliberations were interrupted by a step in the fore cabin, and he saw Lowden holding up a glass of bubbling liquor.

"Have a snifter before you go, Durant," said Lowden. "I know it's no use asking you, Treadway."

Durant refused the drink tactfully, avoiding any tone of moral superiority that would inflame Lowden.

Laura now appeared from the after cabin. Despite her indifference to dress she had put on a clean blouse, and her hair was now unruffled except for its natural curl. Lowden also had donned clean white ducks and put on his shoes. Moreover the extra swizzles had given him a certain maudlin steadiness and forethought. He ordered Treadway to start the yacht's engine, a small affair housed under the cabin table, and bring the yacht alongside the submarine, to avoid ferrying the party in that filthy dinghy.

A few minutes later, by the light of a few lamps strung by Tomlins and his

men and to the music of a phonograph, Laura was dancing with the officers on the slant deck of the submarine. The deck was almost steady; only a sensitive one like Laura could detect that gentle roll, that slight undulation, which told her she was not dancing on land; to her it seemed as if the sea itself was in step with her, the submarine her partner in this ballroom of the ocean and the stars. Her gayety carried aft, where the men, who knew almost as much about Durant's shore doings as he did about theirs, were dancing with each other, guessing at the rivalry between Durant and Lowden, and muttering crude suggestions how to help out their commander.

Durant had not danced with Laura as yet; he had taken Grebe below to show him the intricacies of the control room, and Lowden had accompanied them. Lowden surprised Durant by his familiarity with much of the mechanism. The man displayed the ruins of a fine intelligence.

"You see, Durant, I once had an idea of going in for the navy myself; my old man could easily have worked it for me. But I decided there was too much swank in it. Give me sail. This stuff's too much like sitting in an office and pushing buttons."

Lowden was offensive in his assumption that he could have lasted through the Academy and that such yachting as his was a sister and equal service.

"If I had only something like this," said Grebe, after Durant had explained the air lock that enables men to escape from a submarine unable to rise. "When will they build vessels like this for research instead of for war?"

"Don't forget, Mr. Grebe," said Durant, "that it is the training for war which makes our men take the risks."

"You mean to tell me," exploded Grebe, "men of science lack courage? I maintain that the heroes of science in courage, resourcefulness and self-abnegation surpass all the popinjays in armor and uniform that ever strutted down to the footlights of history."

Durant only smiled at this gentle old enthusiast who could be so peppery in controversy.

"But don't forget," he reminded Grebe, "that the modern sailor and soldier have to be scientists. Ask Firket about navigating by radio and taking soundings from echoes off the sea's bottom. That periscope there is as delicately constructed as one of your microscopes. And Lowden—don't forget that modern wars are won by men pushing buttons. Have you ever been in the fire-control room of a battleship during gun practice?"

Both Lowden and Grebe were silenced by this double reply.

"Quite so, my boy," answered Grebe after a moment, with that quick admission of facts against his prejudices characteristic of the true scientist. "But it does seem an awful waste of money."

The mention of money pressed the main buttons in Lowden's mentality; he bloated, as if his millions were in his blood.

"You can have all the money you need," he bragged to Grebe. "I can fix you up something like this vessel. We can pick up a discarded model somewhere and build glass holes in her. That'll be better than a yacht."

While Lowden was noisily explaining what he would do for science—which of course meant the scientist's daughter—Durant quietly slipped away and up on deck. He found Laura taking a breathing spell, surrounded by the officers, who gave way when they saw their commander approaching.

"Your dance, Phil," she said.

"I don't want to dance; I want to talk to you, Laura."

"Please don't, Phil," she pleaded, jarred from her mood of enjoyment by his earnestness.

Durant could hear Lowden's thick

voice coming up through the manholes. This was Durant's one chance with the girl, as they stood alone on the narrow strip of deck by the conning tower. The yacht lay alongside, but at the length of her cable, and Treadway was below; the officers had left them alone—but that thick voice was coming nearer; for Grebe and Lowden and an accompanying officer were climbing into the conning tower. In a few moments they would be right above the heads of Durant and Laura and unavoidably within earshot. It is difficult to secure privacy on a submarine.

"I wasn't going to talk about myself, Laura. Please wait here a moment."

Durant stepped back and began hauling on the light cable that held the yacht. It took hard pulling to get even that light craft to stir through the water. She was approaching too slowly to beat those nearing voices. Officers and men sprang to give a hand to their commander.

"Anything wrong?" asked Laura.

"Yes; please wait," said Durant, leaping onto the bows of the *Pixie,* hurrying aft and stepping into her dinghy. He quickly cast off the painter of the dinghy and with one stroke of her oars backed her stern against the side ladder of the submarine.

"Get in," he said to the girl.

"Whatever is it, Phil?" she queried, puzzled by the noncommittal replies she had received from the officers who had guessed their commander's maneuver.

"I want you to come for a row with me. Quick. I must talk to you away from every one," whispered Durant.

By this time Lowden was in the conning tower, but was luckily gazing forward and hearing nothing but his own voice. He was blatantly remodeling the submarine with his dollars, with perfect confidence in their omnipotence. Impelled by the brusqueness that Durant could put in a whisper, the girl stepped deftly down, like one accustomed to small boats. Durant let her seat herself in the soiled stern sheet, and took a long stroke with the oars. The oarlocks thudded noisily.

"Turn on that victrola," said Firket, and the music roared its loudest. So Durant pulled with the girl he loved out into the night, and none of the men in the conning tower heard the splashing of his oars or those ill-fitting oarlocks.

The girl swayed to the fast strokes Durant now dared to take, and did not speak till they were far enough from the faint area of light surrounding the two vessels.

"What is it, Phil?" she asked, at length.

To Durant she appeared as a silhouette against a background of shining water, but was more than ever appealing to him, because she had yielded thus much in coming out in the dinghy with him without question. It was a promise of a more ecstatic surrender. But the dinghy was very small and very frail; the heavy heave of the sea reminded them they were on the ocean, however regular the swell was; out in the dark something splashed, perhaps more of those voracious barracudas were about. The two were alone on a sea capable of dark surprises and sudden treacheries; Durant's love dream had to be held in check by his responsibility, by his need of guarding this girl so dear to him.

"I don't think you're safe in that yacht, so short-handed," he began slowly. "It's near the hurricane season."

"Is that all?" said the girl. "Why, we've been in a hurricane, at least a storm; and we're not short-handed. Father will do what he's told, and I can steer."

"But you have only one sailor aboard."

"Don't you consider Bobby Lowden a sailor?" she asked, with spirit.

"Not by my standards, Miss Grebe, or by any standards," he answered gravely.

She hesitated as if weighing his seriousness.

"I understand," she sighed. "This is one of Bobby's off days, poor boy."

Hesitation was foreign by nature and training to Durant, once he had cleared for action; so now he plunged ahead.

"Miss Grebe——" he began, keeping the light, rhythmic touch on the oars to hold the dinghy's nose to the swell.

"You used to call me Laura," said the girl. "I call you Phil. Are you only human ashore? Are you still angry for what I said about your navy?"

"Not angry, Laura, but determined to hold to my opinions and correct yours. I want you to admit we are not mere swankers in uniform. But I did not bring you out here to talk about myself. I want to tell you that you're running a greater risk than of foundering on that yacht; you need more swank on board, not less. It is not safe to be sailing with a man in command who is letting every lashing go, doing what he likes at sea, a man who——"

Durant's speech was cut off by the girl's sudden disturbance of the trim of the boat. Her loyalty to the man Durant was criticizing, the man who was doing so much for her father, had caused her to sit up suddenly, and a little water had come over the stern.

"Careful, Laura, please; keep in the center and sit steady. Afraid I must ask that much swank from you."

She recovered her self-possession and laughed lightly.

"I see. A demonstration of naval efficiency. That was clever of you, Phil. But all the same you exaggerate about Bobby, though I admit he does drink far too much."

"It's not the drink only, Laura; it's the slackness. Your yacht is down at heels. The yacht and its owner are going to pieces. It takes a strong man to stand up against the skizzles and slackness of these islands. He's letting himself go, like those fellows on their plantations. I've seen that get too many. Frankly I'm afraid for you."

"But," she repeated, "we have Captain Treadway and father. Why, Bobby's awfully fond of father."

"I said I was afraid for you, Laura."

His meaning penetrated the girl; the little restrained shiver she allowed herself, Durant could feel; it was carried to him through the light, responsive floating timbers of the dinghy.

"You're entirely wrong, Phil," she answered in a moment. "Bobby's really not a bad fellow."

"He's worse than bad, he's weak. We get men like that sometimes, and they're harder to lick into shape than the bad ones."

"Well, I think I can lick Bobby into shape," she said determinedly.

"Why should you?" he asked, forgetting all formality from his fundamental desire to know how much she cared for Lowden. "I beg your pardon," he said then, relapsing.

"What have you got to ask my pardon about?" she said petulently. "For goodness' sake, Phil, forget your brass buttons. I'm not your ranking officer."

Durant wanted to tell her that she was, almost outranking all officers, but he simply could not break the command he had laid upon himself, for he had determined to win her by more than words, though he had not the slightest idea how he was to do it.

"We're old friends," she went on lightly, "and after all, I once did nearly accept you."

Durant's hands merely tightened on the oars at this rare touch of coquetry in her.

"But—you—withdrew—your — proposal," she laughed, with a fair mimicry of his stilted behavior of that afternoon in the Newport cliffs.

"I withdrew it, yes," he growled.

His behavior seemed to baffle the girl; her coquetry, which had been merely a protective attempt to lighten too serious a conversation, had failed. However responsive Durant might have been at dances and garden parties ashore, here he was a different and more difficult man. She was forced to take up the subject she had tried to evade.

"Bobby has promised to help father a great deal, and of course I want to help him."

"Not by marrying him, I hope?" was at last wrung from Durant.

"And why not?" she demanded.

"I'd rather see you dropped over the side with a shot at your heels," said Durant with an earnestness almost savage.

The bending to his oars had brought his face close to hers, but it was not only his words so laden with intense feeling and so closely spoken that impressed her; his calm handling of the oars, his body's showing no surrender to that passion but tuned to all the demands of this cockleshell, had an appeal beyond words.

Now she, too, had her swank, her demand for precision; the laboratory experiments of her service demanded such mastery of emotion as Durant's. She was quick to see that Durant was splendidly advertising naval exactness by his behavior; her heart told her he was wooing her by the way he handled the dinghy and himself on this stark immensity of the ocean at night. But she was also intuitive enough not to impute such deliberate cleverness to Durant as she had just accused him of; it was a mere accident that the dinghy, the sky and the throbbing waters were helping him. Durant's dour honesty at sea forbade her thinking that this pull in the dinghy had been a staged effect. But all the same, she was not ready to yield yet; she was too much of a modern, highly intellectualized girl to consider yielding at all; her instinct at present was to stand by Bobby and rescue him from his bad bringing up. Again she tried to lighten the tension.

"You men are all the same, Phil—brothers under your skins. All these nautical storm warnings, this talk of founderings and hurricanes and shots at the heel—isn't it all just jealousy, Phil?"

Durant was saved from answering by a hoarse hail across the waters. They recognized the voice as Lowden's and that he was calling to them.

"We must go back," she begged. "Bobby is jealous, too. But please put me on the yacht."

"Will you all stand by and have breakfast with me to-morrow?" pleaded Durant, as he swung the dinghy round.

"What for? We're sailing for St. Thomas, and you're dallying here for no reason. You can't stop your submarine for social calls."

"I will enter in my log that I delayed to give assistance to the Frobisher Grebe Expedition, which was in urgent need of—need of——"

"Of what?" she asked mockingly.

"Swank," he retorted, as he pulled under the counter of the yacht and up to her companion ladder. He helped Laura on board; she accepted the breakfast invitation for the party and then Durant pulled over to the submarine. He was met by the now thoroughly irritated Lowden at the gangway.

"Say, Durant, that's rather a raw real, cutting in on me like that. This was supposed to be your dance you're giving, and you ran off with the only girl."

Durant, though perhaps not aware of Queen Elizabeth's dictum that a lie is sometimes an intellectual solution of a difficulty, made some excuse about Miss Grebe wishing to see both vessels from the distant waters. It was a justifiable lie, he felt, for he was now strung up to the exactions of war. It was a war between what he stood for and all that

Lowden and Laura and Grebe had loosely and unthinkingly despised as swank, the sloppy sentimentalizing that cannot see what swank implies, what qualities it demands, the courage created by clean decks and trim uniforms, what the navy gives its men in return for their infrequent service in rare wars.

"He's been making an awful holler about you, sir," said Firket, when Lowden had pulled away in the dinghy. "Wanted to put the searchlight on you."

"That's all right; maybe I'll put the searchlight on him."

"How's that, sir?" wondered Firket, for Durant was rarely enigmatic.

"Nothing," answered Durant. "We'll do a dive to-morrow; and they're all coming to breakfast."

Durant went down to his stateroom. The invitation to breakfast shadowed the merest sketch of a project. He proposed to cut further into Lowden's claim to Laura; but, so far as it was a definite plan, it was really nothing. But he went cheerily to his berth and soon slept, confident that something would come of his intention to submerge to-morrow, with Laura and her party on board. Nothing is impossible to a man who can aim hopefully and sleep calmly before action. The morning would bring the perfect plan.

CHAPTER III.

THE DIVE.

ONLY four sat down to breakfast next morning, because Treadway refused to leave his vessel. The tiny little cabin was rather crowded. Durant had to warn them to watch out for gaddets, stopcocks, elbows of pipes that projected from the walls. Lowden had already bumped his temples; this did not help his early-morning temper, accentuated by an unusually heavy hangover. Roused out of his berth when he had wanted to sleep, he had naturally dressed in his beach-comber outfit of worn clothes. The rest of the party were gay; Laura was sparkling, Durant effervescent. Instinctively Durant knew that the best way to interest a girl of her type is to contradict her.

"You know we sub men get into the habit of creeping around like mice in a hole," he had remarked.

"That's why you all dance so stiffly," she said. "You all seem to wear leg irons."

Lowden looked up occasionally, but made few remarks, confining his attention to the dishes slipped onto the table by the Filipino mess boy with the dexterity of a conjurer.

Grebe had listened in his usual abstracted manner, till Laura questioned Durant for more details of his encounter with the whales yesterday, which she had heard of from her partners last night.

"You don't really believe that whale was going to attack you, Phil?" she asked.

"Of course I do, and I don't blame him. I was annoying him with my harpoons. He probably thought I was some kind of mosquito he could easily squelch. I could feel he meant to sink us."

"We haven't the slightest clew as to how animals or fish feel," broke in Grebe. "Your assumption is on a par with your belief in man-eating sharks. The most difficult obstacle to a proper approach to zoölogy is the common fallacy of attributing human feelings to animals."

Grebe was as ponderous and dogmatic as he usually was when on his specialty. Laura's eyes twinkled.

"Are you squelched now, Phil?" she asked mischievously. "Father's worse than a sperm whale, isn't he?"

Of course Durant could have produced a thousand facts to prove malevolent animus in the sperm whale, from Moby Dick to the tales of Petty Officer

Snow. But this was a breakfast, not a scientific arena, so he preferred to trifle. The perfect plan how to cut this adorable girl from her chains to Lowden had not as yet developed. Some men grow solemn before a fight, some pray, some blaspheme, but a drop of Louisianian blood in Durant's ancestry compelled him to be gay before difficulties, and most frivolous when most desperate.

"Afraid I don't agree with you," he said lightly. "You can't understand anything alive till you meet it on human terms. And not only live things, but ships, too. No one can sail a ship if he thinks of it as an 'it.' We all call this vessel our old girl. That's how we learn to run her."

"Oh, if you're going to drag in poetry," growled Grebe.

"Why not?" laughed Durant, looking at Laura the poetry he could not otherwise express.

The party went on deck to enjoy the surface spin Durant had promised them. Grebe, however, would not waste precious moments away from his microscopes and notebooks and returned to the yacht, which cast off after Durant had given his course to Treadway. Lowden had interposed some objections, but in a heavy lumpish way, as if he was still not yet quite awake. Laura waved these aside.

"Why, we're going to dive, aren't we, Phil?"

"At your orders, sir," said Durant, saluting her. Laura beamed; Durant, fresh as the morning, bright of eye, suave and subtle of speech was certainly a contrast to Lowden, yawning and sulking about the deck. "Swank," she heard Lowden say, as Durant thus acknowledged her as his superior officer.

Preparations for the dive were in progress. The deck had to be stripped before the vessel would be in 'submerged condition,' the portable life lines and stanchions stowed, radio mast lowered, submerged radio rigged and only one periscope extended.

Laura stood up in the bows with Durant. He had lent her an oilskin coat to guard her from the spray. He supported her with one arm in hers and the other clinging to the heavy jumping-rope, which came down to the bows and was thus within his reach. She asked the purport of this rope.

"It's something like the bumper of an automobile," he explained. "We tighten that rope with a gear in the tower up to a strain of nearly fifteen tons. So if we run into anything below—a wreck on the bottom, for instance—that rope acts as a spring."

Laura asked more questions about the big planes, those horizontal rudders extending from the bows like a fish's gill fins.

"I suppose it's easy to dive. Do you just go down?" she asked.

"We have to go down right. You see, there are lots of tanks fore and aft, and we let the water in them gradually —that's all there is to it. Have to keep her trim, you know. Of course we can't do back dives, like boys off a springboard; though, after all, a sub is just like a boy floating on air wings. I think she's in condition now; we'll go below."

Durant had received a nod from the executive officer that told him all was ready for the dive, which was to be a running one.

He led Laura aft to the manhole and came on Lowden, who had been sheltering himself from the spray under the lee of the bridge and indulging in comments to show he understood every procedure. The executive officer had been hoping Lowden would step farther aft and allow the wash of the big stationary waves that perpetually curled under the stern to wash him overboard. Lowden looked rather white and shaky, but tried to pull himself together with boisterous geniality. He, too, had been lent

an oil coat, but had not buttoned it, and a dash of spray had soaked him to the skin.

"Come below, Lowden," said Durant. "We're going to submerge and you'd better take a change of clothes."

"Aw, shucks, Durant, salt water won't hurt me."

He slopped forward to the officers' manhole, oozing water from his boots. Durant reflected that Lowden was really the greatest swanker on board, a braggart of his animal health, a pretender to hardihood, the would-be carefree libeler of seafaring men, aping the bilge and dregs of old fo'c's'le romance.

"A dive's really not at all thrilling, Laura—less than a drop in a Woolworth Building elevator," said Durant, as he noticed the rather awed look the girl gave the sea and the sky as he passed her down the manhole. "Give the lady a hand, below there."

Durant smiled at the scuffle below, between the men leaping to obey this rare order. They were doing a "dollar dive." They had had many on this cruise helping out their pay rolls, but to submerge with this girl was more than any such bonus.

"Say, Durant, just a minute. How long are we going to be over this? I want to get back to the yacht."

Lowden spoke querulously, and the hand that he put on Durant's shoulder overfamiliarly was very tremulous.

"Not long," said Durant, for the first time noticing the curious look in Lowden's eyes. He had never observed that partial squint of Lowden's before.

"Any chance of a swizzle?" asked Lowden. "It's time for my eleven o'clock; doctor's orders, you know. This damn climate's debilitating. Don't tell me you haven't got any. You chaps dig up better stuff than we do."

Durant kept an immobile face, as he diagnosed that squint, that occasional introversion of the eyeballs. It was no mere physical defect, but one of the symptoms of incipient D. T. Lowden's condition was caused by the sudden interruption of his drinking habit, and he wanted to get back to the cellar on his yacht.

"Yes, I have a little medical liquor. Get below and I'll prescribe. I'm the doctor, you know."

Inside his tight lips, Durant was smiling, because his plan was beginning to take shape, to loom up as a perfect bit of strategy that could not fail. This loose-ended lout who combined the power of a man with the irresponsibility of a boy tumbling down the manhole where no one lent him a hand, was hopeless. Durant had only to strip him of the rags of romance he had dressed himself in, only to uncover him of his pretense of being a patron of scientific research, to thoroughly disillusion Laura.

Durant went down after him, with, however, the usual sailor's look at the sea before descending. A slap of spray struck his cheek—clean, warm sea water, salt to his lips. It cleared his ideas. He turned for a moment to see the men shut out the sunlight; then led Lowden aft to his cabin, with the cool, deliberate intent of giving him every drop of liquor in the ship. He would submerge Lowden in the alcoholic sea of his own choosing, and Lowden would not emerge if Durant could help it; he would give him every drop out of the few but precious bottles presented to him by the commander of a British cruiser. Laura was not in sight; he knew she had been taken into the dining cabin. Durant led Lowden into his own stateroom.

"Sit in the bunk, Lowden," he said, "and just wait a moment, till I go into the control room."

Durant passed along the gangway and saw Laura.

"Are we down?" she asked.

"Not yet; just going to open the tanks."

He passed into the control room. Officers and men were at their stations. The submarine was in diving trim. Durant gave the orders and the water began to flow into the tanks. The bow planes were turned for the long, slow, steady dive; the slight slant of the deck was readable by the bubbles of the clinometers. Durant snatched a moment from his post of duty and again went forward.

"How's Bobby?" asked Laura, betraying that she was perfectly aware of his condition.

"All right; he's in my stateroom. I'll take you into the control room in a second."

The girl's look of questioning anxiety disturbed Durant's desire to carry out his scheme. The swift man of action was troubled with doubts. It would not be enough to expose the native worthlessness of Lowden to Laura; he would have to satisfy the nice æsthetic and moral demands that he saw in the girl's eyes. His primitive, masculine way of making Lowden more than usually drunk began to appear crude and impossible. It would be poor strategy that won a battle but lost the prize it was fought for.

He entered the cabin and, as he had expected, found Lowden sprawling on the bunk, not even having taken off the wet oilers which sopped and soiled Durant's immaculate bedding.

"Get a move on, Durant; I'm gasping," he said.

Durant opened the little locker which contained first-aid kits, bottles of medicine, and another bottle, whose build and brand and contents really straightened the crooked eyes of Lowden when he recognized them.

"All the way from Glasgow. 'Special for His Majesty'—that's the stuff," he chuckled, as Durant poured him out a stiff drink and handed it to him.

Durant then replaced the bottle in the locker. He had at first intended leaving the locker open and the bottle exposed; then he thought it better to turn the lock and leave his keys ostentatiously on the shelf; now, refining his plan further through the impulse he received from the eyes of the girl, he decided to lock the bottle up and take the keys away with him. He would give Lowden this chance; he was meeting, as best he knew how, as a fighter, a sailor and a sportsman, the finer demand that the girl would surely make of him. Durant felt he had not unfairly graded the temptation to the weakling.

"Coming into the control room?" he asked Lowden, to give him a further chance before he left the cabin.

"No; nothing to it; seen it all before. Damn push-button business. Tell me when we're on the surface."

Durant smiled openly, as he left him; Lowden could not leave that cabin with such a bottle in the locker.

Durant now led Laura into the contol room. Firket was reporting whales he had sighted through the periscope. Durant took his place at the eyepiece. The sub was now running awash. Turning the gear, he could see the spouting of whales on the horizon which was now very near, as his periscope was almost under. The whales were astern; none seemed to be ahead; he saw no risk in continuing his dive. He called Laura to the eyepiece.

The girl had been standing by the gyro, watching these quiet, serious men —so transformed by this mansion of mechanism from the light triflers she had found them ashore, that she was humbled. She was thrilled, as she looked into the periscope and caught a glimpse of the long level of the sea and saw the close waves vanish in a green fog as the rising waters blinded it. She knew she was beneath the surface and understood the ecstasy of danger.

"I'll never let any one call you push-button men again," she whispered.

It was a triumph for Durant; for that epithet had been fastened upon him by Lowden, and she had used it herself. To the scientific, semiartistic, college circles she had emerged from, that epithet was condemnatory of the whole civilization that has produced the submarine.

"You all seem so absolutely sure of yourselves," she whispered. "I only wish——"

She did not finish; Durant felt a growing sympathy which told him she was seeking similar surety for the navigation of herself.

"You can't be always sure," he said. "One of our old profs used to say, 'Be sure, but keep your eyes peeled.' A commander, he taught us, has to be able to meet an emergency when he's asleep. Got to wake up with the right orders on his lips."

"How splendid. But where's Bobby? He must see this."

She turned, as if to get Lowden; but Durant stopped her.

"I must ask you to stay here, please."

It was a request; it was also an order, softly spoken but with such sure expectancy of being obeyed that she did obey. She went back to the place assigned her; she was held in the toils, beginning to yield to the enchantment of what all her upbringing had taught her to despise. In a few minutes the submarine was running twenty fathoms under, on a level keel. Laura had to be told of this; she had no sensation of descent or progress; the facts had to be driven home to her by bubbles in tubes and readings on dials.

Durant took the opportunity of her diverted attention to slip back to his cabin. Lowden was sleeping heavily. Durant's plan had failed; the locker had not been broken into; Lowden's thirst had apparently been sated sufficiently for the present.

Durant was glad of this temporary hitch. The girl, who was gradually dropping her dogmatic, idealistic verdicts against men whose trade was war, was equally changing him. That rather brutal idea of his of setting Lowden swimming in a sea of liquor had to be put aside; and he immediately thought of a better plan. He utterly disbelieved in the infallible strategists who always pretended that everything goes exactly according to plan; *they* are really the push-button men. He had been trained, rather, in the school of quick emergencies and improvised expedients and in the faith that the better way will always appear when the wrong is discarded.

He first tore the strip off the almanac hanging on the bulkhead, thus making it read one day ahead. Then, with his finger and thumb, he gently caught the winder of the wrist watch on Lowden's hand, as it lay limply over the edge of the bunk. He first turned the hand on some hours, and then jerked the winder back violently, until he had damaged the watch and stopped its ticking. He had just effected this without disturbing Lowden, when Laura's voice was heard outside the curtains.

"He's all right; he's asleep," said Durant, lifting the portières.

The girl looked at the man in the bunk and then at the glass on the shelf. The cabin still held that perfume from Scotland.

"You've been giving him something to drink," she said, with plain disapproval.

"I had to; he needed it. It's bad for a man to break his habits too suddenly."

She bent to the bunk and rearranged Lowden's pillows, loosened his collar, put his hand into the bunk—in fact, babied him. He did not stir.

"He's been spoiled from his cradle," she said.

"Pity he never made a service where there are no women and very little money."

They passed out of the stateroom;

Durant was going to bring the submarine to the surface, he told her. He was back at his station and Laura was at her old place by the gyro, when Lowden appeared—frowzy, sleepy and thirsty.

"Say, I've had enough of this, Durant. This oil tank suffocates me. Get us up, will you? And where can I get a drink of—of water?"

Durant nodded to a seaman to bring Lowden a drink and to Tomlins to reduce speed. Lowden swallowed the water in a way that indicated a burning throat. He again demanded an immediate return to the surface.

"Sorry, Lowden; I don't want to alarm you," said Durant steadily, "but something's gone wrong with our buoyancy. Maybe we're tangled in something on the bottom. I'm not sure—yet. We're trying to find out the trouble, but it will be all right; I've sent out radio calls. We will be yanked up by some one before our air gives out."

Not an officer stirred; not a man took his eyes from the panels, as Durant calmly and almost flippantly made this astounding statement. Laura, who was nearer the end of her resources in her long struggle to resist Bobby's advances, accepted that statement without a doubt. Durant, the push-button marine mechanic, was becoming her soul anchor; he was more of an assuring guide than had been ever given to her by her courses in philosophy.

"I did not intend to let you know of our predicament, Miss Grebe," continued Durant. "I will ask you and Mr. Lowden to remain in the cabin till we're out of this mess."

"Why don't you blow your tanks?" bellowed Lowden, after his first gasp of panic.

"I have."

"Blow your oil then. Durant, I'll break you for this. You had no right to submerge with passengers, with a woman; you got to get us up."

Lowden was going to pieces with terror of drowning like a cat in a barrel, where his physical strength would amount to nothing.

"We will do our best, Lowden. We've been trying to for the last twelve hours."

"Twelve hours?" echoed Lowden, tottering till he had to catch a rail.

"Yes; we got stuck this morning about noon," said Durant. "I let you sleep on."

"Twelve hours, twelve hours," murmured Lowden, forcing his muddled brain to accept the lapse of time. He looked at his wrist watch; it had stopped just after five; he looked at the clock in the control room, which said ten minutes after twelve—with nothing to indicate whether that twelve was noon or midnight.

"You did not neglect to change my calendar, Enrico?" said Durant to the mess boy, who was standing behind Lowden. "Take a look at that calendar, it's Wednesday now."

Lowden with fierce, strangled curses choking him, turned and shambled forward to the stateroom. The officers looked at Durant for the next move; the men exchanged little side glances; their commander was going to scare the wits out of this lump of human ballast they were burdened with.

Durant had given Laura no look, no sign asking her not to betray him; he trusted the girl; her first fears, when she had believed the submarine was in danger, had merely summoned her courage. She stood as calm as any of the men. Now, when his monstrous bluff to Lowden had cleared her of this fear, she still said nothing. Not until Lowden had left the control room and was out of earshot did she speak, and then very gently.

"It's not quite fair, Phil," she pleaded. "Any man who has been drinking would be frightened for a minute."

"Not necessarily; I have met drunken

heroes who won war medals. Please don't go to him. I insist. He must work out his own salvation or his damnation."

She was silent; perhaps she wanted to see if the navy's way of making a man was better than hers; as if the matter were out of her hands, she obeyed Durant and remained in the control room.

"Stand by to blow main tanks," said Durant.

Laura heard a slight crash behind her; it was a sound unlike the methodical noises of the submarine and alarming enough to her strung nerves. None of the men seemed to notice it, except Durant, who smiled at her.

A few moments later she heard Lowden's voice angrily disputing with Enrico and then something flew through the control room and crashed against the pipes on the after bulkhead. It was a whisky bottle. The glass scattered all over the control room but no liquor splashed with it. Lowden soon appeared, cursing, blaspheming, kindled to a mingled madness of fear and rage by the liquor he had drained in one long drink. Enrico followed, explaining.

"He broke open your locker, sir."

Durant did not have to give an order; two husky gunners anticipated it and rushed Lowden back to the stateroom. Lowden's strength and weight were helped by his semidelirium and he gave the men a dockyard job in shipping his hulk.

"Tell them to lash him down," Durant said to the slight Enrico.

Laura, again the victim of her pity, at seeing the overgrown boy so bull-rushed and threatened, pleaded with Durant.

"Don't lash him, Phil. It was really your fault. You gave him the drink."

"I gave him one drink; he stole the rest."

The little touch of elation in Durant angered the girl; she was aware of Durant's masterful cunning and reresource being here applied to the showing up of a man.

"You are still to blame; you left it within his reach; you put temptation in his way. It was contemptible."

The girl's voice rang with scorn, above the Diesels, the pumps, the mechanical orchestra that had gradually been swaying her to yield to its leader—Durant.

"I am not to blame for his falling for that temptation," he said. "He had to break a lock to get it. I have demonstrated the man he is—the sailor who broaches a rum cask when his vessel is in danger."

Despite his coolness of speech, Durant was as white as his uniform. He had not expected her contempt; he had not realized the depths of her pity for a spoiled boy, nor her loyalty to that pity and her revolt against all brute strength.

Both she and Durant and all in the control room could hear gasps, curses, and the sounds of a furious struggle coming from the stateroom. Durant waited calmly for the result, knowing his men. Laura demanded that Durant call them off.

"I cannot; we can't have a madman running amuck in our control room. See what that bottle has done to that pipe. Luckily it is not a lead water pipe. Remember we're twenty fathoms under, in a submarine. I have to think of the lives of eighty men and my vessel. If he doesn't behave, he's lashed down."

The girl was silenced; she looked at the paint that flying glass had cut from the piping; she knew something of Lowden's wild moods; Lowden had been carried out howling that he would beat up all hands and smash the machinery. She knew he was capable of it. Lowden would not only broach the rum cask in a disaster, he would scuttle the ship to have the foundering over, for fear he would drown sober.

"I can make him behave, Phil," she said. "He won't hurt your vessel."

She went forward to the stateroom.

Durant now gave all his attention to the raising of the submarine. He was satisfied with his maneuver, for despite Laura's contempt of it, he was sure he had gained his point. The two gunners came through the forward bulkhead, breathless and grinning.

"The lady's handling him, sir," said he. "Won't let us touch him."

"Very well; stand by, in case I need you again."

Gladly they stood by; they wanted another tussle with the big brute, who was heavy and strong enough to make the argument an interesting job. The cursings and bellowings from the stateroom ceased; the submarine and her men were quietly busy about this delicate business of balancing a mass of steel against its water displacement, when Laura appeared.

"Can I speak to you, Phil?" she whispered, coming close to Durant, who was preparing to take his first look through the periscope as soon as the lens was clear of the water.

"Of course. Is he all right?"

"Yes; I told him the vessel had never been in danger, that it was only a trick of yours. He wanted to come out and kill you. He's awful when he's like this. I could only get him to lie down by—by—promising to marry him."

"Marry him?" ejaculated Durant, for once completely startled out of his poise.

"Yes; and right this minute, Durant. We want to be married at once," roared Lowden from the opening in the bulkhead.

Relieved of his fear of drowning, fortified by the whisky, he held himself erect and spoke steadily and clearly; he had reached the dangerous spuriously rational stage of the heavy drinker.

"A captain of a vessel has power to conduct a marriage service," he cried. "You're parson as well as doctor. Commander Durant, U. S. N., we ask your services as sky pilot. Dig out your prayer book, and if you haven't got one, use a nautical almanac."

CHAPTER IV.

THE RETURN ATTACK.

LOWDEN, standing at the entrance to the control room, had thrown his arm round Laura; she submitted without protest. Durant could not be sure whether she had made this sacrifice for her father or to save the submarine from further violence. She stood as rigidly as the lines of the bulkhead; she was of finer steel than it, and he knew she would keep her word to Lowden. He had lost her and, however that hurt there, was only thing for him to do; accept his defeat and dismiss its memories. He wanted them both out of his vessel, out of his life; he still had his "old girl," who was just now demanding all his attention.

"That's old stuff, Lowden," he said sharply. "Even windjammer masters don't marry people any more; it's illegal."

"Don't believe it, Durant. Produce your regulations. You can marry us. No more four-flushing."

Lowden was crowing defiantly; his idea of forcing the man whom he knew to be his rival to perform this marriage service appeared to him as a huge jest.

But at that moment a tremendous and ominous shudder shook the whole hull of the submarine. Officers and men stiffened at their stations; the submarine had run into something. But whatever it was she was still keeping to her speed; no leaks were reported; the tanks were slowly filling; she was rising regularly and holding to her calculated trim.

"Whales all around us!" cried Durant, when the emerging periscope gave him his first glimpse of open water. "Must have struck one."

Again the long hull shuddered, and this time the shuddering continued increasing in violence. The men had to use their hands to steady themselves, clutching at anything for a holdfast. It was like an earthquake at sea; surface running in a storm and the buffeting of big waves had never been so unsettling. Levers trembled under their hands; bubbles danced in clinometer tubes, and dial hands flickered; their secure, stable, housing of tested steel quivered as if it were a huge mass of disintegrating jelly.

Lowden—a prey to his fears, yet still exultant over his winning of Laura—was babbling foolish questions. Laura tried to silence him as she watched Durant, and the grim men and officers awaiting the word from their commander. None of them paid the slightest attention to Lowden.

"Those whales are attacking us," she heard Durant say.

"Rot!" cried Lowden.

Laura believed that the whales could not do any serious harm to the submarine; those huge fins she had seen projecting from its bows would mince any whale in their way, and the cutwater itself would be a devastating harpoon. She had acquired this much respect for the power of Durant's submarine. She saw no anxiety in the faces of the officers and crew; she saw joy at the prospect of a butchery of those beautiful leviathans which she had loved. In imagination she saw the sea outside running red and the waters strewn with useless carcasses, slaughtered as vainly as Durant had so heedlessly shot that beautiful porpoise. But her revulsion against Durant was controlled by her disgust at the futile questions and the absurd orders Lowden took it upon himself to give. Again she was measuring one man against the other; the drunkenness of alcohol against the drunkenness of war and sport. Division tore the heart of the girl more distractedly than did the dangers of the submarine.

She saw Durant step aside from the periscope and confer with his officers. The submarine was almost plunging, jerked up and down by some terrible outside power. She became actually certain of the danger when she saw Durant looking directly at her and not seeing her. He was thinking beyond the limits of the control room, trying to guess what was outside, trying to read the meaning of that mysterious attack. His blind gaze rescued her from her sentimentality over slaughtered whales, for she was looking into the eyes of a man who was confronting terrible and perhaps lingering death—not only his own, but the death of his men and of herself. Durant became aware of her for one brief moment, and spoke to her.

"We've lost our periscope. A whale smashed it, and I think he is entangled in our jumping rope. Nothing to be scared about. We'll be on the surface in a moment."

"Don't believe a damned word of it!" roared Lowden. "It's all swank. He's doing stunts for your benefit, Laura—pulling his stuff for a girl. Give us a nose dive, Durant."

Laura found it impossible to restrain Lowden.

Before the periscope had been smashed, Durant had seen the rush of a sperm whale across his flooded deck, and he guessed that a blow of the great fluke had done the damage. The shudders and tremors of his vessel were so like the agonizings of a netted fish that he also guessed the whale had somehow become caught in the deck hamper; its big head could easily be caught and held by the taut, strong jumping ropes. His consultation with the officers was to submit this solution and also the question whether it was wise to risk extending the other periscope, which had been lowered for the dive. But periscopes are very expensive; an inquiry, perhaps

a court-martial, was looming over them for the loss of the one; they decided not to risk the other.

Durant had stopped the blowing of the tanks, when he found he was rising in the midst of a school of whales; he decided to continue the rise now, as further attack and collision with them could not do his superstructure any more damage, and there was a splendid sporting thrill in coming to the surface with a whale netted in his jumping rope.

"Some bag, this!" he laughed. "Blow tanks."

Lowden, hearing the order and feeling more assured, the nearer he came to the surface, that Durant had been merely giving a naval display, continued his jeering comments. Durant's ignoring of these only nettled him further; Lowden did not notice the two gunners standing by, like torpedoes ready to be launched at him.

All the time the submarine was keeping up those tremors, shudders, those racking little jerks in sympathy with the trapped victim on deck. But as they neared the surface, when the tower must have been just emerging and the deck was about six feet under, the bows stopped lifting equally with the stern. There was something wrong with the submarine's buoyancy; her decks began to slant forward in an alarming fashion. It seemed as if she was anchored by the nose; and commander and officers guessed what was happening. The submarine as a whole could not rise and elevate the huge bulk of the whale out of the water. That whale was too much ballast for her buoyancy.

"Can't be done, gentlemen," said Durant. "She objects. Who said sperm whales won't fight? I wish your father was here, Miss Grebe. What is the tonnage of an average whale, Snow?"

Durant was as gay as a fencer, as a boxer who depends on speed and skill instead of punch, as all fighters who battle with their wits; he was almost laughing with that demoniac gayety of intelligence. He was delighted with his capacity of picturing how the whale, feeling itself hauled out of its native element by the tanks of the submarine, was struggling to keep in the water—and successfully, thanks to those laws of hydrodynamics on which the whole being and working of his vessel depended. For every inch of the whale's sections lifted from the water increased its weight, increased the ballast on the deck of the submarine; the whale was winning by sheer bulk, and keeping the submarine under the surface. Durant again consulted with the officers of his vessel.

There was a gathering sense of the seriousness of their situation. Most of the officers and many of the men had watched the building of that submarine, had grown up with it, as something new in naval architecture; they had studied her from the laying of her keel to her last coat of paint. They were facing now the possibility of disaster; for they were at the end of a long cruise and their "old girl" was entitled to the docking and overhauling demanded by naval regulations. Durant already had the report made up of her essential needs. She was now taking this terrific thumping from tons of floundering blubber; she was wrestling with the huge carcass of a whale; her weak spots at any moment were liable to develop trouble.

The submarine was double hulled, and there was a grave risk to the plating of her external ballast. Such a hull runs risks even when bumping against a dock in a seaway, for leakage might start any moment in the oil tanks. Durant recalled places where rivets had become pitted and wasted, sections of the superstructure in the wake of exhausts where paint had been burned off and rust had been eating in. He snapped an order. Lowden did not

catch its meaning at once; then he read its purport from the gauges.

"What the hell?" he spluttered. "What are you going down for? Why down?"

So far, officers and men had regarded Lowden as mere unnecessary noise, making less claim on their attention than the minute variations of their readings, the telltale voices of pumps. Tomlins, standing over his engines, watched the lubricating oil jerked from the cups, and his fat comfortable face grew livid and haggard. To all these men Lowden was barely audible.

But now Lowden took a step farther into the control room. He ventured to put a hand on a lever, and the absorbed man standing by shook his head at the mere annoyance. Durant nodded to the two gunners, and again, with additional violence, Lowden was rushed, fuming and blustering with rage and terror and delirium, from the control room. Laura, pale but steady, made no plea for him now.

"Laura," said Durant, "we're diving to drown the whale. We can't rise while it's on us. You see, a whale has to come up to breathe; he can't remain under longer than an hour and a bit."

Durant's explanation in clear, precise, unemotional words, which actually enlisted her as fit to comprehend this epic maneuver, completely won the girl.

"How long can we remain under?" she ventured.

"We can make air for thirty hours, if our plates can stand the racket. Please stay in the cabin."

From Durant's mechanical rigidity, as much as from Lowden's blustering, the girl knew now that they were in great danger. They were going down magnificently. She would sit in the cabin till he called her, or till the devouring sea poured in on her through the parting plates. She wanted to speak, but her lips were held tight by the very constraints of the mechanism that surrounded her; her words, when they did come, were slow and difficult.

"I'll go," she said, "but I want you to know first that—I love you."

Something flickered in Durant's eyes.

"Keep that till we get ashore, Laura dear," he said faintly, as he returned to his station and the girl went out to the cabin.

The submarine did not have to remain as long under the water as Durant had anticipated; they could all feel the whale's struggles easing. Perhaps it had become exhausted with its struggles; perhaps it had been injured. Those tumultuous tremors ceased when they were down about fifteen fathoms; for Durant had continued the sliding dive, hoping the wash would remove the carcass. The submarine was running easily, though a loss of speed told him that the big bulk was still on the deck and acting as a drag. Durant took a moment to look after his passengers. He passed Laura. He did not wait; because that was no time for tenderness, and, besides, she was promised to Lowden.

He found Lowden senseless and tangled in a knot on the floor of his cabin, with the two gunners piled on top of him. All were bleeding; the gunners were nearly senseless, too, but their hands were still holding Lowden. Durant pulled his men to their feet, bade them go aft and bring another guard for Lowden.

"We're going up," he said to Laura, as he passed her.

But he encountered the same difficulty as before; though now in a lesser degree, for the whale was dead. Still, its great bulk lay on the deck; it was as heavy dead as alive, although his plates now had not to endure the strain of its struggling. He judged that the great part of its weight was amidships. Perhaps its great fluke was held by the

rail or perhaps tangled in the tripod of the gun.

"There seem to be more whales, sir," said an officer who had been examining the after manhole and the torpedo chambers for possible damage. "You can feel them aft."

Durant, too, could sense contacts with the hull. "An attack in force," he smiled. "We lift aft."

He gave the order to cease blowing the forward tanks, so as to lift the stern and possibly the after manhole, so that the men could get on deck and cut away the dead whale.

The submarine kept rising by the stern; the bow still refused to rise. The deck beneath their feet was now at a great slant, when another sense of disturbance told them all that something was still alive on the upper deck. Perhaps the whale was not dead after all; perhaps it had taken a fresh breath and revived and would be starting its fight all over again. But that distrubance was only slight and momentary. In a few minutes the after manhole was clear of the water, the hatch was opened, and Durant climbed on deck.

Looking along the deck, which was submerged a few feet from the manhole, he could see the great black body of a whale bulging around the bridge. His view was somewhat impeded, so he waded forward, followed by the executive officer and some of the men. They saw that the whale was dead; its neck had been held by the jumping rope; its fluke had snapped the rail out of the deck but had finally jammed under the gun, which was too strongly bolted to come away.

Something gray splashed off the more deeply submerged deck, by the whale's carcass. Durant noticed that he was wading in water streaked with blood and floating little strips of blubber. The water alongside was stirred with gray, shadowlike bodies; long snouts lifted from the sea; that water was thick with sharks. Durant had been assisting at a whaler's cutting out, but these blubber hunters were sharks that had been brushing his vessel and were now being driven off the deck by its water growing shallower. The body of the whale was torn and bleeding.

Durant drew a big breath. The sea still had its surprises and exaltations, even for a mechanical mariner. The adventurer can always find new frontiers.

Soon his men were hacking away at the whale with axes, prying and shoveling what they could overboard, till the deck, still lightly flooded, was like a butcher's chopping block. The gray horrors mottling the green waters over the side were snapping at the fragments. Lowden appeared on the deck—sober, chastened and very badly bruised.

"I want to apologize to you, Durant," he said. "Laura says I've got to. It must have been that liquor. It got me. I'm going to quit—for her."

Durant could not accept this apology. It was not sincere; for Lowden was simply using it to display the fact that he was holding Laura to her promise. But neither could he openly quarrel with Lowden. If he were anything but a naval officer, if this were the deck of an old windjamming whaler, Lowden would have gone over the side with a fist to his jaw. But these things are not done; the navy has its constraints, as the sea has its insurrections.

Durant was certain that Laura would keep to her word. It was an incredible, wholly wrong and entirely foolish sacrifice that she was making; but he knew she would not have confessed she loved him, unless she was aware that her love was hopeless. She would marry Lowden and his money out of pity for him, out of gratitude for what he would do for her father. She was the stuff her father's martyrs of science were made of.

"That's all right, Lowden," said Durant, picking up something off the deck to avoid taking Lowden's hand. "But you'd better stay below, till we clean up."

"Oh, I can stand it. I'm not sick now. Sorry Grebe is not here to see those sharks. The old man would put on his diving helmet and play with them."

Durant had picked up a piece of gray muck, not blubber, not bone, something soft that had been floating around. He crumbled it between his fingers; two transparent shell-like structures appeared in the palm of his hand.

"Isn't that ambergris, Lowden?" he asked. "Aren't those the beaks of the cuttlefish the whales feed on? Here's more."

"By George! it is ambergris," said Lowden. "Worth a hundred and fifty to two hundred dollars a pound."

The squint returned to Lowden's eyes as he spoke; he was his old self once again, a primitive brute urged by appetites and nothing else; and the appetite on top just now was greed.

"Why, it's all over the deck. Fifty-fifty, Durant, eh?"

He waded knee-deep among the slush where the men were hacking the whale, trying to pick up more of that precious secretion.

"Say, boys, I'll split with you if you find any more," he cried to the men. "Look, Durant, there's some floating in the sea—oodles of it. Lower your boat, and let's get it."

"Not just now, Lowden. I don't see any."

"Look, man, look!" Lowden pointed with a quivering finger. "Great chunks of it, thousands of dollars' worth. Man, it's a bonanza."

Every little break of foam, every splash of the scurrying sharks, every glint of gray light on the water, was ambergris to the twisted eyes and delirious brain of this man, who was now drunk with that most hopeless intoxication of getting something for nothing.

"It's drifting away," he cried. "I'm going to get it."

He was about to plunge over the side, when Durant held him.

"Lowden, you can't; those sharks are——"

"Ah, sharks don't eat men. Hasn't Grebe told you? Come along with me."

Three men tried to hold Lowden, but that last sputter of his strength multiplied by his diseased imagination was tremendous. He flung one man splashing in the shallow waters of the deck, another among the hideous ribs of the quartered whale; he threw Durant against the gun, where the canvas cover alone saved his skull from cracking.

In a second Lowden had dived over the side, arose to the surface and was seen swimming. Durant had also seen the gray cloud of sharks scatter at the splash, but he knew that the cowardly man-eaters would return.

"Lower the boat!" he cried.

This took time; Lowden was swimming with a leisurely stroke and snatching at every piece of floating blubber he ran into.

"Splash, Lowden, splash!" cried Durant.

Lowden paid no attention to this warning, which told him his only way of keeping hungry sharks at a distance, so Durant dived in after him, with a swift, shallow dive that brought him immediately to the surface. He swam after the maniac, striking the water with loud smacks as he took the long, trudgeon stroke, kicking hard with his feet on the surface, shouting his advice to Lowden, raising all the racket and turmoil he could to instill terror in the sharks. But he was too far from Lowden to be effective, or the sharks were too hungry; for Lowden suddenly disappeared.

When the men in the boat picked up their exhausted commander, a dark stain was rising in the water; below

the boat they could see a mingling of gray shadows and the flashing of upturned, darting bodies far down in the clean depths of the sunlit sea.

Tomlins and Firket were on deck watching the disappearing sails of the *Pixie,* which the submarine was fast leaving behind. Both vessels were covering latitude at their best speed.

"That fellow had some good points. Nervy thing, diving in among those sharks," said Tomlins, alluding to Lowden.

"The man who knew he'd be eaten showed most nerve," replied Firket. 'Durant ought to get a medal."

"He will," grinned Tomlins. "The same girl will be waiting for him in every port."

Firket frowned, as if in pain, but did not further parade his manners before the mustang; danger and death had found the common man below their stripes and differences in breeding.

"Good idea of yours, Tomlins, handing the ambergris over to Grebe."

"Guess I was a fool," growled Tomlins. "My missus could have done with my share. 'Twasn't so much per man, after all; but she needs that money."

"I expect we were all fools, rather," echoed Firket. "Strange how the men fell for it."

"Swank, that's what it was. Lowden was right; there's too much swank in this service."

Firket smiled, aristocratically and quizzically.

"But we can't do without it. You wouldn't take back your share, would you?"

Tomlins was no match at words with this man of tables. He knew Firket was right. For it was at Tomlins' suggestion that officers and men had gladly deposited the ambergris on the deck of the *Pixie.* They pretended they were making a contribution to science. Its total value, while not equal to the visionary millions seen by Lowden, was respectable. The gift was really a wedding present to Laura from the "old girl."

Holman Day, who understands the hearts and minds of men in the timber country, will tell a moving story of that life in the opening novel next week. It is called "Northwoods Stuff."

THE FATAL HANDICAP

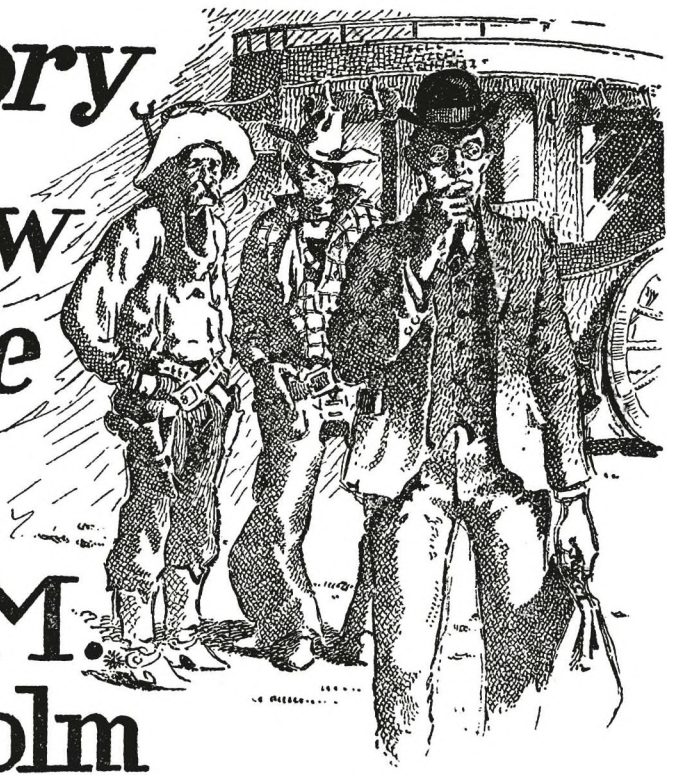
THE day of the Dempsey-Sharkey fight the city of New York hummed with a thousand different reports on the physical condition or lack of condition of the iron-thewed pugilists. Broadway was a hive in which the bees laid away the tainted honey of rumors intended to affect the betting odds; and, as a scared rabbit is a valiant and combative hero in comparison with a gambler looking for a sure thing, numerous gentlemen were running around in circles.

Early in the afternoon, near the corner of Broadway and Forty-second Street, a fat person in a checkerboard suit drew aside a lantern-jawed fellow in striped trousers and gave him this sepulchral whisper:

"Say, Harry, I got this straight. This Doctor Walker, the boxing commission's official physician, says that Dempsey's in rotten shape. He says the big fellow's got neuromalacia!"

"Gee!" exclaimed he of the lantern jaw and striped trousers. "Is that a fact? Then I'm going to hedge. He ain't got a show with that eating on him! I can't even pronounce it; so what chance has he got to carry it around in the ring with him and stay on his feet?"

History in Yellow Horse



By

A. M. Chisholm

Author of "The Real Dog," "A Silver Mine and a Widow," Etc.

A choice group of Western pioneers sit around the general store and discuss "l'tr'ature, hist'ry," and other things. One of the "other things" they discussed was the quiet, inquisitive Easterner who looked like a professor. The outcome was startling.

THE sun of afternoon striking the old-time placer camp of Yellow Horse, drenched it with a pitiless light unrelieved by kindly shadows or the purple hazes of the hills. No town-planning expert had had a hand in the arrangement of the buildings of logs or whipsawn rough boards which sheltered its inhabitants. Yellow Horse sprawled anyhow upon the flat beside the swift creek from which it took its name, whose gold-bearing sands had attracted many adventurers of the old West.

There was what by courtesy might be termed a main street, which had evolved by accident and the exigencies of freight teams, and lay in summer in deeply rutted dust swirled blindingly by the mountain winds. On this street were the marts of trade and commerce, consisting of a general store of an amazingly varied and extensive stock, a restaurant, a dance hall, a saloon or two, and the Golden Light, the camp's principal hostelry where its leading spirits were wont to congregate, seeking refreshment or to settle public affairs. It was in effect the camp's club, court of justice on occasion, and rallying point.

On this afternoon a group of citizens sat in its grateful shade awaiting the arrival of the stage which linked the camp with the outside world. The group comprised Zeb Bowerman, a

grizzled old wolf of the frontier, by common consent the camp's leading citizen, who on occasion acted as judge and coroner and was chairman of its meetings; "Bad Bill" Stevens, its unofficial but very efficient marshal, with a deservedly high reputation for speed and accuracy with the two heavy guns which composed his armament; his friend Ed Tabor, a cold-eyed young man whose repute was second only to that of Mr. Stevens; one Soames, an opinionated and obstinate citizen; "Cockeye" Wilson, whose startling obliquity of vision did not in the least interfere with his ability to use a gun when he had to; and, last but by no means least, "Uncle Billy" Webster, a veritable partriarch of the plains and hills, whose memories and reminiscences, authentic or otherwise, went far back to the days of "Kit" Carson, "California Joe," Jim Bridger and other celebrities.

"Stage is late to-day," Tabor observed, making a cigarette expertly.

"If she gits in the same way she's due she ain't what you'd call late," Uncle Billy amended, with the large disregard of time of the old West. "Maybe the driver's drunker'n usual."

"Maybe she's held up," Mr. Soames suggested.

"Road agents ain't workin' lately," said Tabor. "And Injuns is quiet, too."

"When them savages is quiet they'll stand watchin'," Uncle Billy observed sagely. "Old Timber Hoss and his nephew, Diggin' Badger, is plenty zealous murderers, give 'em the chance. I've told this camp often enough, the only safe play is to hang that pair."

"You're the prey of prejudice against Injuns," Mr. Soames asserted. Between him and the ancient flourished a perennial wordy feud which on several occasions almost had been translated into direct action. On most subjects they disagreed automatically and flatly.

"If I am," Uncle Billy retorted, "it's because I've durn near become the prey of Injuns more times than I can count. You're talkin' foolishness, as usual."

But what promsed to become a spirited discussion was interrupted by the arrival of the belated stage which, drawn by four half-broken but weary cayuses stimulated to a last show of spirit by the vigorous popping of a long whiplash above their ears, rocked up the trail in a cloud of dust and halted before the Golden Light.

Several passengers descended stiffly and gratefully. All but one, being weathered gentlemen and generally Western in appearance, made for the bar with the eager certainty of hounds on a hot scent. But one lingered, looking around.

This individual obviously was of the genus "pilgrim." His apparel was that of the city dweller; his complexion, in spite of a heavy coating of dust and a sunburned and peeling nose, bore the pallor of indoor pursuits; he wore spectacles, at that time rarer than in the present day; and a book projected from his pocket. Generally, his air was diffident. Plainly, he found himself in strange surroundings. He peered around through his lenses somewhat nervously, viewing the camp and the group of weathered, hard-featured, weaponed men before picking up his grip and following his fellow passengers.

At that time pilgrims were rare in Yellow Horse. East was East and West was West, and the twain seldom met. A denizen of the one was rarely found in the haunts of the other. Hence, the arrival of this specimen excited mild curiosity and some speculation.

"He boards the stage at Antelope," the driver replied to a leading question, "and he's the cause of me bein' two hours late. Stoppin' to water and feed on the Seven Feathers, he wanders

off a few yards, gets behind a tree, turns round twice and loses himself complete. When we find him—because if we don't some of Diggin' Badger's bucks is due to lift his hair—he's three miles off and tryin' to make it thirty."

"What's his little game in these parts?" Tabor asked.

"He don't tell me," the driver replied wearily. "But on a guess and the way he acts, I should say it was marbles, or some sech infantile pursuit."

"He may be a gospel spreader," Mr. Stevens observed, with some apprehension, "out to show us the trail to the Better Land. Which them kind is usual plumb helpless and lost in this."

"His coat tails ain't long enough," Uncle Billy voiced his own conclusions. "He looks to me more like a perfessor."

"The kind that pulls rabbits out a hat and sells root-and-yarb remedies?" Mr. Stevens queried hopefully.

"Well, no," Uncle Billy returned, with some regret. "The kind they has in them brain foundries back East. I once guides one out of Benton, which is int'rested in what he calls the 'flora and fauna' of the West."

"Is that Flora the one they calls 'Whisky Flo' back in Benton?" Mr. Stevens queried.

"What makes you think this pilgrim is a professor?" Mr. Soames interrupted skeptically.

"Because he shows sim'lar brands and earmarks to the one I guides," Uncle Billy replied. "In addition, I notes a book stickin' out of his pocket, which shows him to be a victim of the habit of readin'. Them perfessors reads a heap. They knows all about what's in books, and not much about what's outside 'em. That a way they's like the dog which lets go the bone to grab at its shadder in the crick."

"Well, it's a free country," Bowerman observed judicially. "If a gent prefers knowin' about books to knowin' about things, his American judgment goes supreme. Books, in my opinion, is harmless. Myself, I've read sev'ral, specially one time when I'm laid up with a busted laig. She's a long, slow session, that laig is, and when solitaire palls I reads books."

"Readin' books," Mr. Soames agreed, "to appreciate 'em requires leisure, such as a busted leg or a stay in the calaboose affords. She's an intellectual pursuit, readin' books is, and I've indulged in her a lot when I could."

"If ever you engages in intellectual pursuits," Uncle Billy commented with venom, "you're shorely pursuin' a long way in the rear. If ever you overtakes anything intellectual it's because it steps in a badger's hole."

"It's plain," Mr. Soames retorted, "that you ain't read books—and it's maybe because you can't."

"I maintains," Uncle Billy asseverated, "that, while stringin' words into books maybe takes industry and a good eye, like layin' bricks straight, readin' 'em don't require no intelligence at all, which is probably why you indulges in it. It's like follerin' a plain trail on a wise pony. You lets your hoss have his head, relaxes in your mental saddle and ambles along, maybe lookin' at the scenery but not thinkin' much. The trail's thar for you, and you rides it; you ain't strikin' out into new country for yourself."

"That there view," Mr. Soames retorted with heat, "is narrow and restricted, and the common one of the uneducated and ign'rant. It's possible to read and think, if you got the mental outfit and ain't so plumb old that your tree of intellect is withered at the top. Readin' books puts us in touch with the brightest thoughts of the greatest minds of his'ry—from the immortal works of Mister Hoyle and Noah Webster back through the voyages of

Captain Cook and that other great navigator, Sinbad the sailor, Shakespeare's 'Twelve Arabian Nights' and Milton's 'Pilgrim's Progress,' till final we bunt into the Old Testament and the wisdom of them old prophets that rode the first trails and made camp with the angels, and we come onto Adam out gardening in Eden while Eve sits in the cabin door sewin' figleaf patches on his pants.

"And there we have to stop, because that's the soda card and the back wall of human hist'ry. We can't get behind it, because there's no foothold behind. But if it ain't for books, the hist'ry of mankind gets lost in the shuffle ages ago and never does turn up in the deal. We wouldn't know where we came from nor why; and our records would be merely piles of stone or vermilion drawin's on flat rocks in a pass, same as the Injuns make. There's a heap to be learned from books, and a man that ain't learned to read has missed a lot."

"That's what!" Mr. Stevens agreed cordially. "A gent that can't read sheriffs' notices and sim'lar documents is op'ratin' under a handicap. F'r instance, once I rides into a strange town, and there's a notice posted up, offerin' five hundred dollars' reward for my ha'r and years. It's a mistake that's cleared up later, but there she is. There's plenty of murderers in that town ready to beef me for that sum, so I shakes its dust off my pony's hoofs without delay. In that case ability to read saved my life; or, if not mine, sev'ral others."

"All the same," Uncle Billy maintained obstinately, "it's readin' and thinkin' about what he reads, like Soames advises, that lands Jud Palmer in his coffin."

"Who's Jud Palmer?" Mr. Stevens asked.

"It don't make no diff'rence who he is," said Mr. Soames, who disliked the startling reminiscences of a long life in which Uncle Billy was prone to indulge.

"I asks about him," Mr. Stevens returned coldly, "and I aims to hear about him. Who's Jud Palmer, Uncle Billy?"

"Jud Palmer," the ancient began, casting a triumphant glance at his enemy and tilting back in his chair for a better narration, "is a friend of mine a good many years back. He follers trappin' for a livelihood, and he does well at it. Only he's addicted to readin', and, as I says, he thinks about what he peruses. His mind that a way is active. Usual he packs a book in his outfit to last him over winter—and sometimes two. He's what you might call a bookworm. He owns up to me that one winter he reads as many as three books between first snow and spring.

"But one winter when he goes forth to trap, by some oversight he forgets to outfit himself with a book. He don't discover this omission till too late, when he's in his headquarters camp, an old cabin far away in the hills, and the passes behind him blocked with snow. So he settles down to trap and get along without readin'.

"But in this old cabin, tucked away under the eaves, some stained by the weather and some gnawed by mountain rats, he discovers an old almanac settin' forth the diseases flesh is heir to and their symptoms; also the virtues of Doctor Amos Bloggs' Kidney Pills, Blood Purifier, Liver Stim'lator, Heart Reg'lator, Rheumatism Cure, Corn Eradicator, Toothache Drops, and a lot more benefi'cent remedies put out by this em'nent physician, Bloggs.

"Now, Jud Palmer is tough as a twisted hick'ry withe. He can pack eighty pounds on his back all day, and he can live on straight meat without salt. He's in his prime, and the only illnesses he's ever had is a mild

rash while teethin' and an equally mild attack of tremens from St. Louis whisky. But as he reads this work of Bloggs' all winter and meditates on it, he finds he has most of the symptoms of all the diseases Bloggs tells about, and some that Bloggs has missed.

"This ill health of his preys on his mind, and he gets doubtful if he'll last till spring. But he does, and when the snow goes from the passes he emerges with his furs a wreck of his former self.

"When he hits a town—it's Elk City—he makes a bee line for a drug store and demands Bloggs' remedies, but they don't keep 'em. Come to find out, nobody knows much about 'em. They're off the market, and mankind has to struggle along without them aids to health. Which is the same as a death sentence to Jud Palmer.

"'You better see a doctor,' the druggist advises. 'We got two in town.'

"'Which is the best one?' Jud asks.

"'They're both good,' the druggist assures him. 'But on a show of tombstones I'd say Doc Sawyer has the best of the luck.'

"'I'll see him,' says Jud. 'Maybe he learned his trade from Doc Bloggs.'

"So he goes to see this Doctor Sawyer, who tells him that, while he ain't got none of Bloggs' diseases, he has sev'ral that Bloggs has overlooked. So Jud doctors with Doctor Sawyer, who cuts him off whisky, tobacker, ham and eggs, flapjacks and coffee, and sorter turns him out to grass.

"'Them stim'lants and indigest'bles will kill you if you don't quit 'em,' says this Doctor Sawyer.

"But Jud don't improve. He keeps gettin' worse, and low in his mind, and nat'rally he fails in weight account of this grass diet. And Doctor Sawyer tells him he's got to have an op'ration.

"'Will it fix me up all right?' Jud asks.

"'It'll fix you, all right,' says Doctor Sawyer. 'Don't eat no supper nor no breakfast, and be on hand first thing in the morning.'

"Jud goes out of the doctor's office, and, feelin' sorter weak, sets down in the waitin' room to get back some of his strength. As he sets thar, stackin' up his chances and feelin' a heap sim'lar to a gent about to be staked out to be op'rated on by Injuns the other doctor comes in and goes into Doctor Sawyer's office. He leaves the door open some, so Jud can hear them talkin'.

"'How about tryin' out them new shotguns on some chicken to-morrow, doctor?' says the second doctor, gay and cheerful.

"'I got an op'ration, first,' Doctor Sawyer tells him; 'but then I'm free.'

"'What's the nature of the op'ration?' asks the second doctor.

"'It's a trapper,' Doctor Sawyer replies.

"'In that case, you don't need to waste much time, and we can get away early,' says the second doctor. 'What's your diagnosis?'

"'He's got five hundred dollars, at least,' Doctor Sawyer answers.

"'Then you can buy the whisky and ca'tridges for to-morrow,' says the other doctor. 'What's the matter with this trapper?'

"'I don't know yet,' Doctor Sawyer replies; 'but I'll find out. I aim to tunnel into him a ways, drift southwest and put in a crosscut, and I'll bet I'll find the lead to something. By the way, I wisht you'd lend me your jig saw. I ruined the set of mine against a hard-boned patient last week.'

"'Shore,' says the second doctor. 'But be careful of it.'

"'I will,' Doctor Sawyer promises. 'I only want it in case of emergency. Most of my work will be knife work,

but I want to be in shape to rip through some bones if I strike them.'

" 'Do you want a spare scalpel, too?' the other doctor asks. 'Them trappers is stringy meat, and dulls an edge fast.'

" 'I got lots of knives fresh honed,' says Doctor Sawyer.

" 'Well, I hope the op'ration is a success,' says his friend.

" 'I hope so, too,' says Doctor Sawyer; 'but, of course, you can't never tell. If it ain't, he's a stranger here, and I guess we can get his body. We'd ought to have a good skeleton between us, to keep up our knowledge of anatomy, and he's a fine specimen. I dunno's I ever dug up a better.'

" 'Has he got a good skull?' the other doctor asks.

" 'A little low in front, but plenty high for all he has in it,' Doctor Sawyer replies. It'll be no trick at all to clean out his brains.'

" 'That's fine,' says the second doctor, real pleased. 'We'll boil the meat off'n his bones, and bore his j'ints, and couple him up with pianner wire, and set him up on a stand like we did that cin'mon bear. It'll be int'resting work for the winter evenings. Hustle up that op'ration in the morning, because we want to get them prairie chickens.'

"But in the mornin that op'ration is a failure because Jud ain't thar for it. He's on a fast pony, fifty miles away, and he don't stop till he hits Bannack. There he heads into a s'loon where he knows the barkeep.

" 'I'm through, Harry,' he tells this dispenser. 'I ain't got but a short time to live, and I want to forget my troubles. Gimme some whisky with teeth.'

"The whisky the barkeep produces has both teeth and claws; and drinkin' always makes Jud hungry. He's special rav'nous, account of the diet he's been on. He knows reg'lar grub will likely kill him; but now he don't care, and he hunts up a restrawnt.

" 'I'm a dyin' man,' he tells the biscuit shooter; 'but I aim to have one squar' meal before I go. Start me with a plate of ham cut thick and six aigs, flapjacks with cane sirup, half a raisin pie, and coffee. After that I'll tell you what I want to eat."

"Jud issues forth from that rest'rawnt with his belt buckle out six holes, and he goes into a store.

" 'I'll be dead in a few hours now,' he says, and I got just time to smoke a few cigars. Gimme six of them dollar ones, black; and also a plug of eatin'.'

"He goes out smokin' one of them cigars, and as he totters along he sees a store window holdin' a coffin and some silver plates and wax flowers that an undertaker displays as sorter decoys for trade; and, bein' thoughtful for other folks, it strikes him that with time gettin' so short he'd better make his own arrangements for the final deal, so's not to bother nobody. So he heads into the shop.

" 'What do you charge for turnin' the last card for a gent of my size?' he asks. 'I wants a cash price.'

"The undertaker tells him.

" 'All right,' says Jud, 'you've sold a fun'ral. Yere's your money.'

" 'Where is the deceased?' the undertaker asks.

" 'I'm him,' Jud replies; 'or I will be in an hour or so. And, mind you, I wants my casket long enough, me bein' extra tall, so's I'll have room to stretch out. All my life I've been plagued by short beds, and I aim not to have cramps from lyin' so long all doubled up when Gabriel blows his horn.'

"And havin' thus arranged the future satisfact'ry so far as man can, he goes back to the s'loon to wait for the end.

" 'I may's well die here, Harry,' he says to the barkeep, 'if you don't object. And while I'm waitin', give me a full bottle of that whisky. Time's

so short now that whisky by the glass is merely vanity and vexation of spirit.'

"He drinks most of the whisky and goes to sleep in a corner. While he's sleepin', the undertaker comes in for his afternoon's coffin varnish, and recognizes him.

" 'This man comes into my store a while ago and buys a pers'nal funeral from me,' he tells the barkeep. 'Is somebody gunnin' for him, or what?'

" 'Not that I know of,' the barkeep replies. 'He merely puts it up that he's dyin' and wants to do it here if I don't object. Which I don't. I runs a public house.'

" 'Well, he'd ought to know his own business,' says the undertaker. 'If he was to pass away yere in a drunken slumber the censorious minded might make remarks concernin' the quality of the licker you puts up. I got to look after him, anyway, and things is quiet with me right now. How'd it be if I had him packed over to my place, to have him handy?'

"The barkeep says that suits him, so the undertaker sends over a couple of roustabouts, and they pack Jud, who's dead to the world, if not dead literal.

" 'Where'll we put him?' they asks.

" 'Well, I ain't got much room,' says the undertaker, lookin' around. 'Lay him into that long coffin over there. It's his, anyway. I'll look in at him after a while.'

"But he goes out and gets into a poker game and forgets all about Jud; or if he remembers he thinks as he's coffined up he's all right, anyway. While he's thus absent from business his wife and daughter come in and go lookin' around and the daughter discovers Jud.

" 'Look, ma,' she says, clappin' her hands. 'Pa's got a customer!'

" 'Well, ain't that nice!' says the undertaker's wife, admirin' Jud as he lays. 'He looks the naturalest I ever see. I reckon,' she says, sniffin', 'he died of drink.'

" 'He's got a lovely color,' says the daughter, ' 'specially his nose, and he's just a young man. Ain't it sad?'

" 'But it's good for business,' says the undertaker's wife, resigned. 'You're so tender-hearted, darling.'

" 'I can't help it,' says the girl. 'He may have a wife or a sweetheart somewheres, and I'm thinkin' of her. I'll jest stake him to one of them lilies for luck.'

"She gets one of the wax flowers and lays it on Jud's chest, and they go away. The undertaker don't come back because he gets behind the game and can't quit.

"Account of the whisky which is shore powerful, Jud don't wake up for hours, and when he does it's late at night. He's all alone, except for an old darky the undertaker has for a sort of night watchman, and to bring him word of business croppin' up at night, which it often does. The darky don't know about Jud; and natural Jud don't know about him, which he is settin' dozin' on a chair a few feet away from where he's lyin'.

"When Jud wakes up it's dark and quiet. He ain't got much elbow room, but he feels around and discovers what he's lyin' in, and also the lily on his chest.

" 'I'm dead, sure as a gun,' he says to himself. 'It's easy, after all. The only question is, which place have I went to.' But thar's nothing to show. 'If I was in heaven,' Jud reflects, 'thar'd ought to be lots of light, and a good placer showin' on the streets, and harp music and lots of angels for company. And there ain't one of them things. Well, I never really did expect to make that landin'.

" 'But on the other hand,' he goes on to himself after a minute, 'if I'm in the other place thar'd ought to be a smell of brimstun' and wailin' and

gnashin' of teeth, as well as some old friends of mine.

" 'Is it possible,' he continues his reflections after thinkin' it over, 'that I'm a card that's been overlooked in the deal and ain't held in no hand whatever?'

"This awful thought holds Jud spellbound with horror for a minute. It's bad enough to think he's in them lower regions, but to fear that he ain't wanted no place at all is worse. He's so appalled that he lies plumb quiet. Then he feels round, and his fingers encounter one of them dollar cigars in his vest pocket. He hunts for a match and finds one.

" 'These things is just leftovers from the other life,' he says to himself. 'Cigars and matches is but earthly mem'ries. She'll be a ghost smoke, of course, with no taste, but it's the best I can get now.' And he strikes a match.

"The pop of it brings the old darky out of his doze. As I says, nobody's told him about Jud, and he thinks this coffin he's sittin' beside is just one in stock, or he wouldn't be beside it. He's a deacon or somethin', but to play it safe he's also voodoo, and sacrifices white roosters—and they's mostly white folks' roosters, too—so whichever way the last card falls for him he's due to make a winnin'. Workin' among coffins and dead folks, like he does, gives him a high rep'tation among his fellows. Jud's match pops, and the darky sees an unearthly flare light up the interior of a coffin, and then vanish.

" 'Oh, hell!' says a deep voice out of the darkness which ensues.

"This is merely Jud expressin' irritation with the match which has gone out before he can light his cigar; but it scares the darky an ash gray. Jud strikes a second match and cups his hands over it. When you-all does that in the dark to light a cigar, you can't see nothin' beyond the flame itself; so Jud don't see the watchman standin', froze in terror, close to him. He holds the second match to the cigar and draws in the smoke. To his s'prise he can taste it.

" 'Well, I'm damned!' Jud comments.

"He don't mean nothin' by this statement, not even cussin'. It's merely his ordinary way of expressin' s'prise and maybe relief. If he's where he can taste tobacker, it ain't so bad after all, providin' they got tobacker thar to taste. But to the darky it sounds like somebody complainin' about his hereafter. He sees a coffin lit up by hell-fire and a dead man in it bemoanin' his fate. He's shorely a scared African, too froze with fright to run.

"Jud holds up the match, still burnin', to see as much of his surroundin's as he can, this hereafter he's in not seemin' to be lighted much. The flare reveals a black face that seems as he looks at it to turn sorter gray to match woolly hair, and a pair of poppin', strainin' eyeballs. This Ethiopian vision puzzles Jud. He ain't posted on hereafters for colored folks, and he wants information.

" 'Hey,' he says, 'come yere.'

"But the darky emits a woeful howl.

" 'Oh, good Marse Lawd! Oh, good Marse Debbil,' he begs, 'yo'-all don't want dis yeah wuthless ol' black man, not to-night——'

" 'Come yere, I tells you!' says Jud, settin' up in his coffin and reachin' for him. But he don't lay his grip on the watchman. That son of Ham sends forth a screech like a hundred bobcats, and issues from that establishment, takin' most of the door with him.

"As he goes sky-hootin' down the street, touchin' it merely occasional, a gent from Alabama who's just emerged from a s'loon, seein' a fugitive darky, unlimbers his six-shooter and takes a few shots at his heels on gen'ral principles, at the same time hollerin' to turn loose the bloodhounds; and that black fellow simply becomes a flyin' cloud.

"This shootin' is heard by the undertaker who is still up to his hocks in the poker game in that s'loon; and as it don't do to neglect business, even for poker, he comes out in a hurry, hopin' to pick up a client or two. He runs into Jud, who now knows that he ain't inhabitin' the hereafter, just emergin' from the wreck of the door of his store, smokin' a cigar and wearin' a wax lily in his buttonhole.

" 'What's this?' the undertaker demands. 'Yere I had you laid out all ready to plant.'

" 'Would you bury a livin' man?' says Jud.

" 'I got nothing to do with that,' says the undertaker. 'You claims to be through with life and arranges for your funeral, and I organizes on that basis. Are you a man of your word, or ain't you?'

" 'I don't aim to deceive you delib'rate,' says Jud. 'By rights I ought to be dead; but the fact is I'm far from it, and feelin' better 'n ever.'

" 'It's probable the last flare of the wick before the lamp goes out,' the undertaker tells him. 'You don't want to be contrary and pig-headed. We all got to die some time, so why not do it now and have it over? Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day.'

"But Jud don't see it that way.

" 'How about refundin' my money?' he asks.

" 'That coffin of yours is now second hand,' the undertaker tells him, 'and folks considers it bad luck to use a secondhand coffin. But I'll give you a credit slip, good for a fun'ral any time in a year, if you happen to change your mind. Take one of my cards with you.'

"The card he hands Jud reads:

"Doctor Amos Bloggs, Ph. D.
Undertaker and Funeral Director.
Planting Done Right.

"Jud stares at it.

" 'Be you Doctor Amos Bloggs?' he asks, sorter stunned.

" 'I be,' the undertaker replies.

" 'The author of 'Bloggs' Alamanac and Complete Guide to Health?' Jud goes on.

" 'It's years since I authorized that work,' the undertaker tells him. 'In the bright enthusiasm of youth I allows I'll cure folks; but in my maturer years, observin' their habits, I sees it's a surer play to plant them.'

" 'It seems strange for a doctor to be plantin' people,' Jud comments.

" 'It's true, the profession is averse to cleanin' up after itself,' says Doctor Bloggs; 'but if it did, it'd double its business.'

" 'What does them letters 'Ph. D.' after your name mean?' Jud queries further.

" 'In some cases,' Doctor Bloggs replies, 'them letters stands for 'Doctor of Philosophy.' But after my name they mean that besides undertakin', I now treats the diseases of pigs, horses and dogs—them critters lackin' man's reasonin' powers and so havin' sense enough to refrain from bustin' all the laws of health, thus givin' the physician a better break. I now doctors animiles; and I plants my fellow men. It's a good system. Don't lose my card.'

"And that," Uncle Billy concluded, "completes the bodily cure of Jud Palmer. Bloggs cures him after all. And also it cures him, mental, of readin'. 'She's too risky a game, Bill,' he says to me, 'for a gent with imagination to indulge in. From now on, you bet I don't read nothin' but the price lists of furs.' "

And, having concluded this thrilling and veracious narrative illustrative of the perils of literature, Uncle Billy smiled benevolently upon Mr. Soames, who had been decidedly restive during its progress.

"This yere long-winded and ghoulish reminiscence," said the latter, "don't prove nothing except that this Jud

Palmer ain't got the brains of a sheep, which is probable why you and him was friends, birds of a feather flockin' up, like Scripture says. If a gent is going to take all he reads as pers'nal, same as a pup eats everything, he's due for the same internal troubles as a pup. I maintain that readin' properly indulged in is educative in the extreme, and without it we're shy all records of the experiences and wisdom of mankind. With it, we grab onto this wisdom like a badger to a dog's nose, and hold her from gen'ration to gen'ration, and the human race is a winner thar by."

"While readin' ondoubtedly holds perils if took too serious, as Uncle Billy has shown us in his thrillin' hist'ry of Jud Palmer," Bowerman interposed judicially; "yet it as ondoubted illumines the back trail and points a path of guidance to the future, as Soames states. And some people like it. It's a heap sim'lar to whisky, benef'cent in its effects if handled right, but due to start trouble otherwise. As to this pilgrim, whose probable game we were discussin' when we wandered down these bypaths of lit'rature, likely we find out more about it in time. The way he gets lost from the stage, as the driver relates, seems to indicate that he reads books, or maybe even writes 'em, and so suffers from absence of mind."

"He don't write books," Mr. Stevens stated positively. "His ha'r ain't long enough."

"On the contrary," Mr. Soames objected promptly, "I claim he carries too good a scalp lock to write anything except mayb- po'try. For though by their photogra- ns Shakespeare and them earlier writers was long-maned gents, yet in the wear and tear of modern life writers to-day is mostly shy of hair. Which may be due to their brains turnin' over so fast that they heats up and injures its roots; or merely to scratchin' it out with their claws in them fine lit'ry frenzies that seizes them when they run out of ideas and whisky checks simultaneous. But for another reason I agrees it's onlikely this pilgrim is lit'ry; when he descends from the stage he's the last man to the bar."

This seemed to be conclusive. Yellow Horse having exhausted speculation concerning the pilgrim who seemed to be of small account in the general scheme of things, forgot him until such time as he should do something foolish enough to bring him to public notice.

For some days he mooned about the camp, peering at its activities through his spectacles, but apparently having none of his own unless a desire for information might be so classed. It was Uncle Billy who finally discovered the reason for his stay in Yellow Horse, and made report to the junta at the Golden Light.

"I been talkin' to this pilgrim," he announced, with some importance, "and while he ain't a perfessor, Soames is wrong as usual. This yere pilgrim not only reads books, but he writes 'em. In fact, he's actually here to write one."

This announcement was received in blank astonishment. Yellow Horse, in view of its inhabitants, offered no literary field.

"What about?" Mr. Stevens asked, with deep suspicion.

"About us," Uncle Billy replied.

"He don't write no book about me," the bad man declared positively. "I don't allow it."

"Now wait a minute," Uncle Billy pleaded. "He don't aim to write a book about nobody, pers'nal. As he onfurls his layout to me, his name is Walter Putnam Hale, and he comes from way back East, about whar them old Pilgrim Fathers landed with their wives, Plymouth Rocks, game chickens and

sim'lar live stock; and thar started to hew out a home in the wilderness, sustained by faith, bell-mouthed guns, European whisky, and the knowledge that they'd be shoved in the calaboose if they went back.

"In them early days that Eastern seaboard was the Western border, and them old people had to root, hog, or die. Times was tough and Injuns plenty. But with prayer, blockhouses and bounties on scalps they pulled through. Then the border and settlement behind it moved out to and over the Alleghenies in the days of Dan'l Boone, Jim Harrod and Lew Wetzel. Then she shifts again to west o' the Big Muddy, onto the plains and across them to the mountains, and now she's movin' faster by virtue of britch-loadin' guns, six-shooters, canned tomatters and other agencies of civ'lization.

"They's even optimists which predicts that them plains is good for something besides buff'lo, jack rabbits and antelope, and that some day they'll be settled up. And though them optimists is crazy, of course, nevertheless it's a fact that a heap of country once thought to be worthless has been settled up, and folks has to pay taxes for livin' in it.

"It's this hist'ry of settlement that this pilgrim is int'rested in, and he aims to write a book about it. He's covered them old times back East as well as he can by the signs left by the early inhabitants, and now he's come West to see how she's makin' out, and what for a layout she is, and how we turn the game. He puts it up that we're pioneers of the West to-day, and he's int'rested in Yellow Hoss accordin'."

Yellow Horse, which had never thought of itself as anything but a prosaic workaday camp, was flattered.

"Gen'rally," Uncle Billy concluded," this pilgrim wants to find out. In the East thar's a heap of ign'rance about this man's West, coupled with scand'lous rumors about how shy we be on law and even civ'lization. Accordin' to them, human life ain't safe here, and murder stalks red-handed. These ridic'lous tales is current back East."

"Does this pilgrim indorse them views?" Mr. Tabor asked. "For, if he does, his pop'larity will be that of a polecat at a picnic."

"He don't hold them theories," Uncle Billy assured his friends. "He's out to observe for himself and write accordin'."

"The diff'rence between the East and the West, as I see it," said Bowerman, "is that in the former human life is regarded as sacred, but it ain't safe—while out here it ain't sacred much, but it's safe enough long's as its owner looks after it. The West, adoptin' the enlightened policy of the open diplomacy, packs its hardware in full view; while the East indulges in the suicidal habit of carryin' its gun in its hip pocket, the eternal truth that the waistband is the only proper place in your pants for a gun apparently not havin' penetrated there.

"Owin' to this dang'rous habit of packin' a gun where it can't be got at when needed, nobody knows who's heeled and who ain't, and in consequence many a gent lands in on his home on high before he's expected. But in the West an unarmed man is safe in the knowledge that if he's killed his murderer will stretch a rope. In the East, however, he walks in peril."

"And that's a fact," Mr. Stevens concurred. "One time I goes East as far as Chicago; and when I appears on the street thar a town marshal in uniform objects to my gun. Accordin'ly, to comply with what I thinks is the custom of the camp, I leaves my six-shooters with the barkeep. In my innocence I attributes the bulges I notes on the hips of citizens to the social habit of carryin' flasks.

"What reveals my error is the circumstance that a dray hoss falls down, breaks a laig, and is shot. At the crack of the ca'tridge every man in earshot jumps like his nerves is on the stretch —which likely they be, livin' thar— and reaches for his hip pocket, and I sees that them bulges ain't flasks, but short guns. I've been walkin' all careless in a town whar every gent but me is heeled! The dangers of a camp whar men is so careless of human life as to pack guns in their tobacker pockets appalls me; and, collectin' my artillery from the barkeep I pulls my freight for the West and safety."

"To come back to this pilgrim," Uncle Billy reminded his friends. "As I sees it, it's the duty of this camp, as representin' the spirit of peace, progress and prosperity dominatin' the West, to blaze out a plain trail for him to follow in his lit'ry journey, and to give him a fav'rable impression of our high standards of regard for the safety of human life and property."

"For once," Mr. Soames agreed grudgingly, "you're talkin' sense. Yeller Hoss don't shrink from publicity, but courts it. It looks to me like a good hangin' right at the go-off would go far to create a fav'rable impression on this pilgrim's mind concernin' the safety of human life with us; and I tharfore move we hang somebody."

"That's a thoughtful suggestion," Bowerman admitted, "provided we pick the right party."

"Sev'ral times," said Uncle Billy, "I've told this camp we'd orter got out and round up and hang old Timber Hoss and his nephew, Diggin' Badger. Hangin' improves them two Injuns a lot. And a double hangin' shows enterprise, same as a two-ring circus."

"While concedin' that the Hoss and Badger would be the better for hangin'," said Bowerman, "yet there's practical objections. They'd take some catchin'; pilgrims in their ign'rance looks with favor on Injuns, consid'rin' them to be simple children of Nature and even human bein's; and then they's wards of the nation, and hangin' them, even in a good cause, likely makes trouble."

"I figures," Mr. Stevens suggested, "that this man which calls himself Paddon and lands in camp a few weeks ago, is about due. Though he ain't done nothing here yet that we can take hold of, some remarks he lets fall while drunk starts me lookin' up his back trail, and I find he's a killer, with a record of about six men. In every one of them homicides his victim has a gun in his hand or is reachin' for it when Paddon downs him. So he ain't hanged yet. None the less, he's a murderer, havin' fixed it every time so's he had better than an even break, and he's due to have a pony walk out from under him beneath a limb."

"The trouble is," Bowerman objected, "is that Paddon so far ain't downed nobody in this camp; and to hang him for killin' which other communities has held to be squar'—or, at least, ain't hanged him for—would be to throw on dog and assume airs of superior virtue. Also, it might not impress this historian fav'rable, which, after all, is the end in view. Do I hear any further nom'nations on this rope ticket?"

But other suggestions offered were merely tentative or inspired by rough humor. The camp of late had been quiet, nothing having occurred to disturb its serenity since the advent of a bad man who had undertaken to run things, in which endeavor he had run foul of Mr. Stevens, and had been buried with a respect proper to the spirit of enterprise shown by him in life.

When Mr. Walter Putnam Hale, who had dwelt from his youth up in a center of culture in the extreme East,

made up his mind to visit the then somewhat wild West with a view to procuring firsthand data for the later chapters of his forthcoming "History of American Settlement," his decision was received with amazed incredulity by a select circle of friends of both sexes, who regarded the said West as a *terra incognita*—on a par, say, with darkest Africa, or even below that par.

But when it became evident that he really meant to go, they united to give him a hearty send-off. He was the recipient of much well-meant advice, several excellent dinners, two handkerchief cases smelling of sachet powders, a steamer rug, a silver flask, and a copy of the "Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius—pocket edition, in tooled leather.

This last gift he carried in the side pocket of his coat and dipped into it when he felt the need of mental stimulus. It was this which had given him professorial status in the observing eyes of Uncle Billy.

To digress for a moment from Mr. Hale—slightly earlier in point of time, Mr. Paddon, the nominee for hanging of Mr. Stevens, had received a send-off from a Western community which he had honored by his presence. The send-off differed in detail from that accorded Mr. Hale, as did the sentiments of those taking part in it.

"The committee," said its spokesman to Mr. Paddon, "gives you twelve hours to leave camp."

"What's the matter with this camp?" Mr. Paddon demanded in injured tones. "Don't Wheeler have his gun on his hand when I lands him?"

"All the same," the spokesman returned obdurately, "the camp don't consider you an asset. If at the end of twelve hours your room ain't where your company now is, you'll bend a limb."

"If a gent," Mr. Paddon responded with hauteur, "is to be swung off for downin' another which is goin' after his gun at the time, it's a whipsaw, and human life ain't safe in this camp. Therefore, I quits her gladly; and I don't need twelve hours to do it in."

The circumstances leading up to this urgent invitation to become absent had to do with a homicide for which Mr. Paddon was responsible. Technically, it was a "killing," as distinguished from a murder in the code of the old West; the deceased Wheeler having been armed and in the act of drawing a weapon to exterminate Mr. Paddon, who had beaten him to it. Technically, then, Mr. Paddon had been justified; but as he had figured in other homicides of like nature, the committee of public safety, though it gave him the benefit of the doubt in the case, also gave him the option aforesaid.

Mr. Paddon came to Yellow Horse, where he got drunk, and let fall certain personal information which had aroused the professional interest of "Bad Bill" Stevens, whose specialty in the capacity of the camp's unofficial marshal was suppressing the aspirations of visiting bad men. He instituted inquiries, and as a result acquired a line on Mr. Paddon, whom he held in contempt, though he did not underrate his dangerous qualities.

Both men were killers; but while Mr. Stevens never looked for trouble and cheerfully took an even break when it came, relying on his superior speed with a gun, Paddon's killings had been more or less premeditated and arranged with a minimum of risk to himself. That is, having decided to kill a certain man, he provoked him into drawing or attempting to draw a weapon. Knowing exactly what he was about gave him the fractional second of advantage which was all that was necessary, for he was a good pistol shot. He avoided the even break and would not have taken one with a recognized expert such as Bill Stevens.

A short time after his arrival in

Yellow Horse, Paddon staked a claim adjacent to that of a man named Craddock, who was placering with the help of his son, a lad of about sixteen. The men got into a dispute concerning boundary lines. The dispute did not go to the final arbitrament of the six-shooter, but Paddon made up his mind to kill Craddock, and merely awaited a favorable opportunity and an excuse.

He found the excuse in an unwise reference to himself by Craddock made to a third person, to the effect that Paddon had endeavored to jump his claim. To call a man a claim jumper in a mining camp of that era was equivalent to calling him a horse thief on the plains, and was a perfectly good *casus belli.*

Paddon awaited an opportunity to tax Craddock with this statement, force a quarrel and kill him. But Craddock thought the trouble such as it was had blown over. He was glad of that, for he had received an inkling of Mr. Paddon's record.

To return to Mr. Hale—Yellow Horse did not entertain him by the spectacle of a hanging, single or double, principally for a lack of legitimate material. He remained in the camp, studying it and the manner of life of its inhabitants, familiarizing himself with the atmosphere of a primitive frontier community, so that in his own view he might write understandingly of the pioneer.

On the whole he was favorably impressed. Yellow Horse seemed as peaceful as an elm-shaded Eastern hamlet. Weapons seemed to be worn for adornment rather than for use. He did not see a drawn gun. There was no promiscuous shooting such as he had read of; bibulous gentlemen seemed good natured; gambling, though hundreds of dollars lay on the turn of a card, was as quiet as a game of whist for points. He began to discount the stories he had heard. Meanwhile he became persona grata to the leading spirits who were wont to congregate at the Golden Light, and now and then joined them, listening to their views, which, though often at variance with his own and essentially primitive, he was forced to admit were intensely practical.

Though he did not know it, he was under the capable guardianship of Mr. Stevens, deputed to see that his way was made smooth and that the impressions he received were favorable. The gunman kept unobtrusively in the offing; but very effectively suppressed incipient plans of humorous souls to enliven Mr. Hale's sojourn.

"This pilgrim," Mr. Stevens announced discouragingly to certain of these, "writes books, and he's out to compile one about the West, includin' one of Yellow Hoss. That book—or at least, the chapters of it dealin' with this camp—is goin' to be as peaceful as the hist'ry of Mary's little lamb—or else it'll be as smoky as Gettysburg. Lie to this historian all you like; but the gent that plays hoss with him, plays hoss with me."

Into this general and unwonted harmony, however, Mr. Paddon threw a note of discord. Possibly he had not heard Mr. Stevens' warning, or did not heed it; or he was not possessed of that fervid spirit of local patriotism typical of Western communities. At any rate, having imbibed considerable liquor, he attempted to exploit some rough humor upon Mr. Hale who had chanced to enter the bar of the Golden Light. As a preliminary he insisted that the latter drink whisky with him.

Mr. Hale, who had never heard of Mr. Paddon and knew nothing of his homicidal reputation, saw merely a tough specimen slightly inebriated who was proffering rough hospitality, and he drank the whisky merely to be courteous.

But when Mr. Paddon went far-

ther and proceeded to indulge in humor of standard wild-West brands, he met with unexpected opposition. Mr. Hale, though mild of aspect, possessed plenty of nerve and a high respect for his own dignity. He refused to comply with Mr. Paddon's commands, and the latter with startling facility produced a murderous-looking gun, which in fact was as murderous as it looked.

"Dance, or lose some toes!" Mr. Paddon commanded ultimatumwise, and meant it.

But at this juncture Bad Bill, who had entered unseen by Mr. Paddon, declared himself in the merry game. Mr. Hale was facing him, looking at him past Paddon's gun, and neither then nor subsequently could he tell how Bill's hand became filled with a weapon the counterpart of Paddon's.

"Hands up, Paddon!" Mr. Stevens commanded crisply from that gentleman's rear. "Drop your gun. Fast!"

Mr. Paddon, being too well versed in etiquette to disobey or even to delay, let his artillery fall, and with his hands well elevated turned to face the interrupter of legitimate sport. When he recognized Mr. Stevens he was somewhat relieved in spite of the latter's reputation with a gun, for so far as he knew he had no quarrel with him; but there were men who would have shot him on sight and possibly would have been justified.

"What you standin' me up for?" he demanded hardily.

"I've done give it out," Mr. Stevens explained, "that humor at the expense of this pilgrim, like makin' him dance to gun music, don't go. Pick up your gun and put her back in your belt, but don't roll her none while you're doin' it."

When Mr. Paddon had complied, handling the weapon as gingerly as if it had been a live rattlesnake, Mr. Stevens holstered his own gun and stood empty handed. "I've been lookin' up your back trail, Paddon," he said, "and I find you have a record of sev'ral paralytics and blind folks that went fumblin' around for guns. You claims to be some bad, and some sudden with a six-shooter. Yere's an even break with me, if you wants it."

But the even break, especially with a recognized expert, was no part of Mr. Paddon's system of homicide. Privately he made up his mind to kill Mr. Stevens by that system if he could arrange it, or to shoot him in the back if a favorable opportunity offered; but he pretended to treat the present incident as a misunderstanding.

Bill Stevens, who interpreted Paddon's sentiments and intentions very accurately, left the bar with Mr. Hale, being careful not to turn his back as he withdrew. Outside, Bowerman and Uncle Billy sat smoking in meditative silence, chairs atilt, quite ignorant of the tendency of the barometer to fall. Joining them, Mr. Stevens placed a chair to face the door and sat down, hitching his starboard battery forward convenient to his hand.

Uncle Billy promptly rose and set his own chair back against the wall between two empty whisky barrels whose resilient oaken staves promised shelter if needed.

"Who you watchin' out for, Bill?" he inquired from his bombproof.

"I stands up Paddon a minute ago," the gunman responded, and explained succinctly. "I sees he makes up his mind to get me first chance."

"Do you mean," Mr. Hale asked, with a sense of shock, "that this man, Paddon, may try to shoot you for intervening in my behalf?"

"I don't reckon he'll come a-shootin," Stevens replied; "but then he might."

"Then unwittingly I have put you in danger!" Mr. Hale exclaimed.

"It's more likely Paddon that's in danger," the gunman returned grimly. "He don't trap me into no cinch gun

plays, which is how he makes his killin's."

"Do I understand," Mr. Hale asked, "that he has killed men?"

"Half a dozen that I knows of," Mr. Stevens returned equably. "However, I think he's at the end of his string."

Mr. Hale's sensations were those of one who unwittingly has shared his blankets with a rattlesnake. Suddenly he felt weak.

"In the end," said Bowerman, who had not deigned to move his chair, which argued a fine trust in Providence or in Mr. Stevens, "them killers don't prevail. A killer is a marked man and he don't last."

"When you speak of a 'killer,'" Mr. Hale queried, "do you mean any man who has taken human life?"

"A man," Bowerman returned, "may have killin's crowded onto him, or in the way of business, such as when he's sheriff or town marshal, but he ain't a killer in the sense I mean. A killer kills because he likes to. He's bloodthirsty as a weasel. Sometimes he's a roarin' lion; but more often he's sly, furtive, and nervous quick to strike —which don't mean he won't shoot it out when he has to. Usual he will, havin' the choice between that and hangin'.

"Knowin' he's goin' to kill gives him the advantage, the other party not re'lizin' his peril till it's too late; or, if he knows, bein' awed by the other's rep'tation. As the killer's record of dead men mounts, he gets confidence, which leads him to take longer chances, and need less excuse to kill.

"As a rule, he don't stay long in one place, because public opinion won't let him, though it may fall short of hangin' him, and his victim may have a friend lookin' for revenge. He wanders from town to town and from camp to camp, and his record is one of blood. But, as I says, he don't last. If he ain't hanged, sooner or later he meets up with somebody a shade faster. Maybe another killer. Or somebody who knows him and his record and knowin' it's kill or be killed, don't stand on etiquette, but coldly downs him. Which is regarded as simple justice."

"'He that liveth by the sword, by the sword shall he perish,'" Mr. Hale quoted.

"While I ain't posted on swords," Bowerman agreed, "that's true of six-shooters. No killer lasts. And this Paddon won't. In fact, if he downs anybody in this camp and ain't able to show a plumb good reason for it, apart from bein' faster with his gun, we'll hang him merely on his record."

Paddon did not emerge from the Golden Light. Talk became desultory. The mountain ranges to the eastward, seemingly close at hand, patched with bare rock along their flanks, with dark green of spruce and fir and lighter green of cottonwood running out at last in the stunted growth of timberline topped by gaunt, gray crags, swam and shimmered in the baking heat of the afternoon sun radiating from their vast pile.

They seemed near, imminent, dominating—dwarfing man and his feeble, crude works. Through the lazy heat, pervading it, sounded the ceaseless, steady, murmurous roar of the Yellow Horse, rushing down from its snow-fed headwaters.

Down the street came the man Craddock with his young son. The man plodded, dirty and tired; but the boy, though equally dirty, trod with the light step of youth. The dirt which clung to both was the clean dirt of earth and water. Apparently they had come from work on their claim. The man wore a gun; and so did the boy, a small-calibered six-shooter—by Western standards a mere toy.

Bowerman frowned thoughtfully as the pair approached.

"Oh, Craddock," he said as they

came opposite, "come and set down a while."

"Ain't got time," Craddock responded. "When I get a drink and some grub, I'm goin' back."

"Get your drink some other place," Bowerman advised.

"Why?" Craddock wanted to know.

"Paddon's inside, and he's drinkin'," Bowerman replied.

"Me and Paddon ain't on the outs," Craddock returned, with a carelessness which seemed a trifle assumed. "I'm headed here for a drink, and I gets it here." With which ultimatum he turned into the golden Light, followed by the boy.

Bowerman shook his head.

"I reckon I made a mistake, tellin' Craddock as I did. His pride wouldn't let him go somewhere else, specially with his boy hearin'."

"The fear of bein' thought afraid," Uncle Billy observed sagely from his oaken shelter, "makes some men heroes; but it also makes others corpses. It's a form of pride which I shuns."

"He may be all right with Paddon, like he says," Bowerman suggested.

"You never know when you're all right with a wolf like Paddon," said Mr. Stevens. "And Craddock's been talkin' too much when he's been drinkin'. Also he's been drinkin' too much. It's tough on the boy, but likewise lucky for Craddock that he has him. The kid looks after the old man like he was his mother."

Mr. Hale was interested. He learned that Craddock's boy looked after his father solicitously, kept camp for him, doing the cooking and chores and worked with him on his claim.

Yellow Horse furnished no companions of his own age. He was a close-mouthed youngster, bred in a hard school. By circumstances beyond his control he was being defrauded of the birthright of youth.

"I don't know," Mr. Stevens observed, after a thoughtful pause, "but I'd better go in and ride herd on Craddock. I don't trust Paddon, none whatever, and——"

From within the Golden Light came sudden commotion, voices raised in anger, a crash as of a falling body, a moment of dead silence, the flat report of a gun in confined space, and a second thudding fall.

"I judge it's too late," said Bowerman. "Craddock should have took warning."

"Still, maybe we can hang Paddon on this," Mr. Stevens observed with optimism, rising briskly. "I goes in, stands him up and takes his guns."

"Will he give them up?" the awe-stricken Mr. Hale asked.

"If he don't," Mr. Stevens returned grimly, "he shorely won't need hangin'."

But at this juncture Joe Polk, the bartender, emerged, wearing an air of annoyance mingled with ennui.

"Come on in, somebody, and give me a hand," he requested. "I dishes up this camp's drinks cheerful, single-handed, at all hours; but it ain't my job to skid up its dead. And Paddon is a right heavy corpse."

"Paddon!" Mr. Stevens exclaimed in a surprise shared by the others. "Does Craddock down him?"

"It ain't Craddock; it's his boy," Polk replied. "Paddon picks a fuss with Craddock, knocks him down, and with him on the floor draws his gun. And just then the kid cuts in with his little pea shooter, and lands Paddon. It's the neatest work for a boy that ever I sees."

Bowerman listened to this succinct statement and looked thoughtful.

"In the int'rests of justice I reckon we better have an inquest," he decided with a glance at Mr. Hale. "We sets her for eight o'clock to-night, so's not to interfere with the camp's meals and poker. Meanwhile, somebody round

up a couple of roustabouts, and stake 'em to shovels and whisky to dig a grave with; and somebody fetch Paddon's blankets, and lay him out so's he'll be a handy package for shelvin' after he's been viewed by the jury.

At eight o'clock such citizens as had leisure and sufficient curiosity, crowded the Golden Light. Mr. Paddon's reputation had become pretty well known, and his taking off by a mere boy stimulated interest. Bowerman empaneled his jury without delay, under the foremanship of Mr. Soames.

"What we got to work on to-night," Bowerman informed them, "is the mortal remains of the gent that called himself Paddon in this camp—other names which he passed under at diff'rent times in other camps being irrelevant to the present issue, which is: was he killed squar'?

"The immediate cause of Mr. Paddon bein' snatched from our midst is a little 32-caliber slug, which as a rule wouldn't more than make a growed-up man scratch himself. But this little germ of lead, insignificant as it seems, happens to catch Mr. Paddon in a soft spot under the right eye, and stops the deal of life for him right thar.

"At the time he bumps into this chunk of lead travelin' the other way, Mr. Paddon, who had been drinkin' some, is attemptin' to attack our feller citizen, Mr. Craddock. The nature of the dispute between him and Craddock ain't relevant, because Craddock don't down him. The main thing is that Paddon has his gun in his hand and is hostile as a wolf. Craddock's son, seein' his sire in peril and seized by a nat'ral and praiseworthy impulse to defend the author of his bein', pulls the little gun he packs and onhooks her. With results to Mr. Paddon as stated. In the view of this court, it's quick and creditable work for a boy, even allowin' for luck, and in the same class as that of the son of William Tell, that sech of us as has learned to read has read of in the hist'ry of our beloved country."

"With deference to the great learnin' of the court," Foreman Soames interrupted, "he makes a slight historical error. The son of William Tell never done no shootin' that hist'ry records of. It was old Bill himself. He had a feud with the sheriff of his county over a hog or something, and for a while he allowed he'd bushwhack him. But a sense of fairness prevails, and meetin' up with him one day at the county fair, he allows he'll show him what he can do with a gun.

"So he fills up a tin cup with whisky, puts it on his son's head, steps off thirty paces, and puts a bullet right spang through the cup. 'Thar, George Gessler,' he says to the sheriff, 'is a sample of my gun work. It's just the tender mercy of hell watchin' over you that nothin' goes wrong; for, if I'd creased the boy, I'd have spoiled your belt buckle with my other gun. And this historical incident is the origin of the practice, former prevalent on the frontier, of friends, when they's drunk enough to wish to exhibit brotherly love, shootin' whisky off'n each other's heads."

"Also with deference to the learnin' of the court," said Uncle Billy, "and interruptin' these solemn proceedin's in the int'rests of historical accuracy only, I myself learned to read readin' and some writin' in the days of my boyhood; and with other youths I then peroosed the hist'ry of this Bill Tell, the same standin' out in mem'ry cl'ar as a Sharps' sights.

"And while Mr. Soames has the main outlines of that event as correct as he usual has anything, which ain't sayin' much, the details he gives ain't historical correct. F'r instance, this feud of Tell's was with the governor of his State, and not with the sheriff

of his county, Tell bein' a delegate against him at the prim'ries.

"He don't meet him at a county fair, but at a tax sale; he don't shoot a cup of whisky, but instead an apple, off'n his boy's head; and he don't shoot with a gun at all, but with a bow-arrer. I makes these triflin' corrections in the int'rests of truth and the early hist'ry of America."

"It is highly gratifyin' to me, Mr. Coroner," said Mr. Soames, with elaborate courtesy, "to see my esteemed and ancient friend at last exhibitin' an int'rest in the truth—which usual he don't bother about. When I said Bill Tell shot whisky off'n his boy's head, I may have been astray in a technical detail, some historians holdin' that it was applejack, thus furnishin' a basis for that apple myth, to which extent I stand corrected.

"Again, as to whether he used a gun or a war bow, historians differ, it bein' most likely a gun, though smooth-bore, rifled bar'ls not havin' come in then, which makes his work all the more creditable. But where my ancient friend is in grave error is in attributin' the location of these events to Amercan hist'ry. This yere Tell was a Swiss; so nachrally this feat of his was performed among them Alps in Sweden."

"All these remarks is wide of the target," Bowerman observed, frowning. "For present purposes it don't matter where Tell lived, whether he shot off apples or applejack, or whether he used a war bow or a Hawkenses eight squar' rifle. What we are here for to-night is to find out official what we know already about how Paddon lands in on high. You, Craddock, tell us about it."

"Me and my boy," said Craddock, "had been workin' on our claim all day, and needin' a drink I comes in to get one, and the boy comes with me. He don't drink licker yet—that is, and let me catch him at it—but I figgers maybe Joe can scare up a lemonade or some such for him. You warns me about Paddon, but I think it's all right, and anyway I ain't goin' to have it said that I'm dodgin' him.

"However, he starts in to pick a fuss with me over something he says I've said about him bein' a claim jumper. Bein' warned of Mr. Paddon's rep'tation for eggin' on a man to reach for his gun so's he can kill him in self-defense, I'm careful not to give him the chance, and keeps my hands strictly away from my hardware. He then calls me a coward, an ab'litionist, and other hard names, and he hits me, knockin' me down.

"On the floor, figgerin' he'll shoot me right there, I tries to get out my gun, but she sticks. I'm lookin' up at him at the time and his gun's in his hand, and he's sorter grinnin' and I knows I'm a gone coon. But just then a little, blue spot jumps up below his right eye, I hears a gun, and Mr. Paddon, lookin' mighty s'prised, comes ahead on his face. Which is all I know about it—except also that I'm glad to see it."

"And that's cl'ar enough," said Bowerman with approval. "Joe Polk will now give his evidence. Joe, does Craddock's yarn check up with what you observed?"

"Right to a hair," the bartender corroborated. "Craddock is down and strugglin' for his gun, and Paddon steps back, fills his hand, and grins. He figgers he's makin' another cinch killin', I reckons. When the kid cuts in I'm reachin' for a six-shooter to down Paddon myself—not that I'm out to kill anybody's meat, still less to discourage youthful enterprise. But the fact is, I ain't noticin' the boy; I'm watchin' Paddon, who is too promiscuous with a gun, and drunk as he is, may vi'late etiquette by shootin' the barkeep. The first I notice of the kid

is smoke comin' out of his hand, and Paddon openin' his eyes wide in s'prise, like he saw some angels—which, if he did, his s'prise ain't to be wondered at."

"All right," said Bowerman. "We'll now hear from the kid. Stand up, son, and tell us about it."

The boy, a dark, squarely built, bullet-headed lad with a steady eye, looked toward his father for guidance. In the look there was the loyal devotion of a dog. The man, whatever his shortcomings, held the adoration of his son.

"Tell the truth, Bud," the father advised. "This is one of the right times to do it."

But the boy, abashed by this publicity before his elders, looked down, twirling a ragged hat in his fingers.

"Speak up, son," said Bowerman kindly. "Tell us how come you to down Paddon."

"He was fixin' to plug pap," the boy mumbled.

"Yes." Bowerman nodded encouragingly. "You saw him knock your pappy down and reach for his gun, so you went after yours to protect your parent. Is that about it?"

"He called my pap names," the boy offered. "He was tryin' to get him to draw, so's he could kill him. I was watchin' his gun hand, and I had my hand on my own gun all the time, but he didn't pay no 'tention to me. Then he busted my pap, and knocked him galley-west, and stepped back and pulled his gun, and leaned forward like a coiled rattler, and I knowed pap didn't have a chance. So I yanked my own gun and cut loose at him, and down he come. A man," the boy added, with an air of reflective surprise, "kills as easy as a chicken, and don't flop round near as much."

"It depends, son," Bowerman instructed him, "a lot on where he's hit. We now know official," he went on, "all about this killin', havin' heard from about all present at it, except Paddon himself, who ain't in any shape to enlighten us verbal, but is good silent testimony. There don't seem to be no sort of doubt that he was framin' it to kill Craddock, and had his gun in his hand for said purpose, when the kid cuts in. These bein' the ondoubted facts, I reckon thar ain't much difficulty about the findin' of the jury, which I'll be pleased to receive."

"We find," said Mr. Soames on behalf of his fellow jurors after brief consultation, "that the deceased came to his death by the infallible method of lookin' for it long enough, the immediate cause bein' lead poisonin'. Also we would add a recommendation that in the int'rests of higher education and to encourage youthful genius, the camp chips in enough to buy the Craddock kid a bigger gun, say about .41 caliber, which it's time he had."

"The verdict and the recommendation is a credit to the intelligence and hoss sense of the jury, and the court finds accordin'," said Bowerman with approval. "Somebody pass the hat, donations not bein' limited to the cost of a six-shooter, but stretchin' to include a rifle, so's the boy's education won't be one-sided. As there's plenty of light left, we may's well turn in and plant Paddon now, thus cleanin' up as we go along, and leavin' nothin' in the riffles of the box.

"It's onfortunate that at the moment there's no one in camp capable of puttin' up a prayer with any carry to it; but, after all, in this case, sech petitions is likely a long shot with a limb in the way. Though Mr. Paddon has left us, and we regrets his passin' more or less, we bears up. In Yeller Hoss, in the words of the poet, our lives once more glides on like rivers that waters the woodland, darkened by shadders of earth, but reflectin' the image of heaven. Court's adjourned."

Partners

In three parts—Part III

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

Author of "Morningstar and the Navajo," "Thimblerig," Etc.

Finishing the story of two mining partners, of the woman one of them unexpectedly brought out as his wife, and of what happened when the mine went bad.

CHAPTER X.

ED GOES TO TOWN.

THE kitchen windows shone; the kitchen floor had been scrubbed; the tinware—pots, pans, and kettles—seemed brighter. Even the stove had a different look. And the big room Mary had judiciously revised and expurgated until it had taken on a glow of cleanliness and freshness that amazed the men. There were short, bright curtains at the windows, and two Navajo blankets on the floor; and she had hung two or three pictures. The men praised her—Bill in a large, proprietary way; Ed with a more specific appreciation of what she had accomplished in such a short time, having so little to work with. Mary was radiant, filled with enthusiasm for her new home and its possibilities. They had dinner. Bill's foot pained him, and Mary insisted that he do no more work that day. There were easy tasks at home: firewood to get in, weeding to do in the dooryard, and a stovepipe to be taken down and cleaned. Bill was more anxious to please his wife than he was to do the actual work; but he tackled it. And Ed finally sauntered up to the mine and spent the afternoon cleaning out the drift, that they might get down to actual work next morning.

After supper they sat in front of the log fire and talked and planned. The new cabin was the theme of their conversation. A tent was well enough in summer, and Ed said he was quite satisfied to camp for a month or two longer; but winter would call for a solid roof and walls and a stove.

"One load of lumber," said Ed, "will be all I'll need—two by fours, shingles and flooring. I can cut the logs on the spur above the bench and roll 'em to the edge and let 'em slide. Won't take long to put up a twelve by twelve, with a shed at the back for firewood."

He said there was no reason why the cabin should not be ready to use a month after he began cutting the timber for it, and that Bill could keep on working in the mine after they had got the logs notched and laid—a two-man job. The rest of the work would go pretty fast.

Mary was keenly interested in all the details.

"But if you slide the logs down that steep hill, over the rock and shale, won't it knock all the bark off them?" she asked.

"Yes, it will peel them some," admitted Ed. "But peeled logs are better, anyway. Bark makes an awful good hang-out for all kinds of bugs and beetles and borers. The worst of it is they don't stick to the bark. They get to exploring beds and provisions."

"I hadn't thought of that," said Mary, laughing.

"That's why Ed and I peeled the logs for this cabin," stated Bill. But he did not add that it had been Ed's suggestion and that he had fought it as a waste of time, until Ed had volunteered to peel the logs himself.

Ed smiled. But why shouldn't Bill shine in Mary's eyes? Mary was worth a little exaggeration, any time. In fact, Ed Lester was beginning to think that Mary Watson was about the nicest woman he had ever met. It wasn't altogether her looks, though—or her voice or her way of doing things. It was a quality difficult to define. He thought he knew what it was. Mary Watson was attractive without trying to be so, or being conscious of it. And Ed was satisfied with explaining the matter to himself thus. It did not occur to himself that in giving so much thought to her he was in any way disloyal to himself or to Bill or Mary. If he had even dreamed that he was falling in love with her, he would have left.

Presently Ed got up and went over to his bunk and lay down. He smoked and gazed at the fire, at Bill and Mary, at the corner shadows, the Navajo rugs on the floor. Mighty cheery and comfortable, all of it.

"Sleepy?" asked Mary, turning her head toward what had been known as "Ed's end of the cabin."

"No. But the fire was so hot I was *getting* sleepy," explained Ed. "You see, I've been out for a couple of weeks, sleeping in the open. Even a roof kind of crowds a fellow after he's been in the open right along."

"I always wanted to go on a real camping trip," said Mary. "I've lived in the West all my life, but I've never made a real trip into the timber country or the desert."

"Lots of folks that way," commented Bill drowsily. "They feel that the country they work in ain't no place to play in, so they mostly head for town for their vacation."

"Well, I can look after things any time Bill and you want to take a trip back in the hills. You could take along plenty of blankets and grub—pack Jenny and Johnny. The country up there is sure pretty, right now."

"I guess this is almost like campin', for Mary, right here?" said Bill.

Mary nodded and smiled. "Some day we'll all make a trip into the mountains—the whole family," she said.

Mighty nice of her, thought Bill. But he didn't quite like it, just the same. It was kind of soon to plan to invite Ed along. But, of course, Mary had said that just to be polite. Bill settled back in the big chair, his feet crossed, his hands folded on his lap. He yawned suddenly and with a star-

tling sound. Mary thought of tigers and lions or some similar animals. She had heard some animal make a noise like that. Bill nodded, dozed, and presently snored softly.

Ed Lester swung out of the bunk, nodded good night to Mary, and tiptoed out to the kitchen, where he drank a dipper of water. Quietly he closed the kitchen door after him.

Mary noticed that Bill's head had dropped forward, with his mouth partly open. He slept like an old man. But he wasn't old! He was tired, and his foot had been paining him. Naturally he would be worn out after his long drive. He would have to take it easy for a day or two longer. He had talked of going to town for the rest of her things. But no. Mr. Lester would go—would be glad to go. Of course, Bill could—but he had better rest. And so Mary defended her husband to herself. But would he fall asleep each evening after work and a hearty meal? Some men did, but usually older men than Bill. Would he fall asleep each evening and leave her with no one to talk to or visit with in silent companionship? Two persons could sit before a fire on a cool evening and not talk, and still enjoy a pleasant communion. But not when one of them fell asleep. And suddenly Mary thought of how lonely it might be if she were left to herself, here in the solitude of the hills—if something were to happen to Bill. Mining was dangerous, sometimes.

Bill sat up, rubbed his eyes.

"Gosh! Here I been asleep, and you're here!" he said.

"I'll accept your apology, this time," laughed Mary.

"Where's Ed?"

"He went out to his tent a few minutes ago."

"Well, I guess it's time to turn in." Bill stood up, stretched, and stepped to the kitchen to get a drink of water. "We'll be up right early," he said from the kitchen. "We're goin' to get down to work to-morrow."

Mary said nothing about her opinion that Bill ought to rest up a day or two longer. He wanted to get to work. In fact, Mary surmised that work was about all Bill knew or really cared for. But, after all, he was kind and sincere. And then Mr. Lester was there. She was glad he was intending to stay at the mine. Not that she would not have been happy enough with just Bill, but there was something solid and dependable about Ed Lester.

Sometimes, when Mary felt that she could spare the time, she went up to the mine and watched the men work. But she soon lost interest in watching them drill and set the shots and clean away the rock. There seemed to be nothing to show for their labor. But the arrastra fascinated her Modeled on the old Spanish type, with some slight improvements, the arrastra, to Mary, was the visible and definite instrument of gold producing. The process was primitive enough to be easily understandable, and consequently interesting. Barrowloads of rusty, speckled ore were dumped into the arrastra and pulverized by the clumsy stone crushers—as either Jenny or Johnny walked round and round the great stone saucer, pulling the crude beam. The resultant muddy, sticky-looking mess, as Mary called it, actually contained gold. Water was used to flush the arrastra and precipitate the gold. Then mercury, or "quick," had its share to do in the process.

Bill had explained to her that the ore they put through the arrastra was high grade, selected; that if they were near a railroad tons of the low-grade ore could be handled to advantage.

"We're just taking off the cream," he told her. "And the cream stays good and thick, so far."

It became quite evident to Mary that

her husband was the practical miner, that Ed Lester, while having a general knowledge of the game—and it was a fascinating game for the onlooker—was little better than a laborer. But such a hearty and hard-working laborer! Bill puttered. He was slow, exact, and mechanical in his movements. He was inclined to stop work, sit down, and expound a theory, while Ed listened but kept on working.

And, as often as not, Bill carried the theory on home with him, discussing it at the supper table. There was a sort of to-be-continued-in-our-next quality in these discussions. Not that Ed cared especially about continuing them; but Bill insisted upon doing so. He could leave nothing to the imagination. Bill was stubborn and didactic. He *knew*. Mary and Ed were babes in the woods when it came to practical mining. He could tell them what was what, and he did, whether they were interested or not. And there grew up between Ed and Mary a kind of sympathetic understanding that each was patiently listening to Bill, not because he was interesting or especially instructive, but because they liked him.

About ten days after Mary's arrival, Ed Lester hooked up the mules and drove to Quimby. Mary had revised the list of provisions and household supplies. Then she wanted some of her furniture and rugs. Ed was to fetch these on the buckboard, with the provisions. But the lumber for his new cabin—shingles, flooring, doors, and windows—would have to come in on a wagon. Might be a week, two weeks, before the lumber yard would think of delivering the order.

Also, Ed carried with him considerable gold, for they had struck a pocket the third day after getting back to work, and had taken out a quantity of coarse gold and several small nuggets. The deposit was to one side of the vein they had been following, and had been opened up by a shot which had acted freakishly, disclosing a fissure in what seemed to be a kind of rotten granite. Bill explained, ponderously, that the shot had taken the line of least resistance, that luck had nothing to do with the discovery.

With his errands in mind, and a sense of freedom and well-being counteracting the natural monotony of the journey, Ed vanquished the stubborn miles, "ironed 'em out and let 'em curl behind him," until the oasis of Quimby loomed green and white against the approaching dusk. Ed Lester was not well known in Quimby; in fact, scarcely at all. Two or three knew him. Whenever he was obliged to drive into town, he attended to his errands and drove out again without delay.

This instance, however, was an exception. At best he could not get away before the following evening. Too hot to start at noon; it wouldn't be fair to the mules. He'd give 'em a decent rest for the long pull back with a heavily loaded buckboard.

But he was delayed far beyond the normal time. The furniture that Mary had been obliged to leave was locked in an unused room in the hotel. Ezra Hartmann was away, and his clerk knew nothing as to the whereabouts of the key; nor would he give Ed permission to take the furniture, key or no key, until Mr. Hartmnan had been consulted. Ed asked if the furniture did not belong to Mrs. Watson, and if it had not been understood that she was to send for it. The clerk, who actually knew all about the business relations of Mary and Mr. Hartmann, and their individual properties, nevertheless assumed a dense ignorance of Mary Ryerson's affairs. He went so far as to admit that he thought the furniture beyond to Mrs. Watson; but added that it was stored in a building belonging to his employer, that Mrs.

Watson's lease had expired, and that he had no instructions to allow the removal of the furniture.

Ed listened patiently to all this. Finally, to save time, he offered to go before a lawyer and put up personal security for the furniture. But the clerk declined to bargain. The very word "lawyer" gave him a chill. If he were to legalize the removal of the furniture, and Ezra, returning, disapproved, then good night clerkship and the chance of becoming a browbeaten partner in the business.

Ed left the Hartmann store and went down to Louie Bennett's and drank two bottles of beer. This cooled and quieted him. He gave over the idea of coercion, bribery, or assault. He would wait. Ezra was, vaguely, "in the city." He was expected back daily, almost hourly, which is the poorest assurance that can be offered even a willing waiter. Ed purchased the provisions and supplies, to be called for. He had his hair cut, and listened to the affable Johnny Metz, who enlightened him as to Bill's recent sojourn in Quimby. Johnny dwelt upon the newspaper-office episode at length and lovingly. You oughta seen Johnson's office when Bill got through with it! Course you couldn't prove it was Bill—only Johnson could, and he dassen't. But it was Bill, all right! And how little Frank Bair, the butcher, had cuffed big Al Jones, the liveryman, up to a peak; and Al, instead of belching smoke and fire, had sat down on the floor of the saloon and cried. Now, wouldn't that beat all hell?

Ed agreed that it seemed likely to. Johnny combed and clipped and conversed—actually conversed, for he both asked and answered his own questions. That was his style, especially efficient when his victim was being shaved. Ed had his hair cut. He even went so far as to have his shoes shined.

The next day he spent selecting magazines and books from the scant stock at the Hartmann store and the drug store. Good thing to have books to read in the evenings, especially if you are living in a cabin by yourself. Ed made his selections, to be called for. He could get no new data as to Mr. Hartmann's return. Well, a man couldn't sit around all day. What was there to do? Bright idea! Look around and see if he could not get some hens and a rooster. Take 'em out to the mine. Fresh eggs right along; and Mary could look after producers and product. Mary had said she wished they had some chickens. Ed interviewed several local ranchers, and was referred to the wives, who controlled the chicken market and egg market. Finally Ed purchased six Plymouth Rock hens and a rooster, paying a scandalously big price for them. To be called for. And only one small buckboard for the various packages and boxes! But Ed could pack. What with a tarp and some rope, you could stack a buckboard pretty high.

Ed worried along through another day. And still no news of Ezra Hartmann. One or two citizens who had long since exhausted their credit at the Hartmann store openly declared that Ezra never allowed his piety to interfere with his social life, when he was away from Quimby. But these malingers had to pay cash for groceries or go hungry, and a half-fed man is seldom just in his estimate of character. Finally Ed decided to remove the furniture, Ezra or no Ezra. It belonged to Mary. She owed Mr. Hartmann nothing. That was sufficient for Ed. Yet to break into a locked room belonging to another was technically an illegal proceeding. So Ed technically dodged the risk by trying the window, which was not fastened. It was a big double window, on the side of the building overlooking the alley.

That evening, when Quimby—horse, foot, and dragoons—was at supper, Ed entered the room and, carefully removing the window strips, took out the two sashes. The opening was wider than a doorway and almost as high. Some of the pieces were heavy, but he managed to tip them out and let them down to the ground. The rolled carpet, rugs, chiffonier, washstand, chairs, and table made a formidable-looking pile. Ed thought of buckboard springs and axles. Also of Jenny and Johnny. Yet surreptitious adventure is in itself inspiring. And obstacles, to a man of Ed's fiber, stimulate effort.

However, the stacked furniture did look pretty high and wide, if not handsome. He'd have to have a light wagon; the buckboard was spiritually willing but physically inadequate. Al Jones was at supper. He'd borrow a light wagon and leave the buckboard to be called for. Seemed that everything was being left to be called for. They could hook the buckboard on behind the light load of lumber and tow it to the mine. But the furniture—Mary's precious furniture could not be left to the indifferent handling of the town lumber shover.

And, come to think of it, there were the chickens to transport! He hadn't thought of the chickens for at least thirty minutes. But he had thought of them many a time and oft, since he had bought them. And that is why he planned to travel at night. Common sense would establish the crated chickens on the top of the load. They were live chickens. The journey by daytime would be long and hot. It wouldn't make what you might call a hit with Mrs. Watson if he were to drive up and haul the crate off the wagon and say, kind of offhandlike, "Mrs. Watson, I thought I'd surprise you by fetching along a few chickens and a rooster," only for her to find them cremated.

Meanwhile, Ed was on his way to the livery stable. He was not one to stand and cogitate. In the back yard of the livery stable were many odd craft. He selected a light farm wagon, one that had been used recently and had evidence around the hubs of having been greased. To harness and hitch Jenny and Johnny was but incidental to his progress. Having borrowed the wagon, he might as well borrow a tarpaulin to cover the load. He found one. Back to the alley, with Jenny and Johnny flattening their ears and pretending they were *muy* bronco. Four or five miles of furniture hauling would adjust the ears to a respectable angle —loosen them in their sockets.

It takes a lot of muscle and grit to load a wagon with furniture, single-handed. Ed's ruddy face grew crimson and he indulged in language; but he stacked his load, leaving a space for the chicken crate. Then he climbed into the room, replaced the sash and strips, hammered the brads in with his jackknife, and wiped his brow. He climbed out, pulled the lower sash down, and, taking a bit of bailing wire, worked it in between the upper and lower sash and hooked the catch. Thus far he had been unobserved, but he didn't care about that, one way or the other. But just let any one explain to some one else how the furniture had been taken from the room without unlocking the doors or the window. Quimby would have something to talk about.

He drove out of the alley and down the main street, stopping at the lumber yard to arrange for the delivery of the buckboard at the mine. A few miles farther along the road he gathered up his crate of chickens and roped the load down. Then he lighted his pipe and turned a keen, untroubled face toward the evening mesa. With the philosophy of their kind, Jenny and Johnny settled to the long journey, their pace a walk, their demeanor busi-

nesslike. When Ed allowed them to rest a minute, after pulling a rise, and Johnny did not get into the breast strap promptly, when told to go on, Jenny bared her teeth and nipped his neck. With a loaded wagon to haul, life was real, life was earnest.

Allowing for stops, grades, heavy sand, and the inevitable emergencies of desert travel, they were making about two and a half miles an hour. That would mean about half the distance vanquished by midnight. Then unhook and feed and go into camp for three hours. Then hook up and pull out about three thirty or four. That would mean arriving at the mine along about eight in the morning. Comfortable time to get in, before the sun got too high. Even at eight it would be cool in the canyon. And wouldn't Mary—Ed always thought of her as "Mary," and always called her "Mrs. Watson"—wouldn't Mary be pleased when she saw the big, fat Plymouth Rock rooster and hens!

And, somehow, as he drove along in the pleasant evening air of the big mesa, Ed felt responsible for Mary's happiness, to some extent. If he stopped to ask himself why, he could not find an answer. Mary was Bill's wife. Bill alone was responsible for having fetched her out there in that lonely country. It was all right for a man, but it wasn't a locality many women would care for. And after a while Mary might get tired of it. That would make it pretty tough for Bill. He wasn't what you'd call the most entertaining person in the world. Kind of set in his ways, Bill was. Making a pretty good job of pleasing Mary, right now. But why wade into the possibilities or probabilities of any one's future when the shore line of the present was plainly visible and comparatively safe footing, if you took it easy and watched your step? And even then you were likely to get your feet wet. Ed grinned when he realized how far he had drifted from the road in the haze of speculation which edged the very future he wished to ignore.

With the stars came a thin, cool breeze from the hills. The road was deep rutted through a stretch of heavy sand and gravel. Ed got down and walked, the loose end of the reins wrapped round the spring of the wagon seat. He trusted Jenny and Johnny. What a load a small team of mules could haul if they worked together and wanted to get somewhere! And what a lot of misery just one ornery mule could deal you! Same as humans. Now, Johnny was a good mule. You could ride him, pack him, or drive him in single harness, and he would do his work without a murmur. Yes, he was a good little mule.

But Jenny was the sure-enough rawhide when it came to work. Course, she had her frivolous spells, like all females. But she was the busiest little tail switcher that ever stretched a trace, when it came to real work. She was no saddle animal, and she hated a pack; but put her in harness, single or with her consort, and she was as serious minded and as earnest as a housewife putting up preserves for the winter. Jenny was sure aware of her responsibilities, and also of Johnny's. She had a high standard, and she kept Johnny up to the mark.

The crunching of gravel ceased. The wagon was on firmer ground. Still Ed elected to walk, to stretch his legs and fill his lungs with the cool night air. Presently the mules stopped of their own accord, on the edge of a short, steep pitch into an arroyo. In the dim starlight Ed saw Jenny turn her head and look back at him.

"You're right, old girl!" he said as he climbed to the seat. "This calls for brakes, with the load we got."

He set the hand brake. The wagon slithered and lurched down into the

arroyo. The chickens squawked. Even the rooster, a dignified and ordinarily calm fellow, became flustered at the lurching of the wagon and uttered a shrill, "My! My! My! But this is ter—rible!" Or so Ed interpreted it. Safely across the arroyo, the rooster resumed his dignity and his prestige. However, he had to make a little speech, which Ed was pleased to interpret as: "Keep your seats, ladies. Wait until the car stops!"

"You old four-flusher!" said Ed, laughing. "Trying to make your women think you kept the wagon from upsetting and that you are running the bus! But you're only a bookkeeper."

Miles—still miles of starlight and vague shadows of brush and rock. Ahead were the deeper shadows of the range. The creak of the wagon, the thin, harsh whisper of sand between the brake shoe and the tire, the steady *plut, plut, plut,* of eight small hoofs—a distinctly different sound from the plodding of horses—and, pervading the air, a faint fragrance of greasewood and the rising warmth of the earth.

"You either like it or you hate it," said Ed. "And you can't fool yourself very long, either way." His assertion was vague, like the shapes of the shadows. Jenny's ear flickered back and then forward. Evidently Mr. Lester was not addressing her.

The floor of the mesa—if a table can have a floor—slanted up gently toward the hills. Presently the grade began to make itself felt. Jenny and Johnny stopped to rest. Always they went on again without a word from Ed. But they had made a long, hard haul—close to twelve miles, Ed estimated—and were entitled to a real rest before they tackled the slightly heavier grade into the canyon. Not that they would not have gone on. Any one can take advantage of courage and ambition. But a true horseman never overworks a willing animal.

Moreover, Ed wasn't in nearly so great haste to get back, now that he was well on the way, as he had been in Quimby. He was having a good time, quietly, in his own way. Jenny and Johnny and the chickens were first-rate company, and he had a coffeepot and plenty of food in the wagon. Of course, there were times when a fellow had to hustle. But when you didn't, why not take it easy and get acquainted with yourself?

Ed pulled up at the spring, about eight miles from the foothills. He unhooked the team, took off their bridles, looped up the traces, and turned the mules loose. They weren't hot enough to roll, so he took a chance on that. He put grain in the feed bags, filled his coffeepot, and gathered greasewood roots for a fire. Back at the wagon, he shook one of the bags. The mules came up promptly. He adjusted the nose bags, patted Jenny's shoulder, and then set about making a fire.

When the coffeepot was on the fire and the bacon in the pan, he loosened the hitch on the load and lowered the crate of chickens to the ground. He filled a washbasin with water and loosened a slat on the crate. He set the basin in the crate. Immediately the rooster hopped on the edge of the basin and tipped it over, causing great consternation among the hens. Ed filled the basin and laid a stone in it. The community drank, but paid little attention to the handful of grain which he threw to them.

When he had eaten supper, Ed tied the mules to a wheel of the wagon and hung up the nose bags. There wasn't much else to do but go to sleep. There was a mattress and comforter, blankets and pillows, but they were Mary's, and they were clean. So Ed unloaded the iron bedstead, set it up, adjusted springs and mattress, and, partially undressing, turned in. Mighty soft and comfortable. Mattress, comforter, pil-

low. Roughing it was all right, when you had to. But only a tenderfoot or a fool would sleep on the ground, when there was a bed handy. Wonderful bedroom, also. Curtains down, but lots of fresh air and elbow room. The curtains would roll up soon enough.

Ed was not afraid that he would oversleep. The big rooster had a rich baritone voice. And no healthy, self-respecting rooster would allow his harem to sleep after sunup. Then, along about daylight, the mules would rattle the nose bags and paw and shake themselves. The jingle of a trace hook would awaken him. A fellow gets used to the usual sounds of desert night—even wind and rain, if you are bedded down snug. But any metallic sound, or a sound alien to the environment, will get you up on your elbow, listening. Especially if a fellow has been around live stock much. That pair of cavalry hobbles he had bought in Los Angeles—never could use 'em on a real trip into the back country—every time they jingled you'd wake up. He had given 'em to a Mexican and made a pair of rope hobbles. One of the mules shook itself. The harness rattled and the trace hooks clinked and jingled. Ed grinned, turned over, and in a few seconds he was asleep.

He slept for three undisturbed hours. It seemed like fifteen minutes later that Ed discovered that he was awake, that the stars were fading swiftly. A hint of red tinged the eastern hills. But what was wrong with the rooster? Ed rose on his elbow and peered at the crate. It was empty. Now, a coyote couldn't have pried that slat loose. The mules would have advertised his presence, plenty. Ed had tacked the slat back in place after giving the chickens water. But he discovered—and he didn't stop to dress—that the edge of the crate was split and the nail had not taken hold. Ed hopped back to the bed and got dressed.

He fed the mules and made a breakfast fire. Wasn't light enough to hunt chickens, yet. Mary's chickens loose on the mesa! And about fifteen dollars' worth, at that. He heard a faint "Quirk! Quirk!" and looked up. In the scrawny, lone cottonwood just beyond the spring he saw clumps of feathers. And there was the old rooster peering down, and quirking in a tone which warned Ed not to be too hasty in gathering up the flock. Round the rooster were the hens, perched here and there, their necks hunched down in their feathers. The rooster was the boss, and he was responsible for future proceedings. Let him attend to that.

"If I scare 'em and they stampede," said Ed, "it will be just too bad!"

Cajolery was hopeless. He would have to appeal to their fundamental instincts. So he laid a train of oats from the foot of the tree to the crate and put a liberal handful in the crate. Then he turned his back on the deserters and proceeded to get breakfast for himself. Presently the rooster dropped from the tree. Ed didn't see him, but he heard him. Then, with much speculative clucking and fidgeting, the hens followed. Out of the corner of his eye Ed saw the procession work rapidly toward their normal dwelling place. When the last hen had elbowed her way to the bargain counter, Ed got up casually and nailed the loose slat in place. Without haste, he repacked the wagon, hitched the mules, and climbed to the seat. He wondered if Bill and Mary would believe him when he told them that the chickens had roosted in the old cottonwood by the spring. Plymouth Rocks were heavy birds, with short wings. Anyway, it would make an amusing yarn. Any unusual happening, no matter how trivial, furnishes material for speculation and comment, when you're living on the outskirts of nowhere, and—well, married to a man

like Bill, for instance. Not that Bill wasn't as square as a die. Ed concluded that Bill was almost too much like a die; you always knew just what kind of a thread he would cut. And as a business partner that was mighty satisfactory. But Mary kind of liked to speculate around in her talk, and change the subject at least once or twice during an evening.

And when she did, it always bothered Bill. He never let on, so that you could notice, unless you knew him pretty well. But he couldn't change his gait quickly. He would be walking along like a wise old pack horse, taking good care of his pack—what he was talking about—and, first thing you knew, Mary would be single-footing off on some subject that hadn't anything to do with Bill's trail. Then Bill would stop and turn his head and look at her, just like a wise old pack horse does when some cayuse makes a break from the line; and, though the old pack horse never said anything, his eyes looked like they were thinking, "Now what the devil!" And he'd wait until the train was all straightened out again, when he would switch his tail and plug along, laying his ears back once in a while to listen, nodding his head, sleepylike, and wondering what started that cayuse into a break. *He* hadn't, that was sure.

Jenny and Johnny, like the wise old pack horse, were plugging along in the morning sunshine, their ears toward the green of the distant hills. Ed drowsed on the wagon seat. The sun was warm on his back. There was nothing that required special attention. The pace was necessarily slow. The load was riding well. An occasional lurch elicited a querulous remark from one or another of the hens. Ed felt too lazy and comfortable even to fill his pipe and smoke. Casually he noted the height of the sun, as he passed each familiar landmark. Presently he got down and walked. The grade called for about all that Jenny and Johnny could do.

An hour later, as Ed sauntered along, now ahead of the wagon, now behind it, he saw a coiled rattler sunning itself on a rock, some thirty or forty yards below the road. Ought to step down and kill it. But the snake was minding its own business. And it wasn't a snake's fault that it was born a snake. But hold on! Mary was living up in this part of the country. That wasn't the snake's fault, either. But——

Ed's automatic was in his coat pocket, on the wagon seat. He got it, let the mules go on, and then took a shot at the round, compact target. The shot went high. He fired again.

"Sure wish that was the last one left in the country," he said, not displeased with the result of the second shot.

Jenny and Johnny had stopped. Jenny was looking back, as though to reprove Mr. Lester for indulging in target practice when life was real and life was earnest. Ed walked beside the wagon, as the mules toiled up the grade, and he didn't have to curse them or beat them to keep them at work. They hadn't been trained that way. When you have to work as hard as your team to keep the wheels turning, sell 'em and buy a good team. That is the way Ed always looked at it.

Not that he was thinking of his mules just then. He was simply calling himself a rattlehead for having forgotten to buy some chicken wire. But he whistled himself out of it, became cheerful as he salvaged the consolation that the oversight left him an excuse to go to town again. Had to have a legitimate excuse to go to town. And it was good to have one always on the ice, fresh. A fresh excuse is as good as a stale reason, any time. Bill wouldn't have blown up about the mush kettle, if either of them had gone to town more often. Good thing if Mary

and Bill would drive to town once in a while. Wonderful how it freshened a fellow's interest in his own home. For instance—there was the cabin, looking mighty cozy and comfortable in the morning sunlight. Queer that a bit of color made it look so different. But the window curtains did improve it a lot. Bill had asked Mary why she didn't put up the lace curtains from one of the hotel rooms. But Mary had taken the colored curtains from her trunk and shortened them and hung them on the cabin windows. And she was right. The other curtains would have looked like white-lace ruffles on a cow.

The heavily loaded wagon creaked up to the dooryard gate and stopped. Ed hallooed, and Mary came from the kitchen. She called a greeting to Ed, and, seeing the chicken crate on top of the load, hastened up, obviously delighted by the surprise.

"Have a good trip?" she asked. "What fine chickens! Did you get them from Mrs. Bailey? She always kept Plymouth Rocks."

"That's where they came from. How's Bill?"

"He's feeling first rate. He's up to the mine."

"Well, I'll just unload this stuff and go along up."

"Had breakfast?"

"Yes, ma'am! So have the chickens." And as he unhitched the mules Ed told Mary how the chickens had spent their first night in camp.

Mary laughed at Ed's picture of the dignified Plymouth Rocks roosting in the old cottonwood.

"We saw your camp fire," she said. "But we didn't know for sure it was yours. Bill said you might travel at night and camp at the spring. I'm awfully glad you're back. Bill fussed and pretended to worry. He said something might have happened." And then Ed explained the delay—briefly, because he knew he would have to entertain Bill with the details, later—perhaps at supper. Bill always wanted details, and the more of them, the better he liked it. Gave him a chance to say that he thought about this and that and the other thing.

When Ed returned from the corral he unloaded the wagon and carried the furniture into the cabin. When he had finished, Mary asked him if he didn't want to rest a while. He seemed surprised.

"Why, no. I don't look tired, do I?"

Mary laughed. "No. But you say you got to the spring about midnight. You couldn't have had much sleep."

"What I missed most," said Ed, "was a drink of real, honest water."

He stepped round to the kitchen door. The water bucket was but half full. He drank, flirted the last drops from the dipper, and strode up the trail to the mine.

Bill was sitting on a rock, straightening out the bent point of a shovel. He was making such a racket that he did not hear Ed until Ed called to him. Bill stopped hammering and got up. His greeting was casual, but he was really glad to see Ed again. Even the companionship of Mary had not quite made up for Ed's absence. Bill didn't like to admit it, even to himself. But he had to. It was a fact. He was used to Ed's ways and Ed was used to his. Ed reported on the results of his trip. When he mentioned the chickens, Bill's face lighted up.

"Mary will be right glad to have them chickens," he said. "Now, I wouldn't have thought of it, if she hadn't asked me to get 'em."

"After I get the new cabin built, I was thinking of putting up a shed and stringing some fence up the canyon, so we could keep a cow. Wouldn't cost much—just a small snag of lumber and some wire. What do you think of it, Bill?"

"Mary would be right glad to have fresh milk handy," said Bill.

And that seemed about all he intended to say. He picked up the shovel and started into the tunnel. Ed walked over to the lean-to tool shed and took a pair of old overalls from a nail. When he crossed to the tunnel entrance, Bill was standing there, apparently waiting for him.

"How much did you say Allison allowed you for the stuff?" he asked, referring to their latest shipment of gold.

"Five hundred and thirty-two dollars, even."

"Not so bad. That ought to keep us in beans a couple of months yet. Let's smoke."

When Bill said, "Let's smoke," it meant "Let's lay off and talk a while." It always meant that. It was a signal to rest, or to discuss future operations or past operations or the weather—anything.

Bill lighted a noisy pipe, while Ed made a cigarette.

"It's this way," Bill began ponderously. Then he spat on a rock and took a new hold on his thought. "It's this way, Ed: We got a big job on our hands." He paused and surveyed the dump, as though he contemplated moving it.

Ed watched a smoke ring dissolve in the clear, thin air. It was still, there in the canyon. Ed could hear his watch tick.

Bill drew up his knee and clasped it.

"Ed," he said solemnly, "we got to keep Mary interested."

"Sure!" exclaimed Ed, a bit puzzled, nevertheless.

Bill seemed easier in his mind.

"You see, it ain't like livin' in town. Mary is used to a lot of things we ain't got here. Them chickens ought to help a lot. And a cow. And if you get a cow, get a good-lookin' critter, Ed—mebbe one of them black-and-white cows, like Jim Wright has. Not one of them no-account, ornery, red critters you see everywhere. A black-and-white cow always looks clean, even if it ain't. You know stock, so you can pick out one that is gentle. And we ought to get a churn and tools for makin' butter. And by rights we ought to get her a new stove, though the old one is good for a while yet. You see, Mary sold her own stove and a lot of them hotel fixin's. I know she misses her own stove. Not that she said anything. But our stove is mostly for men-folk to wrangle. We used to cuss it into drawin' good. But we can't help Mary by cussin' it now. And I was thinkin', next trip to town, you might pick up a kitten. Most any one would give you one. And Mary would like a kitten, for company, when we're up here. Most any kind of a kitten would do, but a he-cat would be better.

"And, say, there's somethin' I want to tell you, Ed. I recollect you told me once you had three sisters. Now, I never was used to havin' women around; and it's surprisin', the things you notice. Yesterday, I come down to the cabin at noon, and thought I'd surprise Mary by steppin' in quiet. And do you know, Ed, she was sittin' in the big room, and she had been cryin'!"

Bill paused and looked at Ed as though he expected him to express horror or shock or something more than a casual interest.

"I said 'cryin','" stated Bill somewhat brusquely.

Ed nodded.

"Sure! Women got to cry about something, once in a while."

"But what was she cryin' about?" queried Bill vehemently.

"Did you ask her?" countered Ed.

"Yes, I asked her; but she wouldn't say."

"You made a mistake. When a woman is crying and it isn't your fault,

leave her alone. I found out that much."

"Well, mebbe you're right," said Bill reluctantly. "But it sure made me feel tough. Thought mebbe I'd said somethin' to hurt her feelin's."

"Mary seemed happy this morning," said Ed. "She was mighty pleasant and smiling when I drove up."

"She was the same yesterday. A few minutes after I come into the house, she was just as smiling and bright as ever. But that ain't all, Ed. After we had dinner I went into the big room to set down and smoke, before goin' back up to the mine. I seen her trunk was open, and right on top of her clothes and things was a picture, and on it is said, 'From Johnny to Mary, with love.' I reckon it was her husband's picture; his name was Johnny."

"Well, what of it?"

"Well, I commenced to figure she had been thinkin' of him and——"

"Bill, you're hunting trouble. What's the use of tinkering with a clock when it's running good? Mary is all right. I figure if she's got anything on her mind you ought to know, she'll tell you, right out. She's that kind of a woman. But you got to let her have her own little crying spells, once in a while. I remember once, my sister Annie broke the crystal of the watch mother gave her for Christmas. It was Sunday morning. Annie cried like her heart was broke, also. It wasn't because she broke the crystal. It was because she couldn't wear the watch to church that morning. When I told her that, she got mad and quit crying. So I knew I was right."

"Well, mebbe," said Bill, rather unwilling to relinquish the theme.

But Ed's attitude consoled and assured him. Ed was always cool, and talked sense. The Watson family couldn't get along without Ed—and that was a fact.

It was getting close to noon. Time to go down to the cabin and eat dinner—and, incidentally, take a look at the new chickens. Mighty fine of Ed to surprise Mary with the chickens.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SHORT FUSE.

THE partners worked for a week, getting out ore. Then they spent another week selecting the higher grade ore and running it through the arrastra. It was, as Bill said, a case of skimming good milk for the cream, and throwing away the good milk. Only the so-called "good milk" did not spoil, nor was it wasted. The pile of low-grade ore was growing larger daily. Adequate freighting facilities would convert it into quite a decent bank balance. But neither Bill not Ed worried about that. They were making a good living and putting by something for the proverbial rainy day.

And Bill know, although he never said anything about it, that the rainy day, so far as the Morning-glory Mine was concerned, would come. The very character of the vein they were following warned him that the mine was petering out. True, an occasional pocket seemed to controvert this; yet, following the finding of a pocket, the partners were confronted with the problem of relocating the original vein, which thinned to mere streaks and threads. Bill had prospected so many years without success that when he at last located the Morning-glory and found that it would actually pay him to work it he became possessed with a stubborn pride which would not allow him to admit, save to his innermost self, that his mine was not a miniature Golconda.

And now that Mary's happiness and welfare depended on the output of the mine, Bill was still more inclined to close his eyes to the possibility of its

failure. Why, only a few nights ago, Mary had said—she was joking, of course—that some day they would have enough money to retire on, and then they would take a trip to Europe. Great Scott! If the old Morning-glory held out long enough to make a trip to Los Angeles possible—that is, a first-class trip, with dining car and hotel and everything—it would be doing pretty well.

As a prospector and a bachelor, Bill hadn't known what worry meant. But as a mining man and a husband, he not alone adopted that peevish infant, Worry, but even sat up nights encouraging it, instead of allowing it to cry itself to sleep. It wasn't so bad when he was busy. But after supper, when Mary and he were sitting beside the fire, and Ed reading a magazine or newspaper, and everything so peaceful and pleasant, the infant, Worry, would whimper, and Bill would take it up and hold it close and try to reason with it, quite like he would have taken up a real infant, clumsily endeavoring to keep it from crying.

Often enough, when Bill sat thus, immersed in speculation, Mary would say, "Bill, what are you thinking about?" And then Bill would come to with a start, and shuffle his feet and say something like, "Oh, nothing much. Just wondering how soon that load of lumber will get here. We ought to start building the new cabin pretty soon."

One evening Mary suggested a game of cards. She was not specially fond of card games, but she thought Bill had given up playing cards on her account. She knew the partners used to play, often, in the evenings. But after a few evenings Bill lost interest in the game. So Ed and Mary played double solitaire, while Bill drowsed in front of the fire.

Finally the load of lumber came, and the new interest of building the cabin absorbed them. Ed cut the timber and, with the aid of Jenny and Johnny, dragged it to the slope above the cabin site and shot the logs down into the canyon. In a surprisingly short time the logs were peeled and notched and laid. Bill helped Ed with the lighter work of flooring and setting the rafters and shingling. Then they turned to and built a snug stable for the cow that was to arrive. They would have to haul in some baled hay for the winter. Baled hay cost money. But Bill didn't care, so long as Mary was pleased.

Again Ed Lester made a trip to Quimby, following the completion of the new cabin. Mary had suggested that both Ed and Bill go, that she could get along nicely alone for a few days. But Bill said he didn't care to go just then, that he would go later. Mary urged him to take a short vacation, said that he was working too hard. And he was. But he wouldn't admit it. The mine was not producing enough to pay even good wages. The cream had disappeared and even the milk was getting thin. But there was always the possibility of striking another pocket and running the average up again. Of course, Mary knew nothing of this, and Bill wasn't going to tell her unless it came to an absolute showdown. But the old Morning-glory just couldn't peter out. Ought to be good for another ten years at the rate they were taking out the stuff.

So Bill stayed and worked in the mine while Ed went to Quimby to fetch in a few supplies and the cow. And this time Ed was gone six days. Milch cows, up to the specifications Bill had mentioned, are not kept in stock like a can of tomatoes or a box of crackers. Ed visited several outlying ranches before he found what he thought would answer their requirements. Then he made a crate, and when the cow was delivered to him, in Quimby, he borrowed a wagon and

set out for the hills, with the cow crated and as comfortable as she would allow herself to be under the circumstances.

Meanwhile, Bill toiled like a slave each day and came home each evening worn out and worried. It was so evident, even to himself, that he was obviously worrying, that he felt Mary was entitled to some explanation. So Bill told her that he was worrying about Ed. Should have been back the evening of the fourth day, and it was the sixth, and no Ed in sight, Mary tried to cheer her husband, tried to talk him out of his mood. But it was hard to get Bill to let go of an idea. Something had happened to Ed.

Bill didn't actually believe that anything had happened to his partner. The fact was, Bill missed him more than he cared to admit. When Ed was away, things seemed to stand still. Not that Bill didn't work hard. And Mary found enough to do to keep her busy. But the noon meal, and supper, and the evenings, were not the same when Ed was away. And it was not Mary, but Bill, that missed him most. Mary seemed contented enough. Of course, she had her sewing or reading to occupy her evenings. Once or twice she read to Bill; but invariably he fell asleep. Mary even suggested a card game. But the game was not a success. Bill played indifferently, obviously not caring whether he won or lost.

Finally Mary began to wish that Ed would return. Ed's presence made a different man of Bill. Bill wasn't morose or cross. He was kindness itself. But his interest in life seemed to cease when he entered the cabin, after his day's work. He always had a pleasant answer to a question. But unless spoken to he did not speak. Mary was troubled. Something actually wrong, some definite subject of misunderstanding, would be better than this monotonous attitude. But then, Bill was accustomed to the society of men. He was a bachelor by nature. He was just and kind and industrious. That meant a great deal. It meant so much, in fact, that Mary never asked herself if she had made a mistake in marrying him.

Between three and four o'clock, the morning of the seventh day, Ed drove in. Bill heard him and immediately got up and dressed. They unloaded the cow from the wagon and put her in the new corral. And the cow, frightened by the strangeness, and worried by her long journey, lifted up her voice and mourned for her old home. And that fetched Mary in a hurry.

Mary's delight and enthusiasm were reflected in the faces of Ed and Bill. The cow was a new domestic interest, a creature to be fed and cared for and made much of. And her name? Mary asked Bill what he would suggest.

"Well," said Bill slowly, "she looks like a nice little critter."

He got no further in his groping for a suitable name; and Mary couldn't wait. "What *is* her name?" she asked Ed.

And Ed's sun-browned face grew ruddy in the morning light.

"I didn't ask what her name was," he said, evidently embarrassed.

"But what did you call her?" persisted Mary. "You didn't call her just 'cow.' And I know you talked to her on the way here."

"That's right!" exclaimed Bill, glad to shift the responsibility. "We're waitin' to be introduced."

"Well," said Ed in desperation, "I called her Narcissus."

Bill seemed thunderstruck.

"Gosh a'mighty! Where did you get that name? Sounds like the name of one of them actresses you read about."

"It's the name of a tune," said Ed. "I kind of liked that tune. But I just called her 'Sis,' for short."

"Then Sis is her name!" Mary made the decision without hesitation. "Poor Sis, she's lonesome. But she'll get used to us."

"You couldn't call her acrost a five-acre pasture with that name," declared Bill. "She wouldn't hear it."

"But I won't have to," asserted Mary. "I wonder if she likes carrots?"

"Shouldn't wonder. But have we got any?" said Bill.

"Ed brought some," said Mary, and hastened to the cabin to get a few carrots—an extravagance, but then, it was an occasion.

Ed and Bill watched Mary feed Narcissus raw carrots, cutting them into small pieces, so the cow wouldn't choke herself. They enjoyed watching Mary do things. She took such an interest in all that she did. She was so brisk and cheerful and workmanlike. And she never found fault or deplored the lack of this or that cooking utensil or ingredient—just went ahead and made a go of it.

After breakfast Bill and Ed sauntered up the canyon toward the mine. Bill had something on his mind. He wanted to tell Ed that the vein had petered out, let him know just where they stood. But maybe they could drift and strike the vein farther along the slope. Even so, Ed ought to know about it. But when they reached the workings, Bill just couldn't begin the subject. While Ed had been away, Bill had gotten out enough stuff to keep them busy for a week, at least. And, fighting his old and settled tendency to put off unpleasant news until the eleventh hour, Bill lost the battle. He ought to tell Ed; but, dog-gone it, now that Ed was back, and things livening up again, it didn't seem just fair to open up with bad news, the first thing. Perhaps to-morrow. Or maybe Ed would notice that the ore was pretty thin and streaky, and say something about it himself. They put in the day transferring the ore to the arrastra. That evening Bill turned in early. Ed and Mary played cards and chatted about the folk in Quimby.

The following day, while Ed was running the arrastra, Bill put in a shot, with the forlorn hope of recovering the old vein. The shot was a double-header, a kind of desperate attempt. And Bill had carelessly cut the fuse shorter than usual. He had said nothing to Ed about his intentions. When the shot came, dull and muffled, and shook the ground, Ed ran over to the mine. He called to Bill, even before he realized that Bill was nowhere to be seen.

Ed felt suddenly sick. Bill wasn't in the tool shed or behind the dump. And a thin streak of acrid smoke was curling up from the mouth of the tunnel. Ed stooped down and, swinging his hat in front of his face, pushed in, calling to his partner. He dropped to his hands and knees and crawled along. The smoke and fumes were getting him, but he kept on. Flakes of fire danced before his eyes. He wondered how long he could stand it before the fumes got the best of him. He knew he should have waited till the air in the tunnel cleared. But Bill was in there, somewhere, and he might be in time to do something. It wasn't like Bill to get caught that way. Bill had always been deliberate and careful.

Crawling didn't help much. The fumes hung close to the floor of the mine. Ed cut his hand on a jagged piece of rock. He felt ahead cautiously. His heart drummed in his ears. He lowered his face to the damp floor and drew a deep breath. Then he crawled on again. His head felt as though it would burst. His throat burned and throbbed. He kept telling himself that it wouldn't do any good to keep on. If Bill hadn't got any farther out than the turn, and that was now behind him, there wasn't a chance

in a thousand that his partner was alive. If he could only get one good breath of fresh air he could make a dash for it and find Bill.

But to turn back? He couldn't do that. A few seconds might make all the difference in the world. A few seconds—— His hand touched cloth, Bill's shirt. Ed called his name, but there came no reply. He felt of Bill's face, felt of his chest. He brushed aside a litter of broken rock and, seizing Bill under the arms, drew him out from the ghastly litter that covered him. He got Bill's arms up, and, stooping, heaved and staggered. He kept telling himself he would never make it to the open. But he did, with a staggering rush. The fresh air struck him like a sledge hammer. He let go of his burden and sank down, closing his eyes against the sickening lurch and whirl of the canyon.

Somewhere, in the far distance a bird was twittering. Ed felt the hot sun on his face. Slowly his brain cleared. He sat up. He took out his watch and glanced at it. And it didn't seem an absurd thing to do, then. He glanced across at the arrastra and at the mule, Jenny, standing with head down and long ears drooping. He didn't want to look at Bill. He dared not. He had seen men mangled, killed; it wasn't that. But how could he tell Mary?

He looked at Bill's face, streaked with dirt and dust, at his hands, one clutched tight, the other open and crossed by a jagged cut.

"Bill!" whispered Ed hopelessly.

The blood from the cut oozed slowly down between Bill's fingers. Ed put his own hand on Bill's chest and felt a faint, hesitant movement. He got up and ran staggering toward the water pail in the tool shed. Returning, he knelt and slopped the water over Bill's face and chest.

Bill gasped and raised his arm feebly.

"It's all right, old-timer!" said Ed, his voice shaking. "It's all right!"

Dazed, and trying to speak, Bill lay staring at his partner. He mumbled. Ed leaned closer. He thought Bill was trying to ask him to take some message to Mary. Presently Bill managed to speak.

"How bad did I get it?"

"Can't tell," replied Ed. "Can you move your legs?"

"Guess I can. But I don't want to. My chest feels kind of heavy. I'd have got away all right, only I slipped when I started for the bend. Water!"

Ed gave him a drink, tilting the pail carefully. Bill sighed. His eyes brightened the least bit.

"I'll be all right in a minute," he said. "Just help me over to the shed, in the shade. Things are clearin' up. Concussion knocked me out."

Better let me help you down to the cabin," said Ed.

"Nope!" Bill moved his head from side to side. His old stubbornness was coming to the surface—a good sign.

Ed spread some gunny sacks on the floor of the shed. But Bill insisted upon sitting up. He argued that he was feeling better, would be able to walk down to the cabin in a little while. He had not asked for Mary, nor had he mentioned her name. This didn't strike Ed as queer, at the time. But later he remembered, and then he thought he understood.

"Heard the shot," said Ed. "Didn't know you were in there."

Bill didn't seem to hear him. Finally he asked Ed to take a candle and go in and see if the shot had done any good.

"Air won't be so bad in there now," he said. "Watch out for loose rock overhead."

Ed didn't want to go back into that hole, just then. But Bill didn't seem to realize what had happened, what his partner had been through.

"All right, I'll take a look," said Ed. "But you ought to be in your bunk."

"Or under that rock over there," said Bill, gesturing weakly toward the mouth of the mine.

"Why, you plain fool!" said Ed, laughing.

"No, I ain't," retorted Bill, shaking his head. "I know what I'm doing."

"Looks like it!" Ed's tone was genial. Old Bill was alive. And Mary—he wouldn't have to tell Mary what he had so dreaded telling her.

When Ed came back from the mine, Bill rose and put out his hand, as though expecting Ed had something for him. Ed was puzzled. But of course! Bill had figured out what had happened and wanted to express his gratitude, silently, but sincerely. But when Ed offered to shake hands, Bill's arm dropped to his side.

"No good?" he queried, and his eyes grew dull.

"Looks like the vein was lost," said Ed. "Couldn't see a trace of it. Looked to me like different kind of rock."

"All right. Just help me along down to the cabin. I got to rest up a spell, I guess."

Ed thought that Mary took it pretty well. He could see that she was worried, and also that she tried to take the accident as lightly as Bill seemed to want her to. And, for the first few days, Bill make a joke of it, declaring that he should have known better and that he wasn't worth the risk Ed took in dragging him out.

Day after day Ed went up to the arrastra and worked from morning till night. And day after day he returned to the cabin, where he found Bill sitting in the big room, smoking and gazing out of the doorway. Bill didn't seem to be ill or injured, and yet he didn't seem to take an interest in anything. When Ed would tell him how the day's work had gone, Bill would say, "That's good." Then he would lapse into silence, never speaking unless asked a question or spoken to. Mary had often asked him how he felt. Invariably he had replied that he felt well enough, and that he would probably go up to the mine in the morning. But when the morning came Bill had breakfast and then drifted to the big room and sat gazing out of the doorway.

He wasn't morose, nor did he seem to be suffering from melancholy. To the contrary, he always seemed pleased when spoken to, and always answered cheerfully. Ed tried to get him into one of their old-time arguments. But Bill wouldn't argue. Anything Ed said was right. Both Ed and Mary talked about the chickens, the cow, the folks in Quimby; but Bill could not be drawn into the conversation, except by a direct question. He seemed like a man living in another world, and, in a sense, he was. He knew what was going on about him. He dressed himself, ate and slept regularly, keeping his accustomed hours. But never once did he speak of the mine or express a wish to go up there when Ed went in the morning.

It was much later that Ed found out Bill had not told Mary that the mine had failed them. Meanwhile, Ed said nothing, out of regard for Bill. There was considerable ore to put through the arrastra, and even some of the low-grade ore could be worked to advantage. And whether or not Bill had ever thought of telling Mary about the mine having failed to produce, Ed never knew. Mary was suffering silently, hiding her suffering as best she could. What seemed most terrible to her was that there seemed to be nothing actually wrong with Bill. He ate heartily and always got up early, as though he were going to work.

Finally Mary appealed to Ed, asked him what she ought to do. Should

they send for a doctor? Or should they persuade Bill to go to Quimby and see Doctor Ripley? Ed said he would be only too glad to take Bill to town, or perhaps Bill would consent to go if Mary offered to go with him. Some one would have to stay at the cabin, now they had the cow and the chickens. But when Mary suggested a trip to Quimby, Bill shook his head. He didn't see any reason for making the trip; he was feeling all right. And in the morning he would go along up with Ed and help him put the ore through the arrastra. But when morning came Bill had forgotten that he had said he would go.

About three weeks after the accident, Ed told Mary that he thought of driving to town. He had cleaned up enough to make the trip worth while. And he might persuade Doctor Ripley to come back with him. They had just had supper. Bill was in the big room, in his accustomed chair. Ed had just fetched a bucket of water from the spring. Mary's mouth trembled.

"You've done so much!" she said.

Ed put the water bucket on the bench beside the kitchen door.

"Well, you see, we been partners quite a while," said Ed, smiling. "Trouble is, I don't know *what* to do for Bill. He ain't sick, exactly. Seems like he don't get over the shock. But maybe Doc Ripley would know what to do. I'll fetch him along out with me."

"He likes Bill," said Mary.

"Most everybody does."

Mary put out her hand. Ed took her hand in his and shook it, man fashion. He wanted to say more—wanted to let Mary know that he would do anything in the world for her, as he would for his partner. And, although he did not speak, Mary understood and smiled graciously through tears that she tried to keep back.

"You been mighty brave and sensible," said Ed. "Guess I'll throw some of that meadow hay to Sis."

Mary smiled in spite of herself. Ed was always looking after things. He never forgot that the cow or the mules or the chickens had to be fed, no matter what else might occupy his mind. She finished her work in the kitchen and went into the big room and took up some sewing.

Bill startled her by speaking.

"Mary, I'm feeling a whole lot better. I think I'll clean the old rifle and go back in the hills and get a deer, tomorrow morning."

"Do you think you'll be—all right?" she asked.

"Never felt better in my life. Seems like I been in a kind of dream. I was settin' here and something gave a pop in my head, and I woke up."

"Ed thought he'd drive to Quimby to-morrow."

"Well, that's all right. I'll be back along in the afternoon."

And when Ed came in he was surprised, although he showed it in no other way than a questioning glance at Mary, when Bill reiterated his intention of getting a deer. He said he would like some fresh meat, and thought that a trip back in the hills would do him good. Neither Ed nor Mary liked the idea of Bill going alone, but they said nothing about it. They were only too glad that Bill was at last interested in doing something. And Bill seemed so enthusiastic about going, and so like his old self, that the evening passed swiftly. Mary's happiness was clouded by the thought that her husband would probably give up the idea when morning came.

But he was up early, and was rummaging among his hunting things even before Ed came from his cabin

When Ed came to the kitchen doorway, Mary nodded and gestured toward the living room. "He's going," she said. She seemed troubled.

"How about Quimby?" asked Ed.

"Couldn't you wait and go to-morrow?"

"Sure!"

"Perhaps you'd like to go with Bill."

"I'll go, if he asks me," said Ed. "But I reckon it would be better to let Bill have his own way, this time. Maybe a little trip by himself is just what he needs. I know when I get to feeling ornery the first thing I think of is how I'd like to take a week off, fishing and rambling in the hills. That's what I did, the time Bill and I had a run-in about my leaving that burned mush kettle. Guess he never told you about that. Anyhow, that little trip in the brush put me right with myself and with Bill. And he'll be all right—depend upon that."

At breakfast Bill seemed quite like his old self. He talked about fencing a pasture for the cow, about the fresh eggs they were getting, Ed's next trip to Quimby, and, in fact, showed a lively interest in all that was going on. After breakfast he smoked a while, not sitting in the big room, but walking about the cabin and rummaging among his things, until Mary had put away the dishes. Then he took his rifle and, stating that they would have fresh meat for supper, started to go through the kitchen toward the back door. Mary stopped him, kissed him good-by, and told him to be careful. He joked about her solicitude and, nodding to Ed, went on through the kitchen and up the trail back of the cabin.

Ed fetched another pail of water and then went over to his own cabin, where he went to work putting up some shelves. Then there was a door to make for the corner cupboard. Before he realized it, it was noon, and Mary was calling him to dinner.

Mary seemed depressed and ate very little. Evidently she was worrying about Bill. After dinner Ed saw to it that the cow and the mules had water. Then he went back to his carpenter work. And as he sawed and planed and hammered, he whistled. Bill was all right again! Same old glint in his eye, same fussy way of noticing little things. And if Bill was all right again, everything would be all right. Maybe the old Morning-glory was beginning to play out. Stuff wasn't running as good as it had been. But what did that matter, so long as Bill was up and coming? They would get along, somehow. They were partners—the three of them. And Mary was a mighty nice woman. She could get along with folks, make 'em feel comfortable and at home. And the place was beginning to look like a real home, with the cow and the chickens and the mules and the two cabins. Regular establishment. And the hills were always there, with their timber and trout streams and game.

Ed whistled and sawed and hammered. The afternoon was hot, and the air in the cabin a bit close, in spite of the open door and windows. Tomorrow he would drive to Quimby and get the mail and some magazines and supplies. Mustn't forget the chicken feed, and some rock salt for the cow. And there wouldn't be any need to fetch Doc Ripley out to the mine, now.

Mary came over with a pitcher of lemonade and a tumbler—a real treat, for Ed knew she had been saving the lemons to make lemon pie. Bill thought there was nothing like a lemon pie, unless it was another. It was three o'clock, already. Ed noticed that, after Mary left, she stood looking toward the mountains quite a while. But shucks! No need to worry.

CHAPTER XII.

A STRANGE DEER HUNT.

YET, as the canyon shadows lengthened, and a cool breeze bearing the fragrance of the upper hills called Ed from his work for a brief rest, he

wished that Bill hadn't gone. Bill had been a pretty sick man. Ed stood in the doorway, gazing toward the mine workings up the canyon. He recalled the recent accident and his struggle to get his partner out of the mine. The old Morning-glory had gone back on them—had almost finished Bill, too. Although Ed knew by the sun that it was about five o'clock, he glanced at his watch. Bill ought to be showing up pretty soon. If he had killed a deer, he would probably hang it, and go up next morning with one of the mules and pack it down. That would leave him free to come on down the hill earlier. Packing a deer out of the hills, on your back, was slow going.

Ed sat down in the doorway, made a cigarette, and smoked. In a few minutes he would go over to the big cabin and fetch in some water and firewood. Mary would be getting supper soon. Bill had been gone since early morning—nearly twelve hours. Almost anybody could go up to the meadow and get a deer and get back to the canyon within six hours. Ed rose, tossed his cigarette away. No sense in getting nervous. That wouldn't help any. He whistled as he strode over to the big cabin. He came into the kitchen with an armful of firewood. Mary was cooking supper. She glanced up, questioning him with her eyes. Ed dropped the wood in the box by the stove. He smiled, trying to ignore the question in Mary's eyes. But Ed wasn't much at pretending.

"If—if he isn't back by six, I'll take a stroll up the trail," he said, trying to speak casually.

He didn't try to cheer Mary with assurances—just talk. He took up the water pail and returned and set it on the bench. Mary asked him if he wouldn't have his supper. He said he was powerful hungry. Mary did not sit at the table with him, but kept busy, washing some cooking pans and pots.

After supper Ed put on his coat, took a lantern and a small canteen, and, without saying more than a word or two in regard to feeding the stock—he knew Mary would attend to that—he struck up the trail back of the cabin. While the light lasted he followed Bill's tracks, followed them to the first mountain meadow. And there, in their old lean-to camp, he found Bill's rifle, standing against a tree near the trail. Ed lighted the lantern and examined the rifle. The magazine was filled, and there was a loaded cartridge in the chamber. Ed was puzzled, worried. Evidently Bill had left the rifle there and had gone on. But not looking for deer. Ed cast about for tracks, but could find none in the meadow grass. If he had only started an hour or two sooner, when he would have had some daylight to help him! He called, and the echoes rolled and tumbled in the timberlands of the crest. He fired a shot and then listened. But no answer came.

Knowing the trail, he crossed the meadow and continued on through the timber until he struck a barren ridge of rock, which broke off into narrow ledges on either side. Beyond the hogback was timber and another meadow. Arrived at the second meadow, he shouted again. Perhaps Bill had gone on, clear to Burden's cabin. Burden was an old prospector. Perhaps Bill had given up the idea of hunting and had decided to visit Burden. But why had he left his rifle at the lean-to? And would he try to make it to Burden's place, when he knew he couldn't get back the same day? He had said he would be back early, and he always kept his word, or tried to. Perhaps he had tried to keep his word, and something had happened. Ed turned back from the meadow. To go on through the mountains at night would be a waste of time and strength.

If he only had a good dog! A dog

would have tracked Bill—saved a lot of time and worry. Ed decided to go back to the lean-to and stay there until morning. Queer, that Bill had left his rifle at the lean-to. Why had he left it there? If Bill wasn't crazy, he had discarded the rifle deliberately. Didn't want to be bothered with packing it. Ed started to cross the hogback. It was a narrow, rough trail, where a fellow had to watch his step, even in broad daylight. About halfway over, Ed's foot struck a loose bit of rock. He heard the fragment go bounding and crashing from ledge to ledge. The sound ceased. Ed pulled himself together. He would have to be more careful, watch his step, and stop thinking about anything except getting across.

He had gone on but a few steps when he stopped again. That stone couldn't be going yet. But he thought he had heard a sound from down there. Must have imagined it. He stood listening. But shucks! That stumble had set him to imagining things. Then a faint, quavering call came from the darkness below. Ed hadn't imagined that. He hallooed and listened. Again he heard, or thought he heard, some one calling. "That you, Bill?" he shouted. It seemed a long time before he heard an answer, a single word, which might have been either "Help!" or "Ed!"

"Coming, pardner!" he shouted.

It wasn't imagination that had answered his call. Some one, a human voice, had answered him. To climb down there, from ledge to ledge, in the dark, would be a tough job. Better make sure there was some one down there who needed help. He called again, but nothing save a deep silence succeeded the echoes of his voice. He took up a hole in his belt, slung the canteen where it wouldn't get in his way, and, walking back to where the ridge shouldered into the mountain, he worked cautiously down to the first ledge. It paralleled the hogback trail above, and didn't get anywhere.

So, feeling for footing, he let himself down to the next ledge. When he had got his breath, he called again, and heard only the mockery of echoes. Answer or no answer, he determined to go on down. Rattlesnakes sunned themselves on those ledges—he didn't forget that. He had seen them, in daylight, from the trail above, more than once. And it was so dark he couldn't see farther than the length of his arm. The second ledge grew narrower as he traversed it. And, careful as he was, he slipped, trying to find footing that would help him to the ledge below. He felt himself going, felt the shale going with him.

He brought up on the third ledge, and heard the trickle of shale as it still kept falling. A black something loomed in front of him—a stunted tree curving up from some crevice in the rock. He sat down, took his knife, and cut off a few of the feathery tops of the limbs. He tore a strip from his handkerchief and tied them together. The tops were green, but they would burn for a second or two. He struck a match, lighted the torch, and tossed it over the edge. It flared and went out. But while it flared he was able to catch a glimpse of the all-but-perpendicular wall below.

He would have to let himself down by his hands, and then drop, and chance it. The rock sloped from the ledge he would land on, and, if he made it all right, he thought he might manage to climb on down to the shallow head of the canyon, which separated the two mountain ranges. He lowered himself, hugged the wall, and let go. It wasn't such a long drop, but it was dark. The shock of landing was magnified by his imagination. But he had made it. And now, if he could find a way down the ragged slope to the head of the canyon, he might find Bill. Some one had

called from down there. The very effort he had made in trying to get down convinced him that he was not mistaken.

His hands were cut, his shirt torn, and his back and shoulders scratched and bruised; but he didn't know it. He was thinking of Bill and Mary. He had lost all track of time. If he had thought about it at all, he would have reasoned that it hadn't taken him long to make the descent, although it would have seemed hours since he was on the hogback. He worked diagonally across the slope, turned, and worked on down. The slope was strewn with broken rock, shale, and boulders. He knew he was not far from the head of the canyon. He stopped and hallooed.

Then he went on slowly, peering ahead before he took each step. He saw something which looked like a thin blur of silver. He had almost stepped on it. He thought it might be a bit of mica or quartz. He struck a match. He didn't intend to pick up anything among the rocks until he knew what it was. The silver blur, in the clear, soft glow of the burning match, was the bright point of a prospector's pick.

"Where are you, Bill?" he said, as though expecting his partner to answer from somewhere near.

He could see hardly anything. He closed his eyes, waited until the effects of the flare of the match had died out. When he could distinguish the broken rock and the boulders from the surrounding darkness, he began to descend the slope slowly, peering at each shadow.

Several yards below the spot where he had discovered the pick, he found Bill. He was sitting on the ground, his back against a boulder, as though resting.

"Here we are, pardner!" said Ed.

He knelt and lighted another match. Bill's head lay back. His mouth was open. One side of his face was black with dried blood from a horrible gash above his temple. The match went out. Ed thrust his hand in Bill's shirt. His body was still warm, but his heart had stopped beating.

Ed tried desperately to revive him, knowing that his efforts were futile. Bill *had* called, then. He had not been dead long, or the warmth of his blood would have gone from him. "He must have heard my voice," thought Ed, "and tried to answer. I wonder if he knew it was me? I wonder if he heard me trying to get down to him?"

Ed went back up the slope and found the prospector's pick. He knew, now, why Bill had left the rifle at the lean-to camp. A man wouldn't try to climb down those ledges encumbered with a rifle. Ed recalled having heard Bill say that there was an outcrop below the hogback, and that some day he would climb down to it and see if it was worth working. Ed had paid but little attention to Bill's talk, then. Bill often said there was plenty of gold in the hills, if a fellow would take time to locate it. And Bill had not been after deer. He had made that an excuse to prospect for another mine. Probably he had been thinking about it ever since the Morning-glory had begun to peter out.

And Bill had fallen from one of the ledges, fallen and rolled to where the pick lay. He must have regained consciousness and crawled to the rock, and tried to sit up. Perhaps the chill of the night air had revived him. Ed went back to where Bill sat leaning against the rock. Seemed as though Bill might speak, any minute. Ed laid the pick down beside his partner. Bill had thought a lot of that worn old pick. He had had it for years—had it when he discovered the Morning-glory. And he had hung onto it, right to the finish. He wouldn't need the pick any more, but there it was.

Ed crossed the rock slide to the

brush and pulled some dead roots. Coming back to the rock, he made a fire. By its light he examined Bill's body—found that his left arm was broken. He washed the blood from his head and face. It wasn't the wound in his head, alone, that had caused his death, but that and the broken arm and the shock.

"That blast in the mine is what killed him," thought Ed. "It used him up, so that when this happened he wasn't strong enough to pull through."

The fire died down. It was their last camp together. Ed wondered if he ought to go on down the canyon to the cabin and tell Mary. But no. He would stay with Bill. He couldn't carry him down the canyon at night. And he wouldn't leave him. The fire was a fading red glow in a nest of feathery white ashes. Ed sat with his knees drawn up, his arms across his knees. He bowed his head, and spent the rest of the night in a ghastly waking sleep, half conscious of the other man, who didn't feel the ache of his wounds or the bite of the mountain air.

With the dawn, Ed raised his head, stared about. He rose and stepped over to the rock.

"Well, partner," he said, "we got to get down to the cabin." Then he stooped and, heaving the body across his shoulder, he picked his way down to the stream bed and followed it till he came into the main canyon, east of the cabin. There he laid his burden down and, striking into the mine trail, walked wearily to the cabin.

Mary was in the doorway, waiting.

"He's hurt pretty bad," said Ed.

He had not intended saying that. Mary read beneath his words, read his haggard face and his eyes.

"He's——" She could not say it.

"Fell from a ledge, up yonder. I found him last night. I fetched him down to the flat, just across from the mine."

Ed glanced at Mary. She was staring toward the mine. Without a word she followed him up the trail. He saw her kneel beside the body and put her hands gently on Bill's face. Her quiet grief unnerved Ed, brought home to him his own loss. He felt as though he ought to do something, say something.

"I guess we better go down to the cabin," he said finally.

Mary rose. She didn't understand what Ed meant, until he gestured toward the body.

"If you'll go on ahead," he said, "I'll——"

"No," she said; "I'll help."

Later, Ed went to his cabin and tried to sleep. At noon he got up and hitched the mules to the buckboard. He drove down to the big cabin. Mary had dinner ready. After dinner Ed went out and filled the water trough between the two corrals and put an extra load of alfalfa in the feed rack. He saw that the chickens had plenty of feed and water. When he returned to the cabin, Mary had changed her dress and was ready for the journey to Quimby.

"I'll have to come back to-morrow," said Ed, as they started. "I'll get a saddle horse from Al Jones."

As they drove down the foothill road and across the mesa, Ed told her about finding Bill's rifle at the lean-to camp, and why it had been left there. Mary didn't understand why Bill should have been prospecting. He had said he was going to get a deer. Then Ed explained to her that the Morning-glory Mine had failed—the vein had pinched out. He said he thought that was what had been worrying Bill, and largely accounted for his strange actions following the accident.

For a long time they talked about Bill, and the conversation led naturally to talking about future plans. Mary did not want to go back to the cabin.

She said she couldn't stand it, to live there again—that she would be expecting Bill to come in, at noon and after the day's work. She would always be waiting for him to come in.

"Of course you couldn't live there alone," said Ed.

They discussed the division of the property. Ed disclaimed having anything other than a working share in the mine. He would like to have the mules and the buckboard, and, of course, he would take his personal belongings. Bill had saved some money, which would be Mary's. She said she would sell the cow and the chickens and the furniture, and take a room in Quimby until she had decided what was best to do. Ed thought he would go to Los Angeles. The horse market was good there. He had been away from the horses quite a while. Said he thought he would drive across and camp along the way.

"You can figure on my staying in Quimby till you get things straightened out," he added.

"I know," said Mary.

For a long time they were silent. The mules plodded on, their ears toward the dot of green that marked the distant town. Finally, as they drew near the town, Ed broke the silence.

"This is going to be the hardest part of it, for you," he said. "Folks will be curious, and they'll talk a lot—and, mostly, they won't know what they're talking about. But we'll come through, all right. They know you well enough to ask a lot of questions. But I guess you can handle them."

"Doctor Ripley and Johnny Metz and Frank Bair—they liked Bill," said Mary.

"I understand," said Ed. "I'll make all the arrangements. And I'll get somebody to go out to the mine with me, to-morrow, and stay there and look after the stock till everything is settled up. Mary, I kind of wish you wouldn't have the funeral until day after to-morrow. I want to be here."

CHAPTER XIII.

LOS ANGELES.

WHEN Ed Lester arrived in Los Angeles, he had a few hundred dollars in cash, a buckboard, a tired team of mules, and a camp outfit. His arrival attracted no attention, as such outfits were arriving almost daily from Arizona and New Mexico. As he drove from the Plaza down Spring Street, he noticed many fine turnouts, for those were the days of carriage horses and content. Few people seemed in a hurry. The only folk who did seem in a hurry were the real-estate boomers, and they were not taken as seriously by the citizens as their activities warranted. However, the out-of-town folk took the real-estate boom seriously. The consequence was that many of the native citizens missed the golden opportunities which newcomers seized and shrewdly transferred, at a round profit, to still later arrivals.

Ed made for the first livery stable he saw on South Spring Street. After having his team put up, he rented a room and asked himself what he was going to do. But first he must have some new clothing. Following a shave, a hair cut, and a bath in a barber-shop bathroom, he felt more like donning fresh raiment.

That evening he sauntered up Spring Street, a fine figure of a man in his gray suit and black Stetson, to say nothing of his white silk shirt and black, loosely knotted tie. He fitted his clothes, which was a bit different from having his clothes fit him. To any stranger he might have been a well-to-do young cattleman or rancher or mining man, visiting the town. He had not yet caught the feel of the town, and was obviously a visitor. On Main Street he turned in at a hotel fre-

quented by horsemen. He had no special plan. He simply liked to be among men who could talk his kind of talk.

And what a bar! Polished mahogany, mirrors, tiled floor, leather-seated chairs at tables—and good liquor. Gentlemen took time to taste their liquor in those days. Ed took his—clear amber and as smooth as milk. Didn't saw a man's neck off, like desert liquor. He sauntered to a table, sat down, and lighted a cigar. A prominent banker stood at the bar talking with a local horseman. Farther along stood a flashily dressed real-estate operator, who had become rich overnight. Near one end of the bar a group talked and joked—among them the sheriff, a portly, dark-complexioned man with a heavy chin and a quick eye. There was no loud talking, no rowdyism. Men came through the swing doors from the hotel lobby, moved to the bar, ordered what they wanted, talked a few minutes, and went out. A noisy customer didn't last long there. Neither the management nor the patrons tolerated such. Ed thought he would like to stop at that hotel, but he knew he couldn't afford it. He had less than a thousand dollars—his working capital.

Presently a rather short, stocky, pleasant-faced little man walked briskly in, nodded to one or two friends, and, Ed noticed, called for a glass of beer. When he had finished drinking his beer, the man turned and surveyed the room. His bright blue eyes were shaded by a slight frown as his gaze paused for a second on Ed Lester. Then he walked briskly over to Ed's table.

"Well, I'll be switched if it isn't Ed Lester!"

They shook hands, sat down, and called for that which was but is not. In a few minutes they were talking horses to the extent of forgetting where they were, how chance had brought them together, and what a clock was made for. Old man Howard, known from coast to coast, had fetched some of the finest Kentucky pure breds to California; in fact, the first gaited horses that had been shipped into the State. Ed was not familiar with gaited horses, but he knew horses, and that was enough for old man Howard.

He asked Ed what he was doing and what he intended to do. Ed didn't know. Said he was just looking around. He told Howard about the Morning-glory Mine, where he had been for the past few years, and how the sight of good carriage horses had made his hands itch for the reins.

"Gold mine!" said Howard. "Say, Ed, you're sitting on the greatest gold mine that ever happened, and you don't know it."

"Down cellar, I suppose?"

"Yes, down every cellar on Main Street and Spring Street. Horses are my business, but do you know I've made more money the last six months, right here, than I ever made before in my life! Real estate, boy. That's what!"

"This boom got you, too?"

"No, sir! But I got a slice of *it*. Got a few minutes? Well, you just come with me. I want to show you something."

Ed suggested that they have something to eat. Howard voted for a Chinese restaurant, a few blocks from the hotel. After they had eaten a good supper they strolled out and down to Fifth, and crossed over to Spring.

"See that lot over there between that little, no-account bungalow and that one-story brick store? Well, that can be bought for six thousand, cash."

Howard seemed disappointed when Ed didn't show astonishment.

"I couldn't buy it if it cost six hundred," said Ed.

"Got six hundred?"

"Yes."

"Well, I've seen a six-thousand-dollar lot bought for six hundred, cash, and turned over for ten thousand, inside a week. Tell you what I'll do. I'll let you take four hundred. That will make an even thousand. To-morrow morning you go to this address"—Howard scribbled on a card and gave it to Ed—"and tell 'em you want that lot, on terms. Buy it in your name. You're a stranger. If I was to go, they would hold me up for more cash, because they know that I know the game. Their game is to get your thousand, and wait till you miss a payment or two, and then close down on you. You see, they know I wouldn't let 'em close down. But if you can get hold of the lot and hang on, you stand to make five or six thousand, inside of thirty days. Now, you know me well enough to figure I wouldn't steer you into this if it wasn't all right."

"But how about keeping up the payments?"

"You get hold of the property and I'll see that the payments are made. But we won't make many. That lot will sell inside of thirty days. You remember that stout man at the bar, who was talking to the fellow in a blue suit? Well, the stout man is a leading banker here, and he gave me the tip. A bunch of New York capitalists are coming here this week to buy up stuff along Main and Spring. It hasn't leaked out. I'm telling you because of old times. I'd like to see you get on your feet. I guess you forgot you lent me twenty, once, in Kansas City, when I was broke."

"You paid it back."

"Did I?" Howard grinned. "Well, I do get absent-minded."

"If I throw in with you," said Ed slowly, "I toss in about all I got."

"Which means you wonder why I didn't buy that lot myself. Well, I told you they know me, and I couldn't get it on a small down payment. The minute any of us old-timers begin to monkey around that lot, the agents are going to smell a rat. A stranger is different. They figure you'll lose. And at the same time you are helping 'em carry the property while it is going up in value. They can use your money. A lot of these sales are all paper. Ready cash is the stuff. And if you don't make five or six thousand clean, on the deal, you can call me out in front of the Palace and tell everybody in sight I'm a liar."

Old man Howard chuckled. He knew his ground. Though a mighty shrewd horseman, not even his worst enemy had ever accused him of trickery or dishonesty.

Ed tossed up a half dollar and caught it.

"I'll throw in with you," he said.

Within the thirty days—in fifteen days, to be exact—Ed refused ten thousand dollars for the lot from the agent who had sold it to him. The newspapers were then filled with the names of buyers and sellers and investors. The boom was going big. Ed consulted Howard and they decided to hang on for another week. And a few days later Ed sold the lot for eighteen thousand dollars, cash. He paid old man Howard, banked his money, and watched for another opportunity. But vacant property along that section of Spring Street was now scarce and high. If he could only get hold of a corner! But the corner lots had houses or buildings on them. The idea of buying both house and lot and moving the house off and selling the lot had not yet become popular. Ed set the pace by purchasing the livery stable in which he kept his mules. The stable was on a corner, not far from the zone of active speculation. Six months later he sold the corner for twenty-five thousand and threw in the building for good measure. And in another six months the boom came to an end, and

there was much wailing and gnashing of teeth. Small, down-payment speculators were caught, and suffered the usual consequences. Wise men marked time. Still wiser men went out and quietly bought up acreage along the edge of town. Ed was among these. He not only bought twenty acres of pasture land, but he built a neat bungalow and a stable, in which he kept a pair of high-stepping, bay road horses and a light buggy. He planted eucalyptus and pepper trees, put in a vegetable garden, and hired a Chinese handy man to look after the place.

But Ed wasn't content to live on his money. He must be doing something. So, under the firm name of Howard & Lester, he opened a mule market on Aliso Street, where he spent much of his time. Always, he watched the development of the city, especially on the west side. The tendency of well-to-do citizens was to build south, but Ed anticipated that the next activity would run toward the west.

Meanwhile he had written to Mary, who had gone to live with her married sister in Denver. His letters were filled with enthusiasm for Los Angeles, although he merely hinted that he was doing well. He told her that he was running a mule market, just so Jenny and Johnny would have a home; that they were fat and lazy, and of no account whatever. Because he once mentioned himself as working in a stable, Mary did not even imagine that he owned the stable and other valuable property and had a comfortable bank account. She visualized him as the Ed she had known—Bill's friend and partner, working and whistling and stepping about in overalls and a rough shirt. She knew his fondness for a joke, and did not always know just how to take some of his statements. She knew, however, that she cared a great deal for him, that she had depended upon him so much—upon his cheerfulness, his humor, his quick readiness to anticipate anything that needed doing.

And when Ed had time to settle down to something like a routine, he began to feel lonesome. He didn't know why. He could always find companionship among the horsemen at the Palace, and he had made a friend or two, as well as always having old man Howard to talk to. He spent a somewhat colorful week in San Francisco and was glad to get back to his own town and home. Finally he took to staying downtown for supper, and coming home to the bungalow late. One morning, as he was driving to town, he saw a woman step from the doorway of a bungalow and begin to pick roses from the bushes that bordered the dooryard walk. Just a glimpse, and Ed was past, the bays going at a good clip. But that glimpse bothered him all day. The woman had looked so much like Mary Watson. He drove home early that afternoon, and drove slowly past the bungalow, but saw no one in the yard.

A few days later he again drove past the place, holding the horses down to a slow trot. The woman was at the gate. It was evident that she admired the team. She nodded and smiled. Ed pulled up, and they chatted about horses. As he drove on, he admitted to himself that the woman seemed to be a nice person and did look something like Mary. But she talked through her nose and giggled.

Finally Ed decided to write a real letter to Mary, a letter about much that he had had in mind for a long time. Mary was sensible and wouldn't be offended if he told her he wanted to see her more than he wanted to see any person on earth. He was tempted to tell her of his success, but he thought better of it. If Mary cared for him at all, he wanted her to care for him as the Ed Lester of the Morning-glory

Mine. In conclusion he wrote asking her if he might come to Denver and call on her.

"And I'll know by her answer whether she wants me to make that kind of a call or not," he said, as he sealed the letter.

But Mary never received the letter. Before it had reached Denver, she and her sister and family were on their way to Los Angeles. Mary's brother-in-law had made a strike at Cripple Creek. He thought a winter in Los Angeles would do them all good. So, in the happy-go-lucky manner of Westerners, they stood not upon the order of their going, but packed up and went. Mary thought of writing to Ed about their coming, but concluded that she would let him know of their arrival after they had taken rooms at some hotel. She had Ed's address. And she didn't want him to take the time from his work to meet them at the train.

When Mr. Sherman from Cripple Creek arrived in Los Angeles he and his family were driven to the Palace Hotel. He had made his pile and there was nothing too good for him. The following afternoon, Ed dropped into the hotel bar to meet his partner, old man Howard, who, while he owned a half interest in the mule market, spent most of his time watching the pulse of the real-estate market. They talked for a few minutes, and finally Howard suggested that they get something to eat. "Match you to see who pays for the supper," said Howard.

They matched and he lost. Taking Ed's arm, he started for the hotel dining room. "How about the chink's?" said Ed.

"Tired of that joint," said Howard. "Anyhow, I feel like pulling a cork, this evening. Come on."

"One cork?" asked Ed.

"Just one," said Howard.

Seated at a table near the front windows, they watched the guests as they came in. There was a stir as the Cripple Creek millionaire appeared. He didn't look like a millionaire—and wasn't. He looked very much like a tough, wiry, outdoor man in his Sunday raiment. Howard's waiter leaned over the table.

"Them's his sisters," he whispered.

"The hell they are!" exclaimed Ed. "What's his name?"

"Mr. Jack Sherman," replied the waiter.

"Well, if that isn't Mary——" Ed hesitated. His face grew red. He glanced at Howard.

"Eddie," said Howard reprovingly, "you been drinking."

"Yes. I had one with you. First I've had to-day."

"Then you ain't been drinking enough," said Howard. "You need a couple more to steady you."

But Ed didn't hear. He was counting the number of days since he had sent his last letter to Mary. He seemed puzzled. He got up.

"John," he said to old man Howard, "excuse me for a minute."

He marched across the dining room and stopped at Mr. Jack Sherman's table. Mary had seen him coming and had at once recognized him, in spite of his tailored attire. They shook hands.

"I'm glad to see you, Ed," she said. Then she introduced him to her sister and her sister's husband, Mr. Sherman. When Mr. Jack Sherman realized who Ed was, nothing would do but that Ed should become one of their party. Ed said that he was having supper with his partner, Mr. Howard.

"Fetch him over!" said Mr. Sherman. "If he's a friend of yours, he'll do to take along."

Cripple Creek millionaires do not have to ask for hotel service. A table for five was provided almost before Mr. Jack Sherman knew that he wanted it. Questions, answers, and in-

terpolations flew back and forth across the table.

Ed did get a chance to ask Mary if she had received his latest letter. She hadn't.

"Then," he said, "I'd like a chance to tell you what was in it."

Mr. Jack Sherman hadn't made his strike because he happened to be blind or stupid. Moreover, old man Howard was his kind of man. So, after dinner, he declared he wanted to talk business with Mr. Howard, whom he invited up to his room. Mrs. Sherman went up with them, leaving Ed and Mary in the lobby. Presently Mary went up for her hat and cloak.

"Ed has asked me to go for a drive," she said. "You won't mind if I run away for an hour or two?"

Mary's sister smiled. Mr. Jack Sherman said he wished she would go, so that he and Mr. Howard could settle down to a real visit.

They drove out a long avenue bordered with giant eucalyptus trees. When Mary saw Ed's home—the bungalow, the garden, the young trees and flowers, and the moonlit hills that bordered the wide valley, she was enthralled. When Wo Sung, the Chinese handy man, picked a big white rose and gave it to her, she thought of the struggling morning-glories under the cabin window, in that arid, upland country she had loved.

"But you must see the place in daylight," said Ed. "I just drove out here this evening because—well, I think it's a right pleasant drive."

On the way back Ed was silent for quite a while. Suddenly he turned to Mary.

"I said in that letter I wanted to see you more than any one on this earth. Mary, that bungalow back there is plumb wasted on me. But you could make it a real home."

Mary knew Ed so well, understood him, that she did not expect him to say more than that. He loved her, or he wouldn't have said that much, even jestingly. He had said nothing about his business success in his letters. He was the same Ed.

"You could make it a real home," he said again.

"I'll try," said Mary.

THE END.

BOATMEN STEER FOR ALASKA

THIRTY years ago the name "Alaska" signified "gold"—and as a result it drew the prospector, the adventurer with the lust for gold deep in his make-up. But to-day that has changed somewhat. Gold trails behind in the list of products sent from the far northern wonderland. In its stead has come the realization that the territory offers a new lure—a lure to the boatmen.

Last year dozens of yachtsmen made the cruise to Alaska, largely following the inside passage through British Columbia waters from Seattle to Ketchikan —the first port in Alaska—and thence through the landlocked waterways to Wrangell, Juneau, and Skagway. Few storms occur during the summer months, and the navigation is a simple matter. In years past the trip has even been made in canoes and in rowboats.

The high mountain ranges with snow-capped peaks, the forest-clad hills, the myriads of waterfalls, the glaciers—all offer attractions to the experienced travelers who enjoy traveling in smaller boats in order that they might stop at various places. Anglers, in particular, find it worth while to stop at the hundreds of streams that offer trout fishing.

The Return Of The Gillicuddy

By

Theodore Goodridge Roberts

Author of "Masterless Men," "The Moose Yard," Etc.

To the eyes of a traveler fresh from the warm, comfortable South, that snowbound, leafless Waakadogan country looked bleak and desolate. Yet there was sign of life; smoke curled up from a distant chimney—and the traveler soon found that hearts beat as warm in human drama there as they did elsewhere, despite the snow and waste.

FOR close upon forty years, Miss Amanda was the only Gillicuddy on the Waakadogan stream. Her parents had passed away when she was in her thirtieth year. Her brother Mark, a bachelor, had met with a violent death in a riverside tavern down at Milldam before the demise of the parents; and Walter, the younger brother, had sold his red mare and his rifle to David Bruce and gone south to the States before the sods had fairly set on the old folks' graves.

Walt's emigration was a subject of discussion on the upper reaches of the Waakadogan for several months. There was considerable criticism of the late Josiah, his father, in this connection. There was much talk but very little argument; for who possessed sufficient imagination or courage to deny the obvious explanation of Walt's action? Josiah's last will and testament supplied the explanation. Walt had deserted the ancestral acres because he had no proprietary interest in them. They were all Amanda's.

Ever since little girlhood, Mandy Gillicuddy had been the model for all the households from Covered Bridge to Crooked Elbow, on both sides of the river, of all that a daughter and a sister should be. Gentle, obedient and industrious, she had been the comfort and

hope of her parents. "Handsome is as handsome does" is a saying in that country—but Mandy could not have been any easier to look at if she had been as naughty as she was good. So Mandy, in her thirtieth year, inherited all the worldly possessions of her parents.

David Bruce, the purchaser of Walt Gillicuddy's rifle and red mare, had been courting Mandy all of three years at the time of the old folks' deaths. His one hundred and sixty acres, the old Ben Smith farm, lay just across the mouth of Otter Creek from the Gillicuddy place. He was in the westward of the two angles formed by the junction of the creek with the river, and the Gillicuddy property of one square mile occupied the eastward angle.

At low water he could put across the creek with two strokes of the paddle; and, during the three years of his courtship, there was never a condition of water or ice that could keep him away from Mandy Gillicuddy for longer than twenty-four hours at a time. He was a man of few words. He let his actions speak for him.

It was at supper time of the first day of June that Walter Gillicuddy's rifle and red mare came into David Bruce's possession. Walt fetched them across at the ford; there followed ten minutes of talk between the two men, in which Dave did all the listening; and when Walt named the price, which was moderate considering the pedigree of the red mare, Dave paid it over in hard cash. After a little more talk on Walt's part the two friends shook hands, each satisfied with his end of the bargain, and Walt went away in Dave's second-best canoe.

Dave called on his girl bright and early next morning. She caught sight of him through the kitchen window and hurried to the open door. He halted sharply, a full eight paces off, when she appeared on the threshold. The rose-petal blush of her smooth cheeks paled as their glances met.

"How come it everything's yourn an' Walt gits nothin'?" he asked.

She did not answer instantly, but her gentle eyes widened and darkened and melted to incredible depths of tenderness.

"It was as much of a surprise to me as to him. You hadn't ought to speak to me like that, Dave."

"Maybe so—but why didn't ye fix it with him—fifty-fifty? An' I reckon ye'd both got over yer surprise."

"But it was father's wish, or it wouldn't be left that way. He never said a word about it to me—but he intended it for Walt's own good, I guess."

"Don't fool yerself! Walt's got a right to half the land an' half the cash —and you know it even if the old man didn't."

"Father knew he'd never want for anything in reason."

"He's jumped the Waakadogan country, anyhow. I bought his mare an' his gun last night, an' he lit out for the States—an' that's what any self-respectin' man would do. I'll wish ye good day."

He turned and strode off.

"Dave! Come back here!" she cried. "What ails you? It's no fault of mine —him leavin' home, nor pa's will. Come here, Dave."

He halted and looked back at her over his left shoulder.

"If it's all yourn, why didn't ye give yer brother the half of it?"

"I couldn't do that, Dave—not against the will an' all—against the wishes of the dead. But I meant to do right by Walt—like I always have done —and he knows it; and I'll do right by him even now—whatever's best for his own good."

She stepped down from the threshold with her tender gaze full and pleading upon him, and her smooth, slender arms extended. The last vestige of color re-

ceded from his face, leaving it a gray mask.

"To the devil with that!" he cried; and he turned again and strode away, blind and breathless with anger and yearning and despair. As he stumbled into his canoe he muttered, "Right's right!"—but as he stumbled up the farther bank of the creek he could think only of her gentle eyes. "But right's right!" he muttered. "She's lyin'—and she's greedy."

Dave Bruce did not sleep a wink that night. He did not even go to bed and invite sleep. He wandered about the farmstead and the nearer fields all night in the dark and the dew and the breaking dawn, dazed and tormented.

Twice he found himself down at the edge of the creek, within arm's length of his bedded canoe, within a few paddle strokes and fifty yards of Amanda Gillicuddy. The impulse to lay hold of and launch the canoe was almost stronger than his will. Twice he stooped and touched the dew-wet bulge of resined bark. How was he helping his friend by renouncing his love? Would Walter be any richer for it? But his honest, stubborn anger was stronger than his reasoning, stronger even than his thirst and hunger for the woman. He lifted his hands from the canoe and straightened his back.

"No! Not if she was the only girl in the world! Right's right! She cheated!"

He fought the long night through. Before sunrise he milked his cows and turned them from the yard to the pasture, fed the horses and calves and poultry, then went down to the creek and launched the canoe. One strong thrust of the pole would have taken him across to the Gillicuddy side—and he knew that Mandy would be looking out for him across the dew-washed orchard—but he swung aside from the creek's mouth into the strong rush of the Waakadogan and poled upstream to Sam Brent's landing. He breakfasted with the Bents, gave Sam written authority to dispose of his farm and live stock and personal property, and resumed his ascent of the river.

David Bruce's live stock was auctioned off three weeks after Dave's departure, and most of it, including the red mare that had belonged to the disinherited Walter, was purchased by Amanda Gillicuddy. The heiress bid hard and high, and at the conclusion of the auction she bought the farm itself and hired one of Sam Bent's sons to look after it.

David Bruce never returned to the Waakadogan. He bought a farm on the Tobique and neglected it for ten years while he ran the woods and lost money and weight in unsuccessful logging operations. Then he married a woman from Green River whose mother had come from Covered Bridge on the Waakadogan. He settled down to a heavy and perplexed existence, became known in those woods for his unflinching honesty and unyielding stubbornness, often murmured to himself, "Right's right, but I reckon I was a fool," and, in the course of time, he died of a cold on the chest and was buried in the orchard of his own planting.

Walter Gillicuddy never returned to the Waakadogan.

Burnside Gillicuddy had come a long way, and when he detrained at Covered Bridge on the Waakadogan stream and a flap of icy wind pinched his nose and scorched his eyes, he felt a million miles from home. When the wind passed he surveyed his surroundings distastefully. Little hills, black with spruce and fir and hemlock and splotched with occasional snowy clearings, humped their backs everywhere as if in agonized protest against the colorless, merciless sky.

"Huh!" he exclaimed, with a mittened hand to his mouth. "The land of

my ancestors. The land of promise. It sure looks more like a litter of dead pups—black-an'-white pups, froze stiff."

He stood solitary on the unsheltered, drifted platform, with his two suit cases beside him and his Saratoga trunk and several pieces of freight behind him. The freight was not his. A second twisting flap of wind sprayed him with snow as harsh and dry as tropic sand. He looked a desolate and bewildered figure, like some bulky creature of another age and element that had been washed up and stranded there. His desolation was real, but his bulk was largely extraneous. His appearance of unwieldly width and thickness was due to layers of clothing which had accumulated upon him gradually in the course of his long journey from the great Southwest. He carried on his slender frame a complete sartorial record of the cities and towns at which he had paused on his way from El Paso del Rosalia to Covered Bridge on the Waakadogan; and yesterday, at Kingston on the main river, he had topped the whole collection with a vast and impressive coonskin coat.

He withdrew his attention from the desolate landscape to objects nearer at hand. He turned and moved ponderously to the articles of freight which had been detrained with him and read the inscriptions on tags and labels. All were addressed to Thomas Hilyard of Covered Bridge.

"Somebody must live here," he said. "I bet he was born here an' couldn't find his way out—or he's a bigger fool than me."

Again he turned and looked abroad at the frozen wilderness. He saw the wind-swept gray roof of the covered bridge down in the narrow valley of the shrouded stream, and beyond and above it a thin plume of azure rising and dispersing against hunched shoulders of black forest.

"That's chimney smoke. That's the bold Thomas holding the farthest north against all comers."

Deserting trunk and suit cases, he stepped from the platform in the general direction of the smoke. The snow did not take him deeper than the knees, for there was a beaten road under the new drift. That was deep enough. He wasn't dressed for exercise. He had not gone fifty yards when a pair of horses appeared suddenly in the way from behond a sharp elbow of spruces, spurting frosty spray.

He floundered backward from the hidden track and was instantly holed, waist deep. He flapped his arms helplessly. The horses plunged past and halted and looked back at him. Then he saw the sled at their heels and an upright figure in a long, dark fur coat. The wind swooped and scooped and enveloped horses and driver and wayfarer in stinging drift. It passed after a suffocating minute.

"Are you off the train?" sang out the teamster.

The voice astonished Burnside Gillicuddy. He cleared his eyes with both hands and stared. The frozen landscape had not led him to expect anything like this, nor had the fur coat, which was old, ill shaped and mangy. Was the person equal to the voice, he wondered? For Burnside could see nothing but eyes and nose between cap and collar.

"Am I off it?" he returned. "I'll say so—considerably."

"Did you happen to see any freight for Thomas Hilyard?"

"Four pieces. But don't go tellin' me that *you* are Thomas."

"No, I'm not. Are you Doctor Kiter, the veterinary surgeon?"

"No, I'm not; but spavins and ring bones are no mysteries to me."

"I wonder if you'll help me with the freight? Will it be too much trouble? I'd be very much obliged. Can you spare the time?"

"Time's nothing to me. Don't mention it."

"Come on, then."

"Surely—an' that's putting it mildly—if only I knew what to do next an' how to go about it."

"Can't you get out? Oh, I'm sorry! I'll twitch you out."

It was done with a bit of rope, one end of which was made fast to the frame of the sled and the other grasped firmly by the snowbound Gillicuddy. The horses went forward at the word and Gillicuddy evacuated the hole in the snowdrift with disconcerting abruptness. He scrambled onto the sled and cleared his eyes and mouth of snow.

"You couldn't have done it better with a corkscrew," he said. "Did I pop?"

The teamster laughed.

The wayfarer grinned. He spoke with confidential voice and manner.

"When I first saw your beautiful city it looked to me like seven perished pups in a basket, and I said to myself: 'You'll be lucky if you find one blubber-eatin' Eskimo alive to welcome you.' An Eskimo was the best I expected. And look at me now! Do you know a better one? Or have you ever met up with an Esk——"

"I never saw one in all my life. What do you want with an Eskimo?"

"I'm an orphan, so you mustn't laugh at me."

"I'm an orphan, too."

"That makes it unanimous. I hoped we'd have something in common the minute I saw your eyes and nose; and now that I can see almost down to your chin——"

"You're from farther away than Milldam. Are you from Kingston?"

"I was there. That's where I bought this long-haired coat. But to come back to what I can see of you. It wouldn't be much if measured in square inches, nor even in oblong inches, but there——"

"Here we are," interrupted the young woman in the mangy fur coat.

When the freight was all on the sled, the young woman stepped over to the Saratoga trunk and examined the label that was tacked to its top.

"Is this you?" she asked, with her back to Gillicuddy.

"Not on your life!" he replied. "Here I am. That's only my trunk."

"Is your name Gillicuddy?"

"Yes. Why do you say it in that tone of voice?"

"Walter Gillicuddy's son?"

"Yes, and proud of it."

She turned then and regarded him gravely and curiously.

"So the lawyers found you," she said.

"Yes; and now I'm lookin' for my inheritance. Why not? The old lady didn't make a will, so they tell me, and I'm next of kin."

"Hadn't you enough of your own?"

"Who? What?"

"Walter Gillicuddy was a rich man. You were his next of kin. Didn't he leave you all he had?"

Gillicuddy averted his face. He appeared to reflect.

"All he had? Yes, I reckon he did. Why not?"

"Put your trunk on and we'll get along."

"To Otter Creek?"

"That's six miles beyond our place, and the road not broken. My aunt will put you up for the night—for as long as need be—until you can get through the rest of the way."

Gillicuddy put the trunk on the sled in silence and sat on it. The young woman stood well forward of him, reins in hand, and swung the horses around. The wind swooped, the snow drifted, the eager horses plunged for home. The road dipped and twisted down to the bridge. The hoofs banged and clattered on the frosty planking of the bridge and echoed along the vaulted roof. They began to climb immediately

beyond the shelter, enveloped in smothering clouds of snow.

"So you heard how rich I was?" shouted the young man, leaning forward.

She turned her head slightly and cried back:

"I never heard of you in all my life."

They went the rest of the way in silence, climbing and twisting through the white scud of the blowing snow and between black shoulders of woods. The horses turned aside and halted. A door slammed and a stout man, with a red face and pale eyes, appeared suddenly from the screening drift and stared at the passenger.

"I took you for Doc Kiter!" exclaimed the stout man, blinking.

"Sorry to disappoint you, but my name's Gillicuddy," said the man on the trunk. "Gillicuddy—pronounced as spelled; and if you don't like it—well, you can go to the dickens."

The stout native lost most of his color, and his lower jaw sagged, and for ten full seconds he stood speechless.

"Sure I like it!" he cried—but his voice lacked sincerity. "Why wouldn't I like it? Gillicuddy. It used to be a grand name in these parts. Now what Gillicuddy might you be?"

"What Gillicuddys have you?"

"Hey?"

"What Gillicuddys are there?"

"Not a one as I know of since Miss Mandy died, onless Walt's livin' yet. I heard he married an' made lots of money."

"He's dead; and I'm his son—his only child."

"You don't say! Well, now, to think of that! Lay it there."

They shook hands. Then Gillicuddy stepped from the sled.

"You move kinder stiff-laigged for a young feller," remarked Hilyard.

"Who wouldn't, in three pairs of pants?"

"Three pairs of pants! D'ye mean you got three pairs on right now, all to once?"

"I sure do—and other things accordin'. I've been buyin' suits and gettin' into them ever since I left El Paso del Rosalia."

The expression of the stout man's large face changed again. This change was more subtle than the first—but Burnside Gillicuddy was the lad to see and interpret it.

"This big barbecue thinks I'm a fool and likes the idea," he reflected. And he said, with a note of vanity: "Yes, sir, I sure am upholstered."

"Step along to the house," invited Hilyard, who now smiled broadly and was entirely at his ease. "Supper'll be ready soon. Foller Molly's tracks, if they ain't drifted full already. Make yerself right to home."

The Hilyard household consisted of Thomas and his wife and a son and Molly Bruce. Molly was a niece of Mrs. Hilyard. The son, Norman by name, was away from home at the time of Burnside Gillicuddy's unexpected arrival at Covered Bridge. Gillicuddy acquired the above information during supper. That was a meal which he will remember always. It was plentiful and served stylishly in the dining room. The table was small and illuminated by an oil lamp with a green-and-red shade. The girl sat opposite to him. He had discarded clothing down to the suit of light-gray tweed in which he had left his distant home, but an ornate stove at his back warmed him to the marrow. The wind, which had doubled in violence since sunset, lashed the frozen drift beyond the curtained windows. He felt secure, amused and excited. He talked; and the more he talked the surer he was that Thomas Hilyard considered him a fool and was delighted to do so. He humored the stout man in that belief.

"There's a bur in the blanket some-

where," he reflected. "He got a shock when he first heard my name, but he quieted right down when I told him about the three pairs of pants. And the girl didn't seem to like my name, either—but she didn't look guilty when she heard it, as he did. She looked at me as if I was the guilty party. She thinks I'm rich. Dream on."

"The young man feels the cold, mother," said Hilyard. "He ain't used to snow an' ice. What was you wearin' when I first seen you, mister?"

"Everything I owned but a saddle blanket. Every town I came to was colder than the one before it, so I had to buy me another rig-out; and I had to buy 'em a size larger every time so's I could get into 'em."

Hilyard laughed without attempting to mute an overtone of derision. Mrs. Hilyard appeared to be flustered and anxious. The young woman, Molly Bruce, eyed the guest gravely, unsmilingly.

"I mistook you for a giant," said Hilyard. "'There's bin growin' weather where this young man come from,' I says to myself. An' it wasn't nothin' only coats an' pants, after all."

"Practically nothing."

"Hey?"

"Three hundred an' fifty dollars wouldn't buy it all, includin' the long-haired coat."

"Say, you must be rich!"

"I was rolling in wealth, so to speak."

"You ain't lost none of it?"

"Only a quarter down a crack in the floor of the Milldam depot."

Hilyard hooted with laughter. And so it went. Hilyard was full of leading questions and Gillicuddy of silly answers. When supper was over, the guest offered to assist at the dishwashing—and his services were accepted. Mrs. Hilyard washed while he and Molly dried and Hilyard looked on from a rocking chair with occasional sniggers of derisive mirth. The task was almost completed when the girl stepped close to Gillicuddy and asked in a whisper: "Are you as simple as you sound?"

"Heaven forbid!" he said.

The wind blew out during the night. Morning slid up still and clear, with a sun like colorless glass. At breakfast, which was eaten in the kitchen, Hilyard told Gillicuddy that it was not a good day for tramping on snowshoes and that he had better put off his journey up to Otter Creek until the conditions improved. Gillicuddy glanced at the girl and knew that the stout man was lying.

"Reckon you're right," he said. "What's wrong with it?"

"The cold, for one thing. Was you ever on snowshoes?"

"Maybe not—but I was on roller skates once—but not for long."

Hilyard hooted—and as he was eating pancakes and drinking tea at the same moment he very nearly choked. Upon regaining his breath, he said that the wind had put so many twists in the snow that even an experienced woodsman could not travel a mile in a straight line. Gillicuddy nodded and asked if he might see some snowshoes. His host pointed to a pair which hung from a peg in the wall. He left the table and examined the webs with interest. He took them down from their peg.

"Which is the front end?" he asked.

"The long end. The sharp end."

Gillicuddy replaced the snowshoes and returned to the table. But he did not resume his seat. He drew a five-dollar bill from a pocket and laid it in front of Mrs. Hilyard.

"I'm much obliged to you, ma'am," he said gravely.

He turned instantly and regarded the stout man with a straight and darkling stare.

"As for you—go jump over yerself!" he said. "You're a liar; and I guess you're a crook, too—if you have brains enough."

For a minute the soft humming of the

kettle on the stove was the only sound in the wide, warm kitchen, and the pulsing lift of the kettle's gray steam was the only movement. Gillicuddy's gaze remained unwavering on Hilyard's large face; Hilyard goggled unseeingly to his front; Mrs. Hilyard stared fearfully at the five-dollar bill before her, and the girl watched Gillicuddy with dark, inscrutable eyes. The stout man was the first to move, and, at the same moment, he broke the tingling silence.

He rose to his feet, bellowing. Profane personalities burst and rolled from his thick blanched lips. He rounded the end of the table and enveloped Gillicuddy in mighty arms. Together they lurched away from the table, staggering and revolving. They fell and rolled. The young woman started toward them. Mrs. Hilyard covered her face with her hands. Gillicuddy came upright as if by magic, laughing, and stepped lightly away from Hilyard's scrambling, blundering pursuit.

"I warn you not to grab onto me again," he said. "I might lose my temper next time."

Hilyard checked in the middle of the rush, his arms still wide, his thick fingers still hooked to clutch, his mouth still twisted in a grin of fury. Thus he stood for seconds, a terrible figure —but the shadows of doubt and fear in his pale eyes reduced his appearance to a despicable thing.

"Don't strain yerself," said Gillicuddy lightly. "Ease off and sit down."

Hilyard obeyed, resuming his seat at the table with a relaxed thump, as nerveless and slumpy as a sack of bran.

"You hadn't ought to call a man a liar—not in his own house, anyhow," he complained feebly.

"I call them where I find them," reported the last of the Gillicuddys.

If the man from El Paso del Rosalia felt misgivings as he prepared for the six-mile tramp from Covered Bridge to the mouth of Otter Creek, he did not show them. After a retirement of fifteen or twenty minutes to the room in which he had slept, he returned to the kitchen clothed for the expedition in a workmanlike selection from his wardrobe and a pair of new moosehide moccasins. He carried a canvas pack. His big Saratoga trunk stood in the kitchen; and there he opened it and exposed its contents to Mrs. Hilyard and Molly Bruce. Hilyard was not present. He pulled out a pair of snowshoes, which he had bought at Kingston. It was an unusually large trunk. He produced a belt ax.

"I'll come back some day for the rest of it," he said. "It's mostly saddlery, and no use to me yet a while."

"Why do you go to-day?" asked the girl. "There's nothing to be done at this time of year. The sheriff sold off the live stock, as you must have heard."

"Yes, I heard. But I must go somewhere, and that's where I belong," he answered.

"But you are rich—you can go anywhere. Why do you trouble yourself about an old farm in the backwoods"

"*You* think I'm rich. Hilyard thought I was a fool. You both want to keep me away from Otter Creek. What's your game?"

The girl was obviously distressed by his directness. She lowered her glance and changed color. Her lower lip trembled, as if she were about to speak or cry, but no sound came of it. She tossed her dark head, but the gesture lacked assurance.

"What's the game?" repeated the young man. "You turned against me the moment you learned my name; and Hilyard took it like a kick on the shins. But he cheered up when I played the fool. What's he up to? What's going on at Otter Creek? I'm on my way to find out."

Mrs. Hilyard came close to him, wringing her thin hands.

"Nobody intended any harm!" she cried, thin and high. "We never heard a word of Walter Gillicuddy's son. The old lady—Molly here lived with her an' was like a daughter to her—she told often how her brother was a rich man away off somewheres in the States. He treated her cruel—your father did Miss Mandy—left her alone there an' turned David Bruce against her—him that was Molly's pa later. An' she took Molly to live with her ten years ago, from acrost the height of land, an' promised to leave her everything—but they couldn't find any will when she died. But nobody intended any harm. But maybe you'd best stop here a few days till—till——"

She left it at that, in the air. Gillicuddy turned curiously to the girl, who avoided his glance.

"I've heard of Dave Burce," he said. "My old man often talked about him and his honesty. They swapped letters now an' then—once every ten years or so. And I know all about the pious Mandy. A cheat—and a hog for greediness. That's why Dave Bruce broke with her. My old man treated her cruel, did he? Left her alone, did he?—with a square mile of land, an' stock an' gear an' money! Deserted the poor, sweet, pious woman, did he?—with his pockets bulging with the price of a red mare he sold to Dave Bruce! One mare was *his* inheritance—all he got of the Gillicuddy estate—and sweet Amanda roped the rest of it and named him for a heartless deserter!"

"Don't you dare sneer at her memory!" cried the girl furiously. "She *was* sweet! She *was* good! And your father and mine treated her shamefully! I lived with her over nine years. I knew her, I guess."

"Did she tell you about my father's wealth?"

"Yes, she did. Why shouldn't she? He made it with her money. He got all her money out of her."

Gillicuddy stared. Then he laughed bitterly.

"So that's where the money went to. Well, it solves a mystery." He laughed again, most unpleasantly. "But I'll tell you something else. My old man wrote to her once, and once only. He was on his back at the time, with a broken leg. The Mexicans who had broken his leg had also run off all his cows. He wrote to his sister and explained the whole trouble and asked for a thousand dollars. He was up against it. I was nine or ten years old at the time. We'd have starved but for the charity of some half-breed neighbors. She answered his letter. She said that she couldn't send him any money as she hadn't any, having lost it all, but that she had never ceased to pray for him. But you won't believe that, because it's the truth—the ugly, honest truth—and you've been bred to a taste for lies—pretty lies full of rich old women with broken hearts."

"How dare you!" cried the girl, pale with anger.

"I've done plenty more daring things than tell the truth to a silly woman!" he retorted. "You'd be surprised."

"The truth?" she cried. "It's *you* who lie!"

He shouldered his pack and picked up his snowshoes and crossed to the outer door, smiling grimly.

"Don't go there! Don't go there yet!" wailed Mrs. Hilyard.

He opened the door, stepped out and slammed it behind him.

The white road ran smoothly between dark banks of spruce and fir and lighter cedar, fringed in places by wind-scooped drifts. Its surface, swept and pressed by the night wind, recorded the passage of nothing larger than a rabbit. Burnside Gillicuddy moved along it with shuffling steps, occasional flounderings and frequent halts. Twice and again in the first hundred yards he untied and readjusted the strings of inch-wide cotton lamp wick by which his

snowshoes were attached to his feet. This was the rigging which the salesman at Kingston had recommended to him as superior to the old-style thongs of leather, in that the knots did not bind when wet or frozen. He did not doubt the soundness of that recommendation. He realized—the reasonable man—that his trouble lay in his own ignorance.

"There's more to these durned contraptions than meets the eye," he said. "That feels more like it. Reckon I was cinched up too short before. Now all I got to do's step out straight and strong, lifting each foot clear of the other."

He did so for twenty paces, and then his attention wavered from his feet for a moment and he stepped on himself and did a dive. He cleared his face of snow, untangled his feet and put all to rights.

"You showed real vice that time," he said, stamping down on the big webs. "Which of you tried to bite my ear? But I'll ride you if I bust for it. I'll have you eating out of my hand before I'm done with you. We're off!"

He made fifty yards at a good clip before he fouled his feet again. That was his last tumble in a mile. He became ambitious then.

"Now I know all your tricks. Now we'll see how fast you can go."

He went fast but not far and made a deep hole in the snow. After that he was content to advance at a flapping walk; and by the time three of the six miles were behind him he was forced to halt and massage cramps from the backs of his legs. That was but the first of a number of halts for the same purpose. It was well past noon, and he was moving slowly and painfully, when he came in sight of the house of his fathers.

"Reckon that's it, all right!" he exclaimed. "It sure looks like the kind of place poor Walt Gillicuddy's son would fall heir to."

The old house wore a neglected and woebegone appearance. Its walls had not known so much as a lick of paint since the death of Josiah Gillicuddy more than forty years ago. The ridge pole of the L sagged like the back of an old horse. All the windows were shuttered.

Gillicuddy turned to his right between slanted, half-buried gateposts and shuffled wearily up the gradual slope, which expanded wide and white to the blind face of the house in front and the black flanks and shoulders of the woods to right and left. Its gleaming surface was unmarked by any track or trail or footprint of man or beast. A sudden waft of wind sighed mournfully in the high, dark tops of three sentinel pines.

"What I don't get is why they tried to keep me away from this," said the last of the Gillicuddys. "It wasn't for the pleasure of my company—not that you'd notice. She had kind eyes, too—when she wasn't riled. But I sure riled her. It's tough being called a liar by a girl like that one."

Tom Hilyard had set out for Otter Creek with a ten-minute start of Burnside Gillicuddy, but not by way of the white highroad. He had crossed the drifted yard to his store, left the store by the back door, dodged behind the barn and up through the orchard and into the edge of the woods. He had done the six miles unhurriedly but without pause, keeping a screen of forest between himself and the road all the way. Upon sighting the old house, he swung wide to his right and approached it from the rear, between the big weather-beaten barns.

A sagging woodshed jutted out from the back of the L, and this he entered without pausing to remove the wide webs from his feet, skidding and clattering over the loose floor. He checked heavily against the inner door, then pulled the mitten from his right hand

and knocked with bare knuckles. He struck once, hard, and followed that with three raps, quick and light, after a brief pause. Nothing happened. He repeated the four knocks. Still nothing happened. "Must've overslep' himself. Workin' all night, maybe."

He seized the doorknob with the intention of rattling it, and it turned in his hand. Not locked!

"What the hell!"

He pushed the door open and stood staring on the threshold, widening his eyes against the gloom of the interior. The kitchen was empty. The blankets were gone from the makeshift bed beside the old stove. He crossed the threshold with a sudden plunge and clattered to the middle of the room, shooting startled glances on all sides and into every shadowed corner. The snowshoes were not in sight. Nothing was to be seen of provisions but a few rinds of pork on the table, a dirty tin plate, an empty can.

"Norm!" he called.

He crossed to an inner door, opened it and called again. He heard nothing but the cracking of the frost somewhere in the ancient timbers of the deserted house. He hurried back to stove and table and searched for a candle, still clattering on his wide snowshoes. He found a few inches of tallow with a black wick on the hearth of the stove.

"He's maybe pulled somethin' down on top of himself—a wall or somethin' —tearin' into it!"

There were several loose matches on the table. In fumbling for one of the matches, his cold and anxious hand knocked the tin plate clattering to the floor. Something white fluttered down after the plate. After more nervous fumbling, he managed to strike a match and light the little candle; and by the candle's feeble gleam he saw that the white thing on the floor was a square of paper with dark lines on it. Writing! That was queer. What would Norman be doing with a bit of writing? He stooped and picked up the paper. It shook in his left hand, and the butt of candle shook in his right, as he read the written words:

> Dear father I cant find any will, but found a little of the real necessity—you know what —but only jest enough for myself as done all the bone labor of lookin for it not to menshun the resk. Youd best lay the floors back again for fear some one might happen in nosin round and get to guessin why they was tore up and who done it. The old lady was shure a master hand at the lies for all her saintly looks and ways—tuckin the stuff into holes and blamin' somebody else. Yours respectfully, your departed son. Address unknown.

The candle dropped from Tom Hilyard's unnerved fingers and rolled on the dusty floor and extinguished its feeble flame. The dazed man groped after it, down on hands and knees with the snowshoes fouling and checking him. He recovered it from beneath the cold stove, relit it after breaking half a dozen matches, and read again the astounding communication from his son. The thing was hard to believe—but, at the same time, it was impossible to doubt.

Norman had found money hidden away in the old house, as Tom had suspected he might, though the supposed sole reason for the search was a document which would establish Molly Bruce in possession of the entire Gillicuddy estate; and Norman had run off with the money, which Tom had not dreamed of his doing.

"And he don't even say how much," sighed poor Thomas. "Went an' hogged the hull of it! Cheated his own father —aye, an' the poor orphan girl! Crooked as a ram's horn!"

He stood with his back to the open door, gaping at the fateful message by the wavering gleam of the candle.

Mrs. Hilyard had flopped to the floor in the grip of hysterics immediately upon Burnside Gillicuddy's departure;

and Molly Bruce had been forced to pour cold water over her. The cold water had worked like magic. Leaving the woman drenched and limp, the girl had prepared herself swiftly for the snowy trail and started after the young man. Her intentions were confused, as were her emotions. She hated Gillicuddy, but at the same time she was shaken with anxiety for his safety. She despised Thomas Hilyard, knowing him to be both crafty and cowardly, yet she was angry at the stranger for having exposed Thomas' despicable qualities so quickly and ruthlessly. The fact that she had approved of the young man in the coonskin coat during the first few minutes of their acquaintance added a bitter sense of personal humiliation, and a vaguer sense of loss, to her anger. Oh! she detested him. He had slandered her dear old friend and benefactress, had sneered at the memory of that gentle, long-suffering woman—he, the son of one of the two men who had broken that kind heart! He should have spoken the name of Amanda Gillicuddy with bowed head. But no; he had lied about her! He was a liar; and, in lying about the dead, he was a coward. A coward and a liar! And even as she said it she knew, deep beneath her anger, that the young man from El Paso del Rosalia was not a conscious liar and was not lacking in physical courage.

"He's a fool—to believe such things of that poor saint!" she cried. "And heartless—and greedy—coming all this way to rob the helpless dead. He never set eyes on her, and he sneers at her memory—but he comes thousands of miles to grab her property—the old farm his father deserted. The beast! I hope Norman beats him up good an' plenty!"

And yet that Norman Hilyard might beat him up was one of the complications she feared. To try to save him from Norman's wrath was the chief of her confused reasons for following him now along the snowy road—not that she cared what happened to *him*, but she did not want Norm to get into trouble, perhaps into jail.

Norman was terrible when his temper was roused. He was big and strong. He was the best man on the Waakadogan. He was in the old house now, and had been there for ten days, working for her, searching for the will which she was sure had been written and signed and hidden away by poor Miss Mandy; and she shuddered to think of what he might do, in the heat of righteous indignation, if surprised at his task by young Gillicuddy. He might even kill the slender stranger. It would be murder—and he would hang for it!

At that unnerving thought she felt a glow and a melting of admiration and gratitude and pity toward Norman Hilyard. It thrilled her; and that was strange, for no thought of him had ever thrilled her before—and yet she had promised, a month ago, to marry him some day.

She experienced no difficulty in following Burnside Gillicuddy's trail. It was deep and wide, and in places deeper and wider.

"He never had a snowshoe under him before!" she exclaimed. "Of course, he pretended to know all about it. He thinks he knows everything. He won't get halfway."

She expected to discover him helpless in the snow at every turn of the road. She soon began to wonder at his persistence. Her wonder grew as she advanced. She halted now and then to interpret and consider some point in the record of his struggle. She admitted, grudgingly, that he was not easily turned from his purpose—that he had sand in his craw.

She pictured his meeting, with Norman in the old house, limping with snowshoe cramp but defiant and insulting—crushed in Norman's arms—flung

this way and that like a sack of shavings. A twinge of pity for young Gillicuddy shot through her anxiety for young Hilyard; and she increased her pace to a run and held it at that for fifty yards or so.

Then she thought, with a gasp of relief, that every door would be locked. She knew that Norman would not risk having anybody, stranger or neighbor, happen in on him at that job. Norman was not a fool. And she thought, also, that Tom Hilyard had started for Otter Creek ahead of Gillicuddy, through the woods, to warn Norman.

In that case, there was no danger of murder being committed, even if a door were left unlocked, for Tom Hilyard's temper would never get the better of his discretion. So there was really nothing to be afraid of, nothing serious, not so serious as murder, at the worst. She slackened her pace—but not for long. She was still anxious and afraid, in spite of her sound reasoning.

When she caught sight of Gillicuddy on the white road ahead she halted sharply; and it was then, for the first time, she realized the full significance of his arrival on the Waakadogan. She stood motionless until he had rounded the next bend of the road, and for minutes longer. The excitement of fear and anxiety had given place to a dull sense of loss. Her fine dreams of inheritance, of possession, of independence were dead—dead and fallen to dust and blown away. With the Gillicuddy established in the old house, bitter and suspicious and determined, the last chance of finding the will was gone —that will which would prove all her dear old friend's promises to her. The search was ended. Norman's toil had been in vain. What was hers by right of love and service and loving promises was lost to her irrevocably.

When she sighted the hateful stranger again, he was within a few yards of the front of the old house. She watched him from the shelter of a clump of young birches beside the drifted gateway. He moved slowly, with a sharp limp in one leg. She saw him try the big front door, then turn aside. As he disappeared around a corner, evidently in search of another point of entrance, she darted from cover and headed up the slope at her best pace, urged by a sudden and unreasonable curiosity.

At a sound behind him, Thomas Hilyard twitched and stiffened. Every nerve twanged like a wire. Every muscle jerked and froze.

"Who the devil?" cried a voice. "It's you, is it! What the devil are you doing here?" And it was the voice of Gillicuddy.

Hilyard's brain refused to function; but he turned, slowly and stiffly like a man of wood, with the butt of candle still in one hand and the written message from his son still in the other. He gaped at the figure in the doorway.

"What's your business here?" asked Gillicuddy. "What have you there?"

That jerked him out of his trance. Quick as thought, he brought his hands together with the intention of setting fire to the incriminating paper at the flame of the candle. But he fumbled the first try and almost extinguished the little flame against his wrist; and as he tried the second time, Gillicuddy charged him in a wild fury.

Again he fumbled and missed—but the man from El Paso del Rosalia did not miss. The jolt of the tackle shook both candle and paper from his fingers and backed him sharply against a corner of the table. He tried to step aside, but his webs were fouled in Gillicuddy's webs. Everything went sidewise except his feet. He struck the dusty floor with a thud and lay for a second with a leg of the stove in the back of his neck and Gillicuddy on his chest.

Then he flopped and rolled; and the

young man who clung to him, flopping and rolling with him, received the expression of the blind fury with which the treachery of his son had inflamed him. That and more. Tom Hilyard was in a murderous rage. His sense of discretion was submerged by red anger. He would kill if he could—any one—but this damned Gillicudy for choice.

A hard man to kill, Burnside Gillicuddy. Though handicapped by snowshoe cramp, he could not be held down in one place or position for half a second at a time. Desperate attempts to pound his head against the hearth of the stove proved futile, for his head was never there when wanted. When the heavy table turned over, Hilyard was on top.

It was Hilyard who took a numbing knock on the left shoulder from a corner of the table. When the stove came down five seconds later, Hilyard was still on top; and it was Hilyard who received the rusty fire box in the neck. But when Molly Bruce looked in, the young man from El Paso del Rosalia was on top; and Hilyard, whose discretion had reassured itself, was yelping for help and mercy.

Molly kicked clear of her webs, ran to the woodbox, snatched out a stick of maple and with it dealt Gillicuddy a full-arm blow behind the ear. He moaned, sagged forward, rolled limply off Hilyard's chest. Up scrambled Hilyard, his yelps for mercy changed to blistering curses, and kicked his late antagonist savagely in the ribs. He kicked again.

"Stop that!" screamed the girl.

But he delivered a third kick—it was well for the unconscious man that Hilyard wore moccasins instead of boots. Then the girl swung her stick of maple again; and Thomas grunted, gave at the knees, subsided ponderously and lay still.

The girl dropped the stick and covered her face with her shaking hands. She wept wildly. She knelt beside Thomas Hilyard and explored, with trembling fingers, for some sign of life. His heart was beating. Then a square of white paper on the floor beside her caught her dazed attention. A thin ray of light from a crack in the shutters of the nearest window lay across it, and in that ray half a dozen words stood out. She blinked away her tears and looked closer. She picked up the paper and read every illuminating word of it.

When Burnside Gillicuddy recovered consciousness, his head was in the hollow of a supporting arm and a handful of snow was being pressed tenderly to the bump behind his left ear. He looked up at a tear-wet face, into solicitous eyes. He heard something groaning beside him, but did not give it a thought. That was Thomas Hilyard, complaining unheeded.

"Welcome to Otter Crick," murmured Gillicuddy.

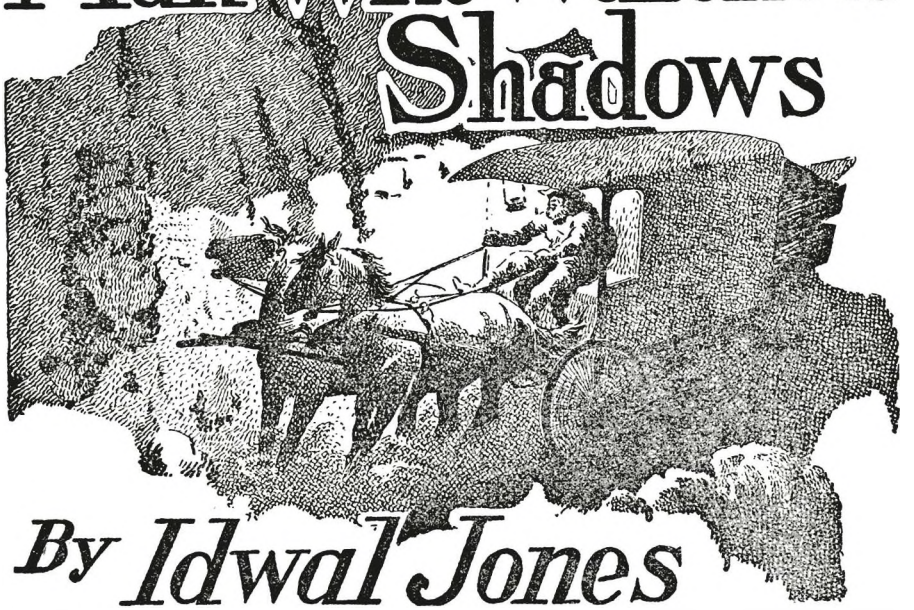
The tremulous lips and shadowed eyes above him smiled.

Another story by Mr. Roberts will appear in an early issue.

A WOMAN OF DISTINCTION

Miss Antoinette Dolores Hechner, of Washington, is a shark on maritime law. Special attorney for the shipping board and for the marine division of the Interstate Commerce Commission, she is the only woman who ever has been admitted to practice maritime law before the United States Supreme Court. And, with all these honors upon her, it will be several years before she sees her thirtieth birthday.

The Man Who Watched Shadows



By Idwal Jones

Author of "The Candles of San Tomas," "The Ticket Home," Etc.

The old peddler, Valverde, came to town. But this time he came not only to sell his wares; he came to right a wrong—not with blows but with his uncanny power.

THE ponies lunged upward, and their shoes struck out sparks that in the dry mountain air glittered in the darkness like fireflies. It was well that the arms of the driver were strong, for at the hairpin turns the wheels of the caravan slued within an inch of the cliff's edge. A carbide lamp, dangling above, lighted the face of the driver. He had the mahogany face of a country preacher, and a beard that was full and grayish. His eyes, soft and searching, like a doe's, stared ahead into the night.

"Steady, there, Hero! Hi-yp, there, Californy!"

The animals moved at slow gait, but it was plain that they knew the road. The driver sniffed as if in search of familiar odors, and his nose twitched to the wind that blew down laden with the scent of pennyroyal and fir balsam. The hoofbeats punctuated the murmuring sound that rose from the canyon where the river tumbled and churned a thousand feet below.

The animals scrambled upon a flat, lighted by a scrap of moon as thin as a nail paring. In a cluster of trees the driver unharnessed them, and turned them loose with resounding slaps on the haunches. Then he looked about him. He gazed with the eye of one to whom the scene was familiar. In little cleared spaces along the winding road were miners' cottages, with quaint dormer windows and carvings under the high eaves. They were boarded up, and in the gardens before them mallow and aniseed grew tall and rank. Farther up were larger buildings, a warehouse, a post office and a store, all dark at this

hour, and all but the store fallen into decay. The driver whistled reminiscently.

It was nipping cold, and he tramped back and forth, blowing on his finger tips, with his head bowed in thought. First, he would have to make a signal fire. He raked together a pile of tinder, pine cones and decayed branches, and applied a match. There was a gush of sparks, then a tall, rushing flame, and the copse seemed bursting with light. Then he went to his caravan, and let down the back steps. On the side of the wagon was the legend:

Michael Valverde
Wickerware, Pans

He carried out bedding, pots and cooking utensils, and, setting up a grid over the fire, he began to cook his meal. The blaze cast his shadow upon the close array of trees behind, and it moved like a gigantic demon compounding a witchery. He ate his meal, then threw more fuel on the fire, and sitting cross-legged gave himself up to the company of his thoughts. Perhaps they were concerned with the natural phenomena about him. Now and then he inclined an ear, or glanced behind him. He filled and lighted a cob pipe, and exhaled clouds of smoke, contentedly, yet without relaxing a vigil, as if he had set himself the task of trying to apperceive sights and sounds that were beyond the range of his senses. He kept the fire burning high. Half an hour passed.

"The light is very noticeable, Mr. Valverde," said a voice.

A youth appeared behind him, dressed in overalls, with a mackinaw jacket and high boots.

"You got my message telling you I would come?" asked the elder, after they had shaken hands and, sitting down, held their fingers out to the blaze.

"That I did, and when I saw the fire I knew it would be you. It was very good of you, Mr. Valverde, to think of me over here, and come to Fargo. The situation remains the same."

"H'm," muttered the peddler. He watched him for a moment, then frowned. "You had better move over a little, Charles. Your shadow is falling into void. Let it rest against a tree. You might as well conserve your soul strength."

The youth gave a half-abashed laugh, and moved over.

"The situation," remarked the peddler, "will always remain the same, unless somebody has the sense to come along and change it. I am tired of it. This crazy feud between the Vaughans and Ruler Fry has not only been the ruination of Fargo, but it has put me out of pocket. Time was, Charles, when I came over to Fargo twice a week to sell my wares and do a nice lot of business. And now look at the place! Nobody here at all. All the miners gone, and their families, too, and everything closed up like a graveyard."

"I can't help it, Mr. Valverde. Ruler has refused to go down, and all I can do is keep the mine pumped dry and keep on looking until some new veins are found. He is the only one who knows where the main lode crops out, and he won't tell."

The peddler clucked sympathetically.

"Well, I am no man to take sides in a private affair, Charles, but your father was a hard man to reason with. He never went underground in his life, and since he left all responsibility to Ruler, he might have done something by him in the will."

The youth shrugged his shoulders.

"My father was always good to the old-timers," he said. "He kept them on the pay roll until they died. And I don't see why he should have bequeathed anything to Ruler in his will."

The older man pursed his lips, and whistled softly for a while, then tossed

a pine cone into the fire, and watched it until the nuts popped out from the heat, and the balsam flamed in bluish jets.

"The property," continued the youth, "was my father's to dispose of. He chose to will it to me, and to no one else."

The peddler disregarded the irony, and nodded.

"I don't say that Ruler was right to hold back his knowledge like that," he said. "Nor do I say he was wrong. All the *capitanos* of the Fargo have been a little queer in the head. Aurelio Hudres, Gil Rubbias, José Brado and Juan Mendoza—what came to them? Before their teeth and hair dropped out their minds gave way, because the mercury went into their brains."

"That was long before my time, Mr. Valverde. All I know is that Ruler got miffed because my father did not remember him after his death, and that for the last five years, since I left school, I have been hunting for the lode."

The peddler, with a finger curled about the bowl of his pipe, blew out clouds of smoke, and reflected.

"Very true. There is much you don't know about the mine and its traditions. A mine has its traditions like an empire has. Ruler began in it as a boy—long before your grandfather bought it. That was in the grand days when the Echeverrias were the mercury kings and the Fargo produced its ten thousand flasks a year. Ruler was a bass *trabajador* when he was only twenty. He became the *capitano* and owned his own carriage and pair when your father, Mark Vaughan, was still in college. The Vaughans always let Ruler do as he pleased. They had sense enough for that. Without his nose for cinnabar ore the mine would have died ages ago. There's few men nowadays that know where to find cinnabar."

The youth gave a rueful grin.

"Nobody knows that better than I," he said. "Ruler's hurt vanity puts both you and me out of pocket."

"You say you have been hunting the vein for yourself?"

"For four years, Mr. Valverde," said Charles, "I have done nothing else." He held up his hands to show the fingers that were stubbed and stained red with cinnabar. "I have even looked for it in the old Spanish tunnel, seven hundred feet below, where the timbering is as soft as cheese, and I had to fight the rats in icy water up to my waist. It took me three hours to find my way there."

"Ruler Fry," said the peddler, "could have reached those Spanish workings in three minutes. There's nobody else could do it, except the watchman, Fong Lee. Is he still moving about?"

"He is in a decline," said the youth. "He has been very ill, and is still weak. The last few days he has been worse. And because they are just of an age, and the last of the old-timers, Ruler is more upset than he lets on to be. They had been good servants, both."

The peddler lowered his pipe.

"A servant?" he said quietly. "Charles, I have been a miner myself, and I know a great *capitano* when I see one. Who was it drove the White Horse tunnel through a half mile of country rock to strike a lode that nobody believed was there? Who invented the roasters to treat the refractory cinnabar ore? And who thereby made princely fortunes for the Echeverrias and later for the Vaughans? Who else but Ruler Fry?"

The youth waved his hand. "Aye, and for sixty years he got well paid for it, and exulted in the title of *capitano* of the Fargo Mine. And now he chooses to wreck all he has done because his vanity is hurt."

For several minutes they remained silent, staring into the fire, and making no movement, as if engrossed by deep

thoughts concerned with the fate of the mine.

"It is past midnight, Mr. Valverde, and I must be going. You will probably see the camp in the morning?"

"What is left of it," said the peddler dryly. "A visit was more profitable in other days. I should like to see them return."

"They will, if the old *capitano* ever gives in. Though he must think he will live forever. Good night, Mr. Valverde. If you come up to the store tomorrow, you might come up to the mine with us. People will be taking up baskets to the old watchman."

"I will be there, Charles. Good night to you."

Alone, Valverde resumed his squatting posture before the fire. He fastened his turned-up collar with a pin, and gave himself up to relaxation, like one prepared for a long vigil. He stroked his beard slowly. He seemed cognizant of all that was visible and audible in the little world of light he had evoked in the chaos of darkness. He listened to the rushing of the flames, and turned to watch the fantastic jigging of the shadows they cast upon the screen of the close-set trunks.

Occasionally he tossed small bunches of twigs into the blaze to keep the circle populated with shadows. He seemed to be versed in their interpretation. When the dying fire gave its last flare, he closed his eyes and half nodded, as if he had made up his mind. He curled himself between his blankets, and was no longer awake.

Morning came, and he was up betimes. At noon he walked up to the store in the camp, and there stood a group of people whom he joined. Charles, carrying a basket, led the way. A squaw followed, with a sack of corn flour on her head. The others were four men, one exceedingly bent, and the green coat he wore, which had brass buttons, gave him a resemblance to a beetle. They walked in Indian file up the hill, and threaded their way among the firs and eucalypti. The vegetation was thick, and hazel branches, wet with dew, slashed springily across their faces. The trail became almost vertical, and they scrambled up, at times on their knees, and breathing heavily.

"The old man is Ruler Fry," whispered Charles.

"No man who has seen him once needs to be told that," said the peddler,

They came to the mine top, and the hoist that straddled the shaft opening, which was covered with decayed planks. All about the ground was overgrown with weeds and morning-glory. Near by was a brick building from which came a muffled, throbbing sound, like the beating of a heart, and a faint hiss of steam. It was the pump house. The squaw, laying down her sack, picked up an iron bolt and struck at the rusty, iron door. After a wait the door opened, inch by inch, and an aged Chinaman appeared at the threshold. His face was like wrinkled parchment, and his jaw, with three long hairs upon it, moved in the tremors of senility.

"How are ye to-day?" grunted Ruler Fry.

The watchman babbled faintly. If he had sunk lifeless on the spot the visitors would not have been surprised.

"You're feeling pretty good, eh, Fong?" rasped the *capitano*. "Ain't seen ye lookin' so well, ever."

The *capitano* took off his square bowler hat, and mopped his brow. Unlike his hands, which were stained a permanent red, his features were drawn and waxen. Mercurial poisoning had shrunken his jaws, he was toothless, and the skin lay in gobbets, like the gutterings of a candle. He was hairless. But though he looked a death's-head, his body had vigor, and his voice had a virile resonance. He still knew how to command.

"Walk him about in the sun," he ordered.

Charles tendered his arm, and led the watchman about in the warming sunlight. The visitors entered and laid their offerings on the table, and as they came out, Valverde, who had been watching the Chinaman, slowly lowered himself upon his knees, with his eyes fixed on the ground, just where the man had trod. He carefully measured the span between two marks in the gravel. The bystanders drew near. The peddler measured again, then tapped his nose reflectively.

"What are you looking at?" demanded the *capitano.*

"It fell right here, the shadow did," said the peddler, without looking up. "I never knew but one other man that cast such a shadow. He lived over to Hornitos Flats."

"Well," asked the *capitano* irritably, "what happened to him?"

"The shadow was dark, and very odd shaped. He just lived four days after casting it," said Valverde. He ignored the start that Ruler Fry gave at the words. "Just four days after, and he was gone. And his shadow was no chillier nor shorter than this."

"Ahi—el pobre!" cried the squaw. She gave a loud, keening wail, as primitive as the call of a bird. It went into the hearts of the visitors and there caused a poignant trouble. The cry penetrated the brick walls of the pump house; there was a flutter of a blind at the window, and the pallid face of the sick Chinaman appeared, to stare at them with dull but questioning eyes. The last of the *capitanos* of the old days mopped the cold perspiration on his forehead with a red handkerchief. He was evidently ill at ease.

"What I want to know," said the peddler, "is, does he get a monument put up to him when he passes out?"

The visitors looked questioningly at the peddler. The *capitano* gazed at him, and then his lips moved as if he were repeating the words.

"A miner of the Echeverria *régime* is passing, gentlemen. With him he takes away sixty years of knowledge. Fong Lee is the last name who could have found a paying vein in the great tunnels of the Fargo Mine. With him dies the secret of how the Fargo, that was the glory of Mariposa county for three generations, should again be made prosperous—a source of profit to its owner, and livelihood for a hundred honest and faithful toilers who maintained themselves and their little families in the once happy community that was Fargo Camp.

"He passes, gentlemen," repeated the peddler, removing his hat, and uttering the words in a sonorous voice. "Salute, the last of the *viejos trabajadores!"*

Charles stared at the peddler. The *capitano,* leaning on his staff, champed his jaws irritably, and glared first at Valverde, then at Fong Lee, who still pressed his face to the window. The visitors, after exchanging puzzled looks, returned downhill. The *capitano* lingered behind. He took a pail from its hook beside the door, and after making three trips to a spring on the hillside, filled the Chinaman's water butt. He gathered an armful of kindling and laid it on the step. Then he sat humped and reflective on a boulder, with his arms folded about his staff. When all was in shadow, and the chorus of frogs began to herald the evening, he shivered, and crept away.

Six days later, Valverde returned to Fargo. After he had made camp again in the grove, he walked to the store. A lounger, who was sitting on the veranda, touched his hat to him. The merchant rose from his chair and gave him a respectful nod. They regarded him, it was evident, as one endowed with occult powers. Valverde seated himself on the veranda and filled his pipe. The sun was high, and the honeysuckle that

draped the pillars cast the veranda into grateful shade, and all behind it were comfortable. Smoke of burning brush gave the air a bluish haze. *"Chk-chk-chk,"* went a beetle in its monotonous threnody.

"When did it happen?" asked Valverde.

They spoke all at once. "Yesterday," they said.

The merchant leaned forward.

"The end came when they thought he had took a turn for the mend. They wasn't nothin' that could 'a' been done. Ruler Fry said it was because his shadow got too chill and short, an' he ought to know."

"In that case," said Valverde, poking a thumb into his pipe bowl, "in that case, there's nothing any man can do."

The loungers made some sage response. The merchant gave a sigh of resignation, and rocked silently in his chair. Valverde stayed on, drawing on his pipe, an hour, two hours.

"Well, there's Ruler a-comin' up the road," the merchant said. All turned to watch him approach. In his black Sunday coat and shiny hat, he looked more like a beetle than ever. "Yes, he's just come back from the funeral down below."

The *capitano* drew nearer.

"G'd afternoon, Ruler," said the merchant, with rather awed politeness. "Hope you're feelin' pretty well."

"Never better, if you want to know," said the *capitano* stiffly.

"That was awful sudden about Fong Lee," said one of the loungers.

The *capitano* rapped the ground with his staff.

"There was some damn fools," he said testily, "that expected even a Chineyman to live forever, like he was made of iron."

The sun cast his shadow, a curved one, full upon the gravel, as he stood there grumbling at the steps. Valverde slid discreetly from the veranda, and with the toe of his boot marked the nearer extremity of the shadow. The *capitano,* from the corner of his eye, watched him, then remained as if dumfounded. The masterful light that for sixty years of dominance had shone in the blue eyes of the great *capitano* faded. He looked like a frightened child that expected a blow or a reproof. Valverde, who had been studying the shadow, looked at him, and with a sad but detached air.

"I trust you are feeling well this day, Ruler Fry," he said, with a sudden assumption of cheerfulness that was not lost on the *capitano.* He smiled and nodded. "The camp is quiet to-day."

"Aye, quiet," quavered the *capitano.*

"All but for the noise of the beetles. They are loud to-day."

"Aye, I hear 'em."

"There were louder ones in the timber in the old Spanish tunnels, *capitano.* Do you remember how they knocked before Aurelio Hudres and Juan Mendoza, the old *capitanos,* came to die? There are Cornish folk that point them out as death-watch beetles."

Ruler Fry snapped his jaws grimly, and his eyes again became defiant; but his face had gone grayer, and he rocked as he leaned on his staff. The peddler turned about and walked leisurely toward his camp, and after a minute the *capitano* followed him.

"It's all as plain as day to Valverde," said the merchant, who was the first of the listeners to find his tongue. "I tell ye, the old man's a wonder if he can last out the week."

The *capitano* heard the words. They fell upon his ears like a knell, and he hastened his pace. He went on to the grove, and there found Valverde sitting on the back step of his caravan, whittling a pine cone. He approached him, and spoke with something of his old masterful air.

"There's a good deal that you see,

Valverde," he said, "but there's a good deal that you don't know. You were wrong about the Chineyman. What was below ground, he knew nothing about. Through bonanza and borrasca I have worked in the tunnels of the Fargo for going on sixty years, from the time you were born, Valverde, and no man knows the cinnabar veins but me, Capitano Ruler Fry of the Miniera Fargo!"

"But there's one thing I know, Ruler," said the peddler quietly.

"And what is that?"

"That if it were Fong Lee that had your knowledge, he would not hide it from him, the master. Long before his time came he would have put the location in his hands, for the sake of doing right. I was wrong about his monument. It should be put up to you. And it should be cut deep and proper with words that do honor to yourself. 'Faithful *Capitano* of the Fargo for Sixty Years.' Are those not words that would sound well?"

Ruler reflected a moment.

"That they would, Valverde. Aye, that is so." His voice wandered off into mumbling, and he poked the ground reflectively with his staff. "If there yet—be time——" He grunted. "After what I am going to do, Valverde, Charles Vaughan will owe me as much. The words would be good for a man to read with his own eyes."

"There will be time, *capitano,*" said Valverde, stroking his beard. "The shadows are auspicious," he added as Ruler Fry turned to leave.

It was close to mid-afternoon the next day when the peddler, who had gone for a long walk over the hills, came back to his camp and became aware of some unwonted stir in the vicinity, and that the stillness of the woods was gone. There was a thin, whirring sound, as of quail. But it was not animal life. He put on his spectacles and looked about him. On the sky line, above the trees, in the direction of the mine, he espied movement. It was a wheel, the sheave atop the mine hoist. It revolved briskly, paused, then reversed.

He was still watching the phenomenon when Charles came into the wood, dressed in mine clothes that were muddy, and with a lamp attached to his cap.

"Well, Mr. Valverde, it's all right again. The *capitano* took me down last night and showed me the vein. He said that at his age he had no call to stand in the way of any man. And the miners are all getting ready to come back tomorrow."

They shook hands, and Charles grinned.

"He just got sort of tired of waiting for me to give in to him, or had got tired of holding the grudge against my father. But it was very kind of you to come, Mr. Valverde, though there was nothing you could do."

"No, nothing," said the peddler, looking steadily at the sheave. "I am right glad of a chance to sell tinware in Fargo again. I reckon there'll be a smart lot of business for me in camp pretty soon."

The trouble with the great political parties in this country just now is that each is so full of men described as presidential timber that no one of the candidates is out of the woods yet.

"All successful politicians are good listeners," remarks a political writer, who may have reached this conclusion by noting how much old stuff their speeches contain.

THE Last Atlantide

By Fred MacIsaac

In Six Parts
Part IV

Author of "Scum of the Sea," "The Progress of Peter Pratt," Etc.

This is said to be the unearthed journal of Pagneomon, a prince of the lost continent, Atlantis. When his father was murdered by Negor, a power in the land, the lad escaped to the care of Thoro, a priest of the evil god, Magor, but really a scientist. There he grew up, skilled in warfare. When Negor usurped the throne, planning to marry, against her will, Arsinhœa, a princess of the royal blood, Thoro sent Pagneomon to the rescue. En route the young prince saved a girl, Murnova, from robbers. With his men, he ambushed Tathe, an ambassador, and impersonated him. He was welcomed by the king, and met Asinhœa, with whom he fell in love. While plotting the rescue of the princess, he was helped by her, for she had recognized him. Murnova agreed to pose as Arsinhœa while the latter escaped, even though it might mean death. She did this because she loved Pagneomon, but she made him swear never to marry any one but herself. Since he had already sworn to Arsinhœa never to be anything to her but a slave—she had made him swear this, fearing his magic—Pagneomon did not care.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BROTHER OF TATHE.

IF I have not described the great hall of the palace until now, it is because my story is written for my own entertainment, that I may live over again my youth, and with no hope that this manuscript will ever fall into the hands of a civilized man who can read it, wishing to know just how things were done in Atlantis.

Civilization has vanished from the earth; when I die the last educated man will perish, and the language I write is understood now by none except myself. Thus I am most concerned with my adventures and my love and not with the size and shape and construction of palaces.

Yet, if in some future age nations arise which pride themselves upon their skill in arts and crafts, and some savant unearths and translates my

story, let him compare any temple or palace hall in the world of his day with this vast chamber of which I speak.

It was circular in shape, and from one side to the other in a straight line it was more than two hundred and fifty paces. From the floor to the top of the dome was nearly thirty paces, if one could pace upward, and the dome was upheld by a circle of tall columns of polished black marble, the capitals of which were ingeniously carved to represent the various extinct animals of our continent.

At their base these columns were as wide as a man is long, but they tapered gracefully as they ascended.

The dome was covered with thin sheets of yellow gold, studded with rare stones of yellow and blue and green, and with many which were pure white and reflected back the light of the torches at night and gleamed radiantly in the daytime.

Beneath the dome was a fountain, in the pool of which swam gold and silver fishes, and the figures from which the water spouted were as tall as in life and of purest silver metal. There were many marble benches and soft cushions about this fountain, and here the women of the palace congregated to exchange gossip.

It was a pretty sight to see the youths and maidens gathered about the fountain—tall, blond young men in the bright colors of the various king's querenals or the robes of the nobles, and lovely girls with hair of red or yellow or light brown, with here and there a girl with glossy black tresses, but skin as milk white as her fair sisters.

The girls were arrayed in dresses of red and blue, of yellow and white and green, with circlets of gold upon their heads, with fantastic figures in gold and silver embroidered upon their gowns, with tiny white feet set in many-colored sandals, their pretty little toes covered with stalls of gold or silver. Their laughter was sweet and clear, and their voices were merry.

Beyond the great central pillars older men and women promenaded—a brilliant, variegated throng, the flower of the aristocracy and loveliness of the nation, and at the outer edge of the promenade stood soldiers of the guard, with the royal feather in their helmets, their burnished spears gleaming in the half light.

Beyond the guards was a second row of pillars of white marble. The outer walls of the hall were of marble of the purest white, upon which great artists had carved and colored with red and blue the great battles and achievements of the kings of Atlantis for hundreds of years. One might learn the history of our country by a circuit of this hall and close study of the picture engravings.

The floor was of wide flagstones in three colors, black and red and white, ingeniously arranged in patterns, and the age of this part of the palace was one thousand years or more.

In this vast room in which thousands of people moved during the afternoon, I looked in vain for a long time for Filthrema, but made the acquaintance of numerous young men and women who had seen me at my audience with the king and who did not hesitate to address me in friendly fashion. Many of these courtiers owned fine palaces in the city and returned to them at night, but most had taken up quarters in the royal house, at the king's invitation, to remain until the wedding ceremony was finished.

I heard many details of the royal wedding during my promenade. Negor had determined that it would be the greatest festival ever seen in Luth, and had decreed that every freeman in the capital should be his guest upon that occasion.

All around the vast square outside the palace walls tables were to be set up, at which one hundred thousand people would sit down to eat and drink at the king's expense, while within the castle the garrison would feast in the courtyard in the same manner.

In the great hall five thousand guests would banquet; but in the garden his majesty, himself, would sit at the head table, and one thousand of the greatest in the kingdom would feast with him.

All over Luth cooks were busy now preparing the details of the mighty festival, and from the sea bottoms vast herds of cattle and sheep were being driven to the city, and thousands of wagons laden with corn and wine and vegetables of every description.

In accordance with the old custom, none might witness the actual ceremony of marriage, for the king would lead the princess into the temple, before the great statue of Garthe, where the high priest would read his blessings. The princess would appear in her bridal robe in a procession with the king which would move through the public square, once around the circular courtyard, and through the gate into the gardens on her way to the temple, and then she would be seen no more until she sat upon the down throne next day with the crown of queen upon her head.

None seemed to think it curious that I asked many questions, for I was a stranger from a remote city which the courtiers considered as a stupid, ignorant, provincial place, a town which might have troubled their ease by rebelling but which was, fortunately, placated.

I was invited by several to feasts at their houses in the city for that night and the next, and it occurred to me that I might have offered such an invitation as an excuse for sallying forth next afternoon. Therefore, I accepted the invitation of a noble named Gormoth to visit his palace the next evening for dinner. This seemed to me an excellent reason for remaining in Luth after dark and a convenient way to dispose of the officer who would escort me through the town.

When I was beginning to despair of encountering Filthrema, I espied her in a group of women close to one of the great central pillars, and, excusing myself to those with whom I conversed, I approached her boldly.

"Cousin Filthrema," I said, "may I have a few words with you?"

"Surely!" she exclaimed, then came forward and took my arm, laughing back at her companions.

"How goes Hardoth?" I asked in a low tone, as we moved along.

"Badly, I fear. He groans, seems in great pain. What terrible spell have you put upon him?"

"Nothing serious. On the third day he will recover. I make no suggestions, but I fear for you when he is again in health. Do you love him?"

"No," she said. "He is a beast."

"Have you sent for the royal physician?"

"I dare not."

"Do so. He will discover nothing, but declare he suffers from some dire ailment. Then, if Hardoth should die on the third day, instead of recovering, none will suspect you."

White faced, she looked at me.

"Do you mean I should poison him?"

I hesitated. Hardoth was nothing to me, but this woman was a friend who would surely suffer when he came to himself and remembered that I had visited her apartment, I who had carried off the princess. It seemed to me better that he should perish than his wife. With him out of the way, she might escape the vengeance of Negor.

"He will remember everything up to the moment I persuaded him he was ill," I said. "Do what you wish, Filthrema."

I saw an expression on her face which boded ill for Hardoth, but it was no longer my affair. In a few words I explained to her my plan—that she must notify Arsinhœa to enter by the secret way her apartment at four in the afternoon, while I would visit her openly at the same hour, accompanied by Murnova.

"It is a clever scheme," she said. "But does this young woman know what will befall her? Negor will have her tortured."

I blanched at the thought, but nodded.

"She knows. She is loyal and considers her life well lost to save the princess."

"Should she weaken, you are destroyed."

"I do not think she will lose courage."

"Depend upon me—hark! Your name!"

We had paused and talked in low tones in the shadow of a great pillar; now we heard voices from the other side of the pillar.

"Tathe walked through the hall but a few moments since," said a woman.

"I know him well," declared another voice, which I recognized as that of my Cousin Baruth. "I'll soon discover him."

"I have ridden fast and hard to reach my brother, Tathe," said one who was unknown to me. "It is imperative I see him at once."

"Is all well at Mummor?" demanded Baruth, who sounded as though, for once, he was sober.

"Splendid. The city will celebrate the royal wedding as magnificently as you here at Luth," replied my "brother."

A burst of derisive laughter answered him; whereupon he began to describe the puny celebration which was being arranged in Mummor. Filthrema and I moved rapidly away from that quarter toward the planes to the upper levels.

"What means this brother who arrives so inopportunely?" she asked. "I have passed myself as your cousin, and he will deny me."

"He will denounce me on sight," I said grimly. "Therefore, I go to my quarters to prepare a reception for him. Go also to yours, Filthrema and remain within doors. This brother of mine will be conducted to my chambers in due time. He must not meet me in the presence of witnesses."

We wound our way up the planes until my floor was reached, while she continued upward. Greatly disturbed by the intrusion, I went to the anteroom, where Murnova rested, and called to her. I led her aside and anxiously inquired:

"Do you know the family of Tathe, girl?"

"Yes. I spent a day in his palace."

"Has he a brother?"

"Two—Fathmon and Doroth."

"I do not know which, but one of them is here with a message for Tathe and will soon be led to these quarters. They know that you rode out of Mummor with Tathe, of course."

"Both were present at his departure to wish him farewell."

"Then he will think nothing amiss when you greet him as he enters. Tell him I am resting in my chamber, dismiss his attendants and whoever escorts him, and send him in to me."

Her face was white with terror.

"Think you he will betray you?"

"Not if it happens as I instruct," I replied grimly.

I have killed multitudes of men in battle without remorse—for they had their chance to slay me—but always I have hated to destroy an unsuspecting foe. Even the necessity of poisoning Hardoth to save his wife from destruction was repugnant to me, though I had nothing to do with it save the

suggestion. Yet I was determined to dispatch this brother and conceal his body in the apartment until I and my band were safe away. I could, perhaps, overcome him as I had conquered Hardoth.

Fortune had been kind to me in forewarning me of his arrival. Had he entered the hall a few moments before, when I was searching for Filthrema, and been conducted to me by the officer who undoubtedly had escorted him from the palace gates, and then declared that I was not his brother Tathe, my ruin would have been complete. Hidden by the great black pillar, I had had time to guard myself and to make preparations for his introduction.

As the minutes passed I realized how much better it would be if I could show myself in public with this brother of Tathe and be acknowledged as his mother's son, thus strengthening my masquerade; therefore, my mode of procedure would be to seize upon his mind and make him obedient to my will. I arranged the curtain of the window so that it would best aid my purpose, and took up a position of expectancy.

CHAPTER XX.

STEEL AGAINST BRONZE.

IT was, however, full thirty minutes before the heavy rapping on my outer door announced the coming of Tathe's brother. I could distinguish the sound of Murnova's voice, pitched high so that I might overhear it, welcoming him and repeating my instructions, and I recognized the deep bass of the man I had heard below in the great hall.

Evidently she succeeded in dismissing the escort, for footsteps sounded on the stone floor, the outer portal slammed, and then I heard them knock on my door.

Without speaking, I stepped to the door, opened it, and stood half concealed as the intruder entered. He was a huge man, as big as myself, with a shock of red hair and a short, red beard, and was clad in a tunic of brown leather, with a breastplate of silver and a long sword at his side. His bare arms were bulging with muscles, and he had the neck of a bull.

"Welcome, brother," he rumbled. "What is this? Who are you?"

"Your brother sleeps in an inner room," I said, stepping forward. Then, catching him in the right light, I threw the full force of my eyes upon his and concentrated upon him my trained will power.

In a second I should have had him, but the fellow suddenly brushed his hand across his face, leaped to one side, and drew his sword with a flourish.

"I know that trick; it has been tried before!" he roared. "And I have a method of beating it. Where is my brother, varlet?"

My sword was within my robe, and he would cut me down before I could draw it. I had been so confident of my power I had not dreamed he would evade it. A glance showed him there was no inner chamber, and, realizing that he was trapped, he plunged upon me.

The room was small; there was scant space for sword play, and he was almost upon me. I dropped to the ground as he made a thrust that would have penetrated my breast; then I rose within his guard and fastened both my hands upon the wrist of his sword arm, twisting it in a manner I had learned which would break the bones if he did not drop the weapon.

His left hand was free, and, as both my hands were busy, he grasped me by the throat with a hand of bronze which was likely in a moment to cut off the breath from my body. Yet if I released the grip upon his right wrist

he would run me through with his sharp, heavy weapon. Despite my anguish, I continued to twist his wrist, while he pressed my throat. I could not breathe; I felt myself growing weak, and I wondered if, after all my strategy and valor, I was doomed to be slain in a brawl in a chamber by this ruffian.

I was almost unconscious when I heard the heavy weapon clang upon the stone floor; then I grasped his left arm with both my hands and tore it from my throat, staggering back in weakness, forgetting that he could again pick up the sword. As he stooped I recovered my senses and, fumbling in my robe, drew my gray weapon; so, when he charged, I confronted him with a strong blade.

The fellow was a doughty swordsman, and for a moment I had all I could manage to parry his blows. Then I saw the door open behind him, and Murnova stood there, a knife in her hand, while behind her were Cathor and two or three of my men, who would quickly have ended it had my pride permitted interference in a single combat.

"Keep out!" I shouted. Then, remembering the quality of the metal in my sword, I met a swoop of his blade with a powerful blow against the part of the bronze sword where the metal was thinnest and weakest. It bent, to his astonishment, and as he drew back, aghast, I ran him through the body just below the breastplate. He fell with a crash to the floor and died.

"Hail, captain!" cried Cathor. "I salute a mighty warrior."

"Take the man and conceal him in a closet," I commanded. "Murnova, quickly wipe the stains from the stone."

Cathor lifted the fallen warrior's sword and exclaimed as he saw that the tip was bent and useless. His eyes fell upon my blade, keen and gray and uninjured.

"'Tis an invincible sword you wear, commander!" he exclaimed. "Never saw I the like of that."

From that hour dated the name of my stout sword, which my followers styled "The Sword of Invincibility."

Murnova was in my arms, sobbing with excitement, secure in her ownership of me by the oaths which I had sworn to her, and I, perforce, had to submit to and return her caresses.

Finally I dismissed her and called in Cathor, feeling it necessary to explain to him the reason of the battle and to warn him to conceal the body deftly. To take out a corpse from my apartments in the palace would be impossible without creating curiosity, and to hold it for several days would result in its betraying itself by the destroying process of nature upon a dead body; yet I hoped to be away within another twenty-four hours. Should slaves enter the apartment, left unguarded during my supposed tour of inspection of the city, and find the dead man, we might be pursued and captured ere we were safely away. In truth, it was a most embarrassing situation.

This brother of Tathe had encountered many persons to whom he explained his identity before he was escorted by a king's officer to my quarters, and recognition of the corpse would instantly convince my Uncle Gathor that I was not what I pretended to be. I would have to let it be assumed that he was residing with me in amity and not at all interested in my visit to the capital next day; but this would require that I should leave men to serve him and to turn away persons who might come inquiring for him.

As I hated to condemn any of my followers to the death which awaited them upon the discovery that I had carried off Arsinhœa, I determined to instruct Cathor to choose by lot two

men who would remain in the palace. Not even Cathor knew that our jaunt of the next day was more than it appeared to be, that our departure would be final, and so the unlucky soldiers who were chosen to remain would be unaware of their doom until it fell upon them.

During my whole life I found it the best policy to keep my intentions a secret from all others, excepting only my beloved wife, until it was necessary to impart them to secure their execution. Only Murnova and myself knew that it would be Arsinhœa who would ride forth with us instead of the girl with whom they were all acquainted.

My excitement as a result of the sharp, short struggle with my supposed brother had caused me to overlook a search of his body. But Cathor entered, carrying a letter which he had found in a pouch worn inside the man's tunic. I opened it with a curiosity that quickly became anxiety, for it was signed by Zuthor and addressed to Tathe.

To my friend and ambassador Tathe, at the palace of his high majesty, Negor, king of Atlantis and the world:

I am sending you this missive by your own brother, Doroth, that you may be certain from whom it comes. Seek at once a private audience with his majesty and inform him of the facts learned by me that he may be upon his guard and appreciate the depth and breadth of my devotion to him.

Know, then, that there forms a dangerous conspiracy against his security, inspired by the pestiferous priests of Magor who lurk in the caves of the smoking mountain—a breed which long since should have been exterminated for the good of the kingdom. Their agent in the palace is Fedrath, wife of the chancelor, Gathor—who, most likely, is privy to the conspiracy—and the plot is to assassinate King Negor and place Arsinhœa on the throne to be the tool of the priests of the black god; also the overthrow of the worship of the great god, Garthe, and the establishment of that of Magor in its place.

For years they have trained in their caves Pagneomon, son of Teforn, King Negor's enemy, whom Negor justly slew, the nephew of Gathor and Fedrath, who set forth alone from the caves some days past with the determination to reach the throne and strike at the heart of the monarch.

A search of Luth will doubtless unearth this Pagneomon; the arrest of Fedrath and Gathor will break the conspiracy. His majesty will be grateful for this information, honor you signally and be finally convinced of the fidelity of myself as governor of Mummor.

When I had finished reading this terrible letter, I sank upon my couch as faint as a woman. It meant that there was treason in the caves close to Thoro, that my mission had been betrayed and my task would be greater than I had feared.

Good Thoro had taught me to believe in no gods, that things occurred by chance and not according to a divine plan; yet I could not credit that the strange fortune which had befriended me so far was the result of accident, for chance is fickle and swings from one opponent to another with even interest—and from the beginning I had been favored continuously.

Was it chance which had caused my rescue of Murnova and inspired her with such a profound affection, providing me with this woman so that I might sacrifice her to win the great game I played? Was it chance which had protected me in my assault upon Tathe and his company in open day, yet enabled me to eliminate all survivors or even spectators who might have carried the news of the massacre to Mummor? Was it chance which caused Murnova to fly from the tree where I had placed her, fall into the hands of Tathe and accompany him upon his mission, so that she would be in my hands at time of need?

It was not by chance that Arsinhœa, who had seen me but once and then when I was a stripling, had recognized me instantly and, trusting me, had placed her fate in my hands when even

my clever Aunt Fedrath knew not what to do. And it certaintly was not chance which sent me in search of Filthrema at the moment when Doroth came into the hall seeking his brother, and which had saved me from being denounced in the great hall.

Had Doroth's pouch containing the letter fallen into any hands than mine, all would have been lost. It was not chance, surely, which again provided Murnova to lure him into my chamber where I had slain him in fair fight.

Garthe I knew to be but a stone idol and Magor a bugaboo. Thoro had taught me that, but the old sage, disillusioned with these man-made gods, had not grasped the existence of the great unknown Divinity which uses men for righteous purposes. Such a God I knew must exist, and He seemed determined to make me the instrument of the overthrow of the unspeakable Negor; when I faltered He strengthened me, when fate threatened my overthrow He wrapped me in His mantle.

From the first I had feared that news of the destruction of Tathe might percolate to Mummor and thence to Luth; instead of that came a traitor from the caves to betray as much of the plot as he knew. And Zuthor, unaware that the man he denounced was inside the palace impersonating his own ambassador, had placed his information not directly in the king's hands but in mine. I laughed aloud as I destroyed the letter.

"Read you this?" I demanded of Cathor.

He nodded. "I thought it no harm; you had given no orders.

"It's fortunate that it fell into our hands. Tomorrow afternoon we ride forth to visit the streets of Luth, accompanied by a woman in the dress of Murnova but who shall not be Murnova. Choose by lot two men who shall guard these apartments until our return, that the body of Doroth shall not be discovered."

Cathor looked thoughtful.

"I feel that you have no intention of returning, lord," he said. "And I suspect the identity of the woman who impersonates Murnova. I love the maid, and would not have harm come to her."

I laid a friendly hand upon his shoulder.

"Her escape is provided for," I lied. "I would she loved you, Cathor. I want her not."

CHAPTER XXI.

MURNOVA'S SACRIFICE.

MY lieutenant gazed at me so searchingly that I had difficulty holding my eyes steadily. I like not double dealing nor deceit, yet circumstances forced me to deceive my devoted followers. Cathor, if he understood fully to what a fate it was necessary to devote Murnova, was capable of destroying my plan; to him she was everything—Arsinhœa, his queen, nothing. Yet I could not blame him. Was I not making the sacrifice of Murnova for the sake of my love, hopeless as it was?

"I trust that it is so," he said glumly, and departed to carry out my instructions, doubtless, also, to question Murnova. But of this I had no fear.

That night I dined in my rooms with my company, although there were places for all of us at the great guest tables below. But having escaped exposure as an impostor so narrowly, I feared there might be in the throng below one who knew Tathe, and from an unimportant individual ruin might come. From a window, after dinner, I looked down upon a city blazing with lights.

In the great square, huge fires burned, by the light of which swarms of slaves were setting out low tables

of timber for the wedding feast, while soldiers were making similar preparations in the courtyard below. The palace resounded with music and laughter, the shouts of revelers.

Murnova stole in and stood by my side, leaning against me and trying to pass her frail arm around me. The round, yellow moon rose up and shed its bright but misty illumination upon the scene. Murnova was silent, understanding my mood, content to be with me alone in the moonlight; and that beguiling orb of night caused me to melt toward her and make some response to the pressure of her arm.

In the bright light of day one may be in the company of his beloved yet have his mind on divers matters; but when the moon shines and the world is bathed in its soft, beautifying effulgence, man yearns for woman and thinks only of her. With Murnova by my side I thought of Arsinhœa; I grew faint at the fancy that it might be Arsinhœa; I tried to make myself think it was she indeed. Yet I knew always it was poor little Murnova, so true, so devoted, so honest and single minded, who had agreed cheerfully to go to certain death for an empty promise that she should wed with me if, by a most remote chance, she should survive.

In the moonlight my thirst for the blood of Negor was less exigent; after all, the brutal tyrant would fall soon, if not by my hand, by the hand of another, and the killing of men seemed wicked in the moonlight.

Our remote and savage ancestors lived to fight and slaughter was their delight; how much better it would be if men could reside in peace and harmony, being considerate of one another's rights, ignorant of deadly weapons, mindful that it is easy to slay but impossible to restore.

We dwelt in Atlantis in a period of civilization and refinement, where a living could be won without recourse to the murder of fellow men; yet all men wore swords, unsheathed them readily in anger and slew as ferociously as the savages from whom our race had sprung.

I who stood with a beautiful young woman beside me, gazing into the pale light of the moon which was filling my mind with puerile thoughts, had that afternoon slain a man in hot blood, had ordered the destruction of Tathe and his entire band a few days before without remorse, and expected to lead armies in battle and slaughter countless thousands to drive Negor from the throne of Atlantis. For a moment it seemed utterly unworthy.

Finally Murnova spoke, her voice soft and low.

"This is our last moment together in this world, beloved," she said. "Tomorrow I walk to my death that you may ride forth with another woman. That your plot will fail is almost certain, in which case you will perish before they cut me to pieces or throw me to wild beasts. Can you read the future, lord?"

"No," I said. "Among the priests of Magor are some who pretend to read it in the stars, but what they find is usually nonsense. Murnova, it is true you will probably perish horribly if you do this deed, while we others may escape. I do not ask you to do it. You are too sweet, too fair. I am not manly in acceptinng such a sacrifice. Some other way may occur to me, and I release you from your promise."

She looked up with melting eyes.

"And that would release you from your double oath, Pagneomon. No! The plan is good. I am resigned to what may befall and I hold you to your vows. Somehow, I do not think that I shall die."

"Very well," I said sadly. I did not believe that she could escape; yet, if the thought comforted her, I would not remove it.

For hours we stood there, then sat on a divan which I pulled before the window opening, and continued to gaze upon the transformed world. Finally I felt her relax and she slept. And then I left her gently, and sought my own room, for on the morrow there was everything to do.

I rose soon after daylight. Some of the men were already moving in their quarters, and these were clamoring for the morning meal. I had permitted none to stir from our apartments since our arrival in the palace lest, inadvertently, one of them might betray us, and so they were full of eagerness to go abroad in the afternoon. I informed them that they were to leave their heavy armor and long spears behind them as we were to pass through the streets of a peaceful city where there was no need for arms; but each man would wear his sword and knife.

The costume of a mounted warrior was a short, leather tunic which left arms and legs bare, over which were placed breastplate and side plates. Their bronze helmets they might wear; but to carry armor, shields and spears might cause the king's officers to ask whom they were setting forth to fight, and with their short tunics there was no way to conceal armor or weapons. I proposed to wear the long, full robe of the noble, and underneath I would have my armor. My buckler I would leave behind, but my sword would swing at my side.

There was much gay chatter and considerable banter directed at the two men who had been chosen by lot to remain in the apartment, to which these poor fellows replied in kind, ignorant that they had been elected by lot to be slaughtered.

It is curious how the necessity of dooming these members of my company affected me, for a general in command of an army, in order to win a battle, will send whole companies to charge or to hold positions where they are certain to be destroyed. Often I have done such things in battle with never a qualm, but these two were brave men whom I knew personally and, somehow, it was different.

I sorrowed, too, for Murnova, but she appeared in high spirits, and chaffed with the soldiers and Cathor as though she did not know the doom which impended over her.

And now the hours dragged slowly, while Murnova sat at my feet and said little, and I was busy with the details of my plan. What would follow if we won past the palace walls I did not know; my idea was to loiter in the streets until it was dark, then move toward the palace of my acquaintance who held festival to-night, hoping, en route, to dispose of my escort in some way, after which I would make for the houses of Teckor who would lead us out of the city by the passage beneath the wall.

Murnova finally went to choose her costume and appeared in a long, shapeless robe of brown with a hood which, when pulled over the head, concealed her features. Besides, she pinned a veil across the lower part of her face, and thus attired was quite unrecognizable. Cathor, who was hovering about, approached to say good-by. She treated him indifferently until he dropped at her feet and wept, then she stooped and kissed the top of his head.

Our own parting was more tender, for at the moment I almost loved her; but finally it was over and I led her out into the corridor and ascended the planes until we reached the quarters of Filthrema.

To my astonishment I found my Aunt Fedrath sitting beside the lady of the house. She came to me and embraced me warmly, then turned to Murnova and drew her into her arms.

"You are a noble young woman," she said. "The great god, Garthe, will

bless you for your courage and devotion to the true dynasty of Atlantis."

"I care not for Atlantis and its queen. I do it for Pagneomon," replied the veiled girl.

"Let me see your face," commanded Fedrath, drawing off the hood and plucking away the veil. "But you are beautiful! Oh, it's a pity! Do you love her, Pagneomon?"

"If we escape, I have promised to wed her," I evaded.

Fedrath was gazing at Murnova, her black eyes sharp and keen as the point of my sword.

"This is not well," she said. "I see trouble. You will escape with Arsinhœa, but difficulties unthought of confront you through this girl."

"Then find another substitute and permit Murnova to depart," I said impatiently.

Fedrath shook her head.

"In all Atlantis there is no other woman who loves a man enough to do this thing. And it is not her fault, what will come to pass."

"O prophetess, what will come to pass?"

"I cannot see clearly, would that I could, but I see that the princess will escape from the palace."

"And Hardoth, how does he fare?"

Fedrath smiled at me strangely.

"You have worked well, nephew. Now leave him to Filthrema and myself. Meantime, come with me into this chamber and tell me the details of your plan."

As soon as we were alone I sought to settle what still perplexed me somewhat, whether she had actually summoned me from my body to her chamber and I had drawn her to my quarters, or whether these two interviews were figments of a fever.

"Do you remember telling me in my chamber to get permission from Gathor to view the city?" I asked.

"Certainly," she replied, with an understanding smile. "Do you doubt your own powers, nephew?"

"When you were so cold to me upon my visit to my uncle, I wondered if I had not imagined that you appeared at my summons."

"I feared a word from me, an extra gesture from you might stimulate the wine-soaked mind of Gathor to recognize you, my boy."

"Another thing, what will become of my mother and sister when Negor learns who has run off with his bride?"

Fedrath made a sign of satisfaction.

"In charge of one of my slaves they are already on their way to the caves of Thoro. Now to your plan."

Briefly, I informed her what I proposed to do, while she nodded approvingly.

"We made no mistake, Thoro and I, in choosing you for this adventure," she said when I had finished. "You have the mind of a mature man, though you are hardly more than a boy. This I have done for you! I have suggested Mancor as your escort; he is of the brotherhood and will obey your orders like one of your own men. He will guide you to the house of Teckor and accompany you on your journey. Avoid the feast at the house of Gormoth, for you might be involved in a quarrel there or the veil of the princess might be lifted by some drunkard."

"Can you do anything to save Murnova from the wrath of Negor? I shudder at what will befall her; she is too fair to be tortured."

Fedrath reflected.

"She might be withdrawn from the chamber of Arsinhœa if she is not discovered by morning. But the entire palace will be searched and the occupants of whatever apartment in which she may be found will suffer with her. Negor will torture her, undoubtedly, to discover your identity and where you have taken Arsinhœa. Best let her remain where none will be involved

with her. But I shall provide her a knife to drive into her heart when they find her."

I sighed. "Very well."

"Remain here until the two women exchange garments. I shall call you when all is ready."

She left me, and I sat in melancholy mood awaiting her summons. It was now too late to draw back. Arsinhœa must be saved. But my heart ached for Murnova, the innocent sacrifice.

CHAPTER XXII.

A TOUR OF THE CITY.

PRESENTLY Fedrath appeared at the door and beckoned, and I followed her into the next room where stood a figure in the robe and hood of Murnova, the veil across her face. Yet my heart leaped and my being thrilled, for I knew that Arsinhœa was now in my hands.

"Come, Murnova," I said softly. "Follow me, half a step behind, and remember to speak to no one, nor utter any sound, no matter who may address you or me."

She nodded her head. Fedrath glided forward, embraced me and kissed me upon the forehead.

"Good-by, my true son," she said. "Magor guide you." Then she prostrated herself and kissed the hem of the long, brown garment which covered the hope of Atlantis. Filthrema did likewise; and I looked for Murnova, but they had shut her in the small room where the exchange of clothing had been made.

Our progress to my quarters was entirely without incident; none obstructed our passage, though several men bowed to me and looked curiously at the woman who followed.

I led her into my own chamber and begged her to wait there until I was ready to depart; then I visited my men and saw that they were in readiness. In another five minutes Mancor, our escort, arrived, a tall man of forty years, dark, though not as dark as Fedrath, who wore the green-and-gold uniform glittering with the bronze helmet and red feather of commander of a querenal of the king's guards.

To test him, though, after what my aunt said I did not doubt him, I addressed him in the secret jargon of Magor. He responded properly; then I grasped his hand and gave the word for my men to assemble.

"Your mounts are waiting you in the courtyard, Tathe," the escort said, in a low, agreeable voice, "and it is understood at the palace walls that you have authority to pass out."

Then I led forth Arsinhœa by the hand, whose appearance caused no comment from my men, for all save Cathor supposed she was Murnova. The way was led by Mancor. I followed with the princess who maintained the half step in the rear, and, with beating hearts, we descended one plane after another until we were in the great hall across which it was necessary to pass to reach the exit.

"Why veil you the woman, Tathe?" demanded a fellow whose acquaintance I had made the previous day.

"Because she complains that Baruth stares too hard," I retorted with a laugh, which was echoed from all sides, for Baruth's penchant for my attendant was known generally.

"Courage," I muttered. "We are almost in safety."

Arsinhœa very softly answered:

"I have confidence in my guide."

And then we were descending the high steps to the courtyard where slaves were leading forward our buthoms. Suddenly I was alarmed. Could the princess ride one of the huge birds, immured in the palace as she had been all her life? However, she stepped upon the back of a slave who dropped down on all fours, set-

tled herself competently upon the beast and lifted, with the deftness of experience, the directing cord which was fastened around his bill.

During the ride to the great gate in the wall I knew many fears; already her absence might have been discovered and I dreaded a blast of trumpets to signal our detention. However, nothing happened. The officer at the gate inspected my passport, lifted both hands above his head in salute, then gave the word that caused the machinery, which was enclosed in a small house beside the gate, to puff and grunt and groan, and the great block of stone began to rise in the air.

We were through! It seemed to me that the atmosphere without the walls was purer and sweeter. Now we threaded our way through multitudes of workmen who were preparing tables for the feast, and I noted that the tables were very low so that the guests must sit upon the stone flaggings upon their haunches instead of reclining upon couches as did the nobles when they feasted.

"What shall we do?" I asked my guide, who rode at my left hand, for Arsinhœa was at my right.

"Move through the streets for a couple of hours until it grows dark," he replied. "It would cause comment, perhaps, if we entered Teckor's houses in daylight."

I nodded, yet I dreaded the two hours which must intervene before we were in comparative safety; having come so far it would be too horrible if we were discovered and arrested in the public avenues. I knew how Arsinhœa must be suffering; the child had more to lose than I if we were captured — her kingdom — exchanged for slavery to a brutal murderer. I would have spoken to her to console her except that I feared one of my men might hear her voice and know that she was not Murnova, and there was the matter of my oath not to address her or turn my eyes upon her except in time of great necessity.

The whole city was *en fête* and everybody who owned a buthom was riding upon it, the long necks of their birds decorated with colored streamers. Those who possessed ox carts were out, their wives and children packed within, chattering and laughing and making holiday.

Above our heads, on the sidewalk terraces, were vast multitudes in gay attire; shopkeepers reaped a harvest and wonder workers occupied the street corners; itinerant musicians collected a crowd, and human monstrosities were being displayed by their owners whereever there was space to show them off and collect the tiny bronze coins proffered by the curious.

Under other circumstances, I might have enjoyed this tour of the great city, for I had visited it but once in my life and then as a boy of fifteen; but I suffered too much from anxiety at what might be happening behind us to waste attention upon the mobs.

Had they found Murnova, or had they broken into my apartment and discovered the body of Doroth, or had Zathor sent another messenger, this time directly to King Negor? Had any in the multitude within or without the palace penetrated the disguise of Arsinhœa and betrayed us? My desire was to pass the walls and set a vast distance between us and the city; instead we moved slowly and aimlessly down one avenue and up another for a period which seemed eternity.

Finally the princess made a sign with her finger which caused me to ride close.

"How long must this continue?" she asked, and the anguish in her voice made my heart ache.

"Only till dark," I replied guardedly. "Then we may be on our way."

"Garthe send night," she replied.

Gradually the light faded and the blue sky darkened. The near-by lamps of night burned, dimly at first, then with increasing brightness; but the throngs in the street and upon terraces seemed to grow rather than decrease in numbers. Mancor finally signed to turn down a narrower thoroughfare where there were fewer mounted persons and vehicles.

"Tell your men," he whispered, "to ride on beyond the next corner and enter the drinking place farther down which you see so brightly lighted. I shall conduct you two to Teckor, then return for the others. A large party entering his house might be noted and remembered by neighbors."

I dropped back to give the word to Cathor. He looked at me sullenly.

"Do you plan to abandon us as you abandoned the others?" he demanded.

I marked but did not resent the insult.

"If necessary," I replied coldly. "However, Mancor will return for you. It is a device to avoid setting pursuit immediately upon us."

"I obey," he said gruffly; but I understood that Cathor was no longer entirely loyal and I did not trust him.

"You will accompany us," I said shortly. "Give the word to Pluthon to command the party in the drinking place."

Cathor hesitated.

"I am not afraid," he protested.

"Do as you are told."

"Yes, lord."

At the next corner we turned right, Arsinhœa, Mancor, Cathor and myself, while the others moved on. We passed two narrow streets and turned to the left at the third; then Mancor drove his bird through a narrow entrance and we followed. I recognized now the place we had entered five years before; then we had encountered no one, but now a man appeared, an aged noble who bowed gravely but said not a word.

"Teckor will guide you," said Mancor, "while I return for the others."

He left us, and then Cathor murmured close to my ear:

"I ask your pardon, lord."

I nodded without reply. This man was my lieutenant, but his faithfulness was not to be relied upon. He had protested against orders before, and a soldier should never murmur though ordered to certain death. Small as was my party, it would be stronger less this one member, and, at the first opportunity, I must get rid of Cathor.

We rode on through the well-remembered passage and after a long time emerged in the courtyard of a small house which I knew to be well outside the town; the miracle had been accomplished and Arsinhœa had been conveyed beyond the walls of the palace and the city.

For the first time Teckor spoke.

"I go to bring the others," he said. Then, descending from his bird, he walked to the mount of the princess, lifted the hem of her garment in his right hand, bent his fine old head and kissed the cloth. "Reign long, O queen," he murmured.

"I shall not forget you, friend," she replied sweetly.

In ten minutes he returned, accompanied by the entire band. Mancor reported that none apparently had seen them enter the house of Teckor. The guardian of the passage now spoke.

"Pagneomon," he said, "your way is long, pursuit will be quick and you must be far away by daylight. Word will be flashed along the signal towers to apprehend a party of twenty, including one woman. Best divide into two bands, and I suggest that the noble lady consent to don male garments."

"I consent," replied Arsinhœa. "But let us make haste."

"The woman of this house will aid you," he suggested. "Deign to descend from your buthom." Like a

slave he presented to her his back, and, making use of it, she sprang lightly from her bird to the ground, then followed him within. Seizing the opportunity, I addressed my men:

"This party cannot have two leaders. Cathor has questioned my orders. If he overcomes me, he shall lead you. Men, you have rescued from the palace the Princess Arsinhœa, herself; that was the mission in which you have ably served me."

There was a murmur of astonishment, and then I drew my sword.

"Draw, Cathor, I commanded. "We shall settle this now."

He hesitated. "I do not seek to lead. And how can I fight against the Sword of Invincibility?"

I grasped the weapon from the belt of one of the men, all had dismounted, and I threw my gray sword upon the ground.

"Fight, Cathor. If you slay me, you must proceed with Arsinhœa to the caves of Thoro."

His eyes gleamed.

"This is fair," he said. "Now, coward, I strike for Murnova."

I met his plunge, and threw him off.

"Wait!" I cried. "I wear armor beneath my robe and you have none. Help me, men."

In a moment my robe was off and my armor lay upon the ground, then, unprotected, as he, I faced him. Perhaps I was mad to take such a chance, but I was confident of overcoming him, and his charge of cowardice was the more galling as my own conscience was none too clear.

We closed again, and as our weapons clashed and rang I found him a stalwart opponent. But all the fury of one who has seen his lover thrown to the wolves to save another was in his eyes, and his passion obstructed his judgment. For a moment it was even; then I was skillful enough to catch his blow with the heavy part of my blade near the hilt against his point, and I turned it as I planned, and with a lightning thrust drove my blade through his body at his unprotected heart.

I turned to my men. Like him they were citizens of Mummor and knew him far better than they knew me.

"He was a traitor at heart," I declared, "and in good time would have betrayed us all. Did I fight him fair?"

They shouted assent.

"Are you willing to follow me? Is there one who would step forward now and avenge Cathor?"

Pluthon came forward, dropped upon his face before me and made the sign of obeisance.

"You are a great warrior and a mighty thinker," he said. "You have shown your devotion to the princess and the cause by abandoning your——"

"My affianced wife," I said truthfully, and at this there was a murmur of astonishment and admiration. "Cathor loved her and hated me," I continued, "which made him disloyal to the princess. Now will you follow me, all?"

There was unanimity in their response and I was satisfied.

"Our road is pitted with every peril. To win through we must have entire confidence in and obedience to the leader. If there is a better leader among you than I, now is the time to choose him."

"We choose you, lord," replied Pluthon.

"It is well. You have no armor or spears, but I shall find them for you. Now mount and be ready. The people of the house will dispose of the body of this unfortunate man."

In a few minutes more Arsinhœa reappeared, a most exquisite figure in the short brown tunic of the soldier. The old man had provided her with armor and a sword and buckler. Her tender feet were covered with leather wrappings and sandals much too large for

her. Her glorious red hair was entirely concealed beneath the bronze helmet, and her chin and neck, the most beautiful in existence, were covered by a thick, woolen scarf of crimson.

"A warrior queen!" exclaimed Pluthon, and he fell upon his face before her, as did every man, including myself.

"Rise, brave soldiers," the girl said proudly. "I thank you for your homage and I hope to lead you to victory. Let us depart."

The gate opened and we rode noiselessly out into an empty, unlighted street far beyond the walls, in a suburb whose entire population must still be in the city.

Though much had happened, it was still only an hour after darkness, and to-night, no doubt, regulations regarding passing the gates were relaxed.

For a week we must journey, perhaps longer if we were forced, from the road into the rough country, and I was fearful of the hardships which this royal girl, who had never set foot upon aught but carpets of fur, must undergo in our company. While she knew how to ride, I doubted if she had ever spent long hours upon the back of a racing bird whose lope was tiring to an inexperienced rider.

"Shall we encounter patrols?" I asked Mancor.

"Doubtless," he said. "But I have the watchword of the night and we shall pass without molestation. To-morrow things will be very different."

"What is the watchword."

"Arsinhœa."

I laughed loudly. What an appropriate word for the passage of Arsinhœa herself! It was natural that it should be the word, since to-morrow was the bridal day of the royal princess to the king, but that made it more humorous that it should be used to permit of her escape from him.

We rode on for some time in silence. Then a soft voice called: "Pagneomon."

I was close to her side in a second.

"I am glad I trusted you Pagneomon," she said. "I thank you for your precious aid and for the sacrifice of your beloved."

Almost stunned, I muttered:

"How do you know that, princess?"

"She told me you were affianced when we changed apparel. She is a brave and beautiful girl, Pagneomon. How could you treat her so?"

"I—I——" Confusion silenced me.

"A man who loves a woman knows no other love or loyalty, and for her would betray king and crown. I am not worth the sacrifice, Pagneomon. Though I benefit by it, I cannot admire it, for she will die a horrible death."

"May I speak, princess?"

"If there is anything you can say."

"I do not love Murnova, and I promised to marry her on condition that she take your place, for it was the only way to effect your rescue. I had sworn a mighty oath to save you at every cost to myself. Knowing that she must die, as she knew it, I swore to her that I would never wed another but live single all my life, and my hope is that I may set you upon your throne, slay Negor with my own hand and then perish quickly in battle."

The princess was silent for a moment. "Then you do not love life?"

"I love it, but a man without a wife does not live. I cannot wed the only woman whom I shall ever love, and in the end, if a sword or spear does not slay me, I shall die of love."

"Then there is some one whom you love?" Her voice was eager.

"Yes," I said sadly.

"And who is she, Pagneomon?"

"Princess, I have sworn an oath never to address you as a man to a woman."

"Oh!"—silence. "You swear many oaths," she said dryly. "I trust you mean to keep them all."

"I shall try," I said grimly.

"Why slew you that soldier but now?"

"Because he was a traitor who refused to obey orders. I slew him in fair fight."

"Was it not folly to reduce our number, already so small?"

"A false heart is no aid in battle."

"True."

She spoke no more, and I returned to the side of Mancor and ordered him to take command of ten of the men who would follow us at a distance of five hundred paces.

Presently came up the moon which lightened the dark way, but it was unwelcome as it showed our parties to those who might be lurking in the streets or looking out of windows of houses. However, we were traveling fast and well out of the thickly settled sections.

Lights in the road ahead warned me of danger, and soon we came in sight of a large patrol, at least fifty mounted men, who carried lamps protected from the wind by bronze casings. Remembering the execution created among a patrol years before by the slave of Fedrath who hurled a fireball, I made ready one in my pouch, then rode ahead to try the watchword. In a moment we met the patrol.

"Where go you and who may you be?" demanded the officer.

"King's business," I shouted, as we drew near.

"Halt your party; advance alone and give the word of the night."

I rode forward, fireball ready.

"Arsinhœa," I whispered, as we were side by side. It was all we needed, for he saluted and ordered his men to the roadside while our group passed along. I sent them forward and waited to see how fared the second group, but Mancor knew the officer personally and the password settled matters. So I saved my precious fireball.

Morning found us far on our road, the tireless birds devouring distance. But the princess was white of face and ready to drop from her seat with fatigue; it was time to halt. Yet we were too close to the city to do so in safety. With daylight we would be visible to the watchers in the signal towers, so I thought it best to leave the road and strike across country toward some rising ground, which might hide us from travelers upon the highway.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE STRANGE CONDUCT OF NEGOR.

OUR situation was a perplexing one, and not only the immediate peril, for I feared there would be no safety in the caves, since Zuthor knew that Thoro and his band were hostile to the king. Negor would send an overwhelming force to the mountain to rout out the savants and recover Arsinhœa, and what I had seen in Luth convinced me that the cowardly populace would not speed to the standard of the princess when it was lifted. However, Thoro was very wise and the brotherhood, though small in numbers, was powerful because of its ingenuity; therefore, I would deliver Arsinhœa to him and ask for orders.

We descended upon the house of a noble who raised cattle upon the sparse grass of the surrounding country, surprised the household in its slumber and took possession of the place, making sure that none escaped to carry the news of our presence. Then I sent Mancor back to read the signals passing from tower to tower and report what was happening.

Two hours later I was awakened by Mancor, whose face was grave.

"The signals have just been busy," he said. "The message is this:

"Apprehend twenty men and one woman, in the name of King Negor. Tathe is the leader, the woman is Murnova, and a recreant king's officer, Mancor."

"Strange," I said. "No word of the princess?"

"None."

"Most likely he does not wish her escape to be publicly known; to capture Murnova is really to capture the princess. Were troops abroad?"

"None but the regular patrols. If our escape has just been discovered, the pursuing bands are far behind us upon the highroad. But doubt not that it will soon be black with warriors."

I nodded. We must travel entirely by night and across rough country, for the highroad would no longer be practical, and if we won through to the mountains it would be a greater miracle than the priests of Magor had ever accomplished.

For lack of something better to do, I had the lord of the castle brought before me. He, with his wife and children, had been driven into a chamber while we made free with the rest of the house. He came with squared shoulders, his heavy jaw thrust forward, his eyes flashing with anger—a powerful man of about forty years who ought to give a good account of himself in battle, none of your meager, dissipated city nobles.

He scowled at me when he was pushed into the room where I had settled myself.

"What have I done to excite the resentment of good King Negor?" he demanded.

"I do not know," I replied courteously. "Seat yourself, sir, and accept my regrets that necessity has forced me to take refuge in your castle."

"What? Are you not king's soldiers?"

"We are enemies of King Negor. now being eagerly sought by his troops.'"

I spoke freely because the whole plateau already knew that the king was pursuing me and because I could not permit this man and his family to live to report that I had occupied his dwelling. So, as he was not to survive to betray me, there was no necessity of concealment.

"I am Tundor, lord of lands hereabouts," he replied, "and brother of Milthrator, royal treasurer, who was slaughtered with the old king. I did not know there lived in Atlantis a man bold enough to declare he was the enemy of King Negor. You are welcome to my home and all within, noble stranger."

I saw that he was truthful, for his resentment was most evident, and my heart warmed to him.

"That makes you an adherent of the old dynasty. Would you strike a blow against Negor for the Princess Arsinhœa?"

He made a despairing gesture. "To what purpose? She weds the tyrant to-night."

I rose and offered him my hand.

"Tundor, you are a good man. The princess has escaped from Negor, is in my charge and sleeps just now beneath your roof. She needs soldiers. Will you enlist under her banner?"

His unbelief and astonishment were ludicrous.

"It's not possible!" he stammered.

"Do you know the princess?"

"Two years ago I saw her at a distance. I think I would know her."

"Come." I led him to the room where Arsinhœa lay, opened the door and displayed to him that most delicious creature, asleep. Her helmet and armor she had doffed and she slept in her brown tunic, her bright-red hair flowing free. A glance was enough for Tundor, who fell upon his knee as I softly shut the door.

"Rise, friend and comrade," I said gayly. "Will you join us?"

Tundor rose and offered me his two hands. "I can arm six freemen and thirty slaves, lord, and I shall follow you if you permit me to carry with us

my wife and two young boys, who will be slain if left behind."

"Granted."

Thus I gained a great fighter and a firm friend who fought at my side and saved my life in the forest battle of which I shall speak later. I led him to Mancor and introduced him to the others, who welcomed him cordially; then I assigned Mancor to accompany him while he rounded up his men.

An hour before dark I sent Mancor forth again, disguised as a slave, to the highroad to discover from the signals what our situation now might be. He was back after nightfall, strangely moved, and drew me to one side to impart his news.

"The signals were not moving, but I encountered the signal man who walked in the fields near the tower at the close of the day. He was so proud of his information that he gladly imparted it to the supposed slave.

"Negor is full of fury and has offered a cartful of gold to the man who brings back the heads of Pagneomon, no longer Tathe, and Mancor; and a second cart of pure gold to those who slay the woman Murnova, but she must be cut in pieces and thrown to the dogs in the presence of a king's officer."

I gazed at him in horror.

"But why slay the princess? I cannot understand. He must want her back, for without her he can never be the legitimate king of Atlantis. I knew him for a beast, but to treat thus the daughter of kings and his bride-to-be!"

"Those are the orders. Furthermore, he has instructed Zuthor to take the entire military force of Mummor and extend it clear across the island, even through the sea bottoms, moving slowly in this direction till it meets a mighty army from Luth coming westward. We shall be caught, inevitably, between the two forces."

I should have expected something like this, of course, for Negor would leave nothing undone to destroy us; yet it had not occurred to me that Mummor would head us off so efficiently.

"We may be able to cut our way through their line, which will be thin if it extends across the entire country," I hazarded.

"Even so, they will be upon our heels by the thousands. I fear we are doomed, Pagneomon."

I was silent for some moments, worrying more at the ghastly fate in store for Arsinhœa than our own danger. Why did he persist in calling her Murnova? Perhaps because he feared that no Atlantide would thus slaughter the royal princess. His anger must be fearful—the wedding set and no bride—the dissatisfaction of the multitude might easily rise to rebellion and his destruction, but too late to save us. The dire extremity of my love was undoubtedly responsible for the inspiration I now received, an idea so daring that for a moment it terrified me to think of it.

"Fetch Tundor!" I commanded sharply. "At once, do you hear?" When Tundor came I bade him be seated and invited Mancor to remain.

"How far is your house from the sea?" I demanded.

"It is five thousand paces to the head of the nearest sea wall," he replied.

"And where is the nearest port for fishermen?"

"Two walls west of that one."

"It's our only chance, Mancor; we shall march immediately to this port where we shall seize a fishing ship and sail around Atlantis to the mountainside."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TERRIBLE SEA.

BOTH men looked at me incredulously, then, seeing I did not jest, grew pale as death. To venture upon the sea was unthinkable to our people;

the thought of it even caused me to tremble. Not a single ship of war had we possessed for many centuries, nor merchant ships, and the men who went forth upon fishing barks were driven aboard with whips and slain if they returned without their cargo of sea food, else there would have been no fish to eat in Atlantis save what was caught by lines off the sea walls.

The fear of the ocean was born in us, a relic of the time when it swallowed up so much of our country. Those of us who lived upon the sea walls had often observed the huge, ferocious monsters who swam in it. Recalcitrant slaves were thrown to them, and I had once seen a fish as long as a ship eat an unfortunate person who had toppled off the wall. Yet I had proposed such an abominable expedient and I would force them all to obey me, for it was our only chance, slight as it might be, of salvation.

"You cannot mean to do this thing," protested Mancor.

"Yes."

Tundor regarded me searchingly, then he laughed.

"Friend Pagneomon," he declared, "I like you well. You have more courage than I, yet I do believe that it can be done. If these fisherfolk can move a ship out upon the deep sea and return unharmed, why cannot we? We shall force the fishers to convey us, and if we perish in the venture, it is no worse than to be slain or captured and tortured on land."

"Thanks, Tundor. Mancor, get your men ready. Tundor, dismiss your slaves—the ship will not hold them—and we must all be mounted to ride fast in one company. I shall inform the princess."

When I entered her room, my love was on her feet, endeavoring with unaccustomed fingers to fasten on her armor; seeing me, she smiled and motioned for me to do it for her. My fingers thrilled and I was clumsy enough, but in the end achieved the work, after which I told her gently the news from the signal towers and the order that she be slain instead of carried back.

"I prefer death to recapture," she said bravely. "They must have found Murnova in my chamber, tortured her, and she confessed your name. Then they put her to death and buried her quickly so that they might pretend that it is she who must be slain with you on the road."

"But, in that case, how explain your disappearance, with your marriage to take place this very night?"

"Perhaps he will give out that I am ill and postpone the wedding, and later claim I have died of an illness, and reign alone."

I nodded, for it seemed a reasonable explanation.

"You believe, then, that we cannot escape this cordon around us?" she asked, without a quiver in her beautiful voice.

"There is a way," I said hesitatingly. "If you are willing, and can master fear, I wish to swoop down upon a port, capture a ship and sail around the island to the mountainside."

For a moment I thought Arsinhœa would fall in a faint, for she grew deadly pale, tottered, then sank upon her couch. But she recovered in a moment and gazed at me, with her great, blue eyes in pitiable appeal.

"You think it the only way?" she asked, and now her voice trembled.

I nodded.

"The wicked, savage sea, the horrible denizens of it, the frail ship and the mighty wind, the dreadful storms," she murmured. "So be it. Better be eaten by the sea monsters than wedded to Negor. I am ready. Let us depart."

When we went into the courtyard, where my company was assembled, I grieved to see among us a young and pretty woman and boys of ten and

twelve years, the younger mounted before his mother, the older holding on behind his father. I made a brief speech to the men, explaining our danger and my determination, and when they wavered I bade any who would not venture to ride forward.

Had there been a coward among us I would have cut him down, but none advanced to his doom, and we rode, a silent company, out of the courtyard and toward the highroad which we must cross.

There were many lights on the highroad, for travelers were still abroad, and doubtless many patrols were hurrying east and west in hope of discovering us and winning two cartfuls of pure gold. So we waited a hundred paces in the fields until the road directly in front was clear for a moment and then we drove madly across it. We carried no lights, and the toes of our two-footed mounts were thickly padded by nature, and so, noiseless and unseen, we crossed.

We were now traveling through a rural district, well inhabited and thickly cultivated, but we rode in a straight line, only turning out of our way to avoid an occasional house, and ruined many a promising patch of vegetables and corn.

At the head of each sea wall was a gate and small fort, guarded by a hundred men who were doubtless informed of King Negor's thirst for our blood, but the land sloped gently down to the sea bottoms without guards or obstructions of any sort.

When Tundor indicated to me that we had reached the wall, at the far end of which was a port, I led my band down into the sea bottom and moved swiftly across the country, contemptuous of the miserable serfs we might encounter. We must abandon our buthoms to take ship—to leave them on the walls would be to betray the method of our escape. But to turn them loose when we were at the foot of the outer wall would be to permit them to scatter about the country where they might not attract attention for a few hours or longer.

This was my own sort of land, but, of course, far from my own estates. Between each wall, at the outer rim, was a distance of about three thousand paces, and I knew there were many staircases to enable those who dwelt upon the outer wall to descend to their farming lands.

Here and there on the flat lands we saw the bright points of the fires which the serfs lighted before their doors to cook their evening meals and to give them light—for such as they possessed no lamps—but we encountered no living soul, and in time there loomed high above us the towering wall beyond which the never-tranquil sea crashed eternally.

We followed the wall till we came to a staircase and then I gave the signal to dismount. With Arsinhœa I began the ascent, followed by my band, who soon began to breathe heavily from the unaccustomed climb. I pitied the poor little princess, encumbered by heavy armor, and I aided her with my arm. Halfway up I saw she was weakening and I offered to carry her, but she refused indignantly. Another fifty steps and she was unable to proceed, then I lifted her without protest in my big arms and carried the delightful burden to the top.

We emerged at the rear of a castle very like my own home which I had not seen for so long. Through the windows streamed light, and I paused to warn the others to keep silent. When we were all assembled we moved around the house out upon the broad roadway of the sea wall, and a little distance away I saw a number of lights twinkling like stars and rising and falling on the bosom of the ocean—the ships we sought.

Centuries ago our engineers had discovered that the sea is only agitated upon the top, so to protect vessels from the waves it was required merely to construct around them a barrier no deeper than the height of a man.

Our great port, near Luth, was made of stone, like our sea walls, but this one was constructed of heavy wooden timbers, strengthened by bands of bronze and drawn down into the water to the necessary depth by great stones, suspended from the bottom of this sea fence by chains. Once in a while a heavy storm would smash this barricade and wreck the ships against the wall, drowning those who lived on them; but it was an easy matter to reconstruct such a port.

The crew of a fishing vessel consisted of ten sailors and rowers, with their captain, and I saw that I must have two or three ships to carry their crews and my party. I decided to place Mancor in command of one vessel, Tundor, the second, and command the third myself, and so immediately divided my men, instructing them to capture each his own ship and to get to sea at once, sailing toward the west.

We moved stealthily down the wooden barrier against which the ships were tied and I waited till each band reached its objective so that our attack should be simultaneous. There was no watch on any vessel; such was the dread of the sea that there was no fear of robbers stealing a ship, and nothing of value to take on shore. So it was that we jumped aboard without opposition and made ourselves the masters.

The wretched fishermen woke to find swords at their throats, and without protest they cast off their lines and pushed their vessels loose with their sweeps. This, however, made some noise and awakened men on other ships, who began to shout. One of my fishermen cried a warning: "Robbers take us to sea!" As he spoke he was hurled overboard by the soldier nearest him, but the shout was taken up all over the port and in a moment lights shone in the road in front of the big house where the lord of the fishermen resided.

All three of the ships were now afloat in the middle of the basin and moving toward the narrow opening at the far side, but making slow progress as yet. This gave time for the owners of the port to assemble a band of men, who ran rapidly down the barrier and grouped at the point of exit, near enough to jump on board as we worked our way through. Among them were bowmen, for I heard a string snap and an arrow shot through the air toward us. I counted some thirty men massed at the end of the barrier. My oarsmen protested shrilly, but my soldiers drove them to their work with blows. Arsinhœa stood beside me, silent but tense. The situation was critical.

More arrows were flying, and a scream of pain came from one of my crew. Now we were some thirty feet from the opening, the other ships close behind.

"We are destroyed," I heard the princess whisper.

My hand went into my pouch, I drew a round ball from it and waited a second longer before I thrust in the yellow, pointed stick. Then I took good aim and hurled it directly at the mass of men. There was a flash like lightning and a blanket of flame surrounded them, while such a roar burst forth that my rowers stopped in terror. But some of the men on the barrier were running away, their clothes aflame; a dozen were driven into the water and not one was left to oppose us.

"Onward!" I shouted. "Drive those swine to the oars! Out to sea! Tundor, Mancor, follow me!"

I turned to Arsinhœa, but again she had shrunk from me, gazing at me with alarm and repulsion.

"Oh!" she gasped. "Pagneomon, you

are not a man! You are the black god himself, the fiend incarnate!"

Her terror was not less than that of the others, and I relieved my anger at her injustice to one who loved her, driving the fishermen at the oars until we were through the passage and upon the bosom of the great deep. Immediately the vessel, so steady within the barrier, began to pitch and roll in a distressing manner. Often had I watched the fisher craft dip and lift on the sea, but never had I realized that it must be most unpleasant for those upon them. Thinking that the sail might stop this motion, I commanded that it be set, and in a few minutes the wind caught full upon the wide expanse of white cloth and drove us along so swiftly that it was no longer necessary to row.

Our ship was about twenty-five paces long. A mast was set a third of the way back and her bow curled back from the water like one of the state sandals of the King of Luth. She was surrounded by a wall so low that it seemed inadequate to save one from falling into the sea when she bent her side over, and the unsteadiness of the platform beneath our feet made it difficult to hold ourselves upright. I had heard that a terrible sickness affected those who ventured upon the ocean—a punishment for their temerity—and to my horror I felt that it was coming upon me.

I was no longer angry with Arsinhœa, and I returned to her side, whereupon she clutched my arm and murmured:

"Save me, Pagneomon; I think I am going to die."

In distress I shouted for the captain of the fishermen, who came cringing like a dog.

"What is the cure for this sickness of the sea?" I demanded. "If this lady dies, I kill you instantly."

"It is nothing, lord," he whined. "All who go to sea are taken with it, but never have I known one to die of it."

"How long before recovery?"

"A few hours or several days, no longer. If you permit me to land you, you recover at once."

I hesitated. Almost I wished to land, for I was no longer my strong self; but to land was to perish, and he said this sickness passed. I saw a cunning look in the fellow's eye and read there that he hoped we would all become ill and helpless so that he could run back to port and turn us over to the soldiers. I determined then that I, at least, would not give way to it.

I supported the princess to the rear of the ship where was a house built above the deck.

The master was again before me. "Whither do we sail?" he asked sullenly.

"Keep the land always on your right hand, and sail far enough from shore so that we shall not be visible."

And now all my men with two exceptions had succumbed to the illness and lay about on the deck moaning and groaning, but I kept my feet and ordered the two stout fellows to watch the crew and slay any who showed signs of taking advantage of our distress.

Then I carried Arsinhœa—who was too weak to shrink from the "fiend incarnate"—within, and placed her upon a bunk which I had covered with my mantle.

Then I went outside and observed that the helmsman was heading inshore. A blow from my fist persuaded him to continue on our course and I checked him by the lights of the land.

After several hours I was pleased to find I was no longer suffering, and some others of my men were again upon their feet. When the sun lifted itself above the sea I saw that the other two ships were not far behind and were following a true course. Also, there were no pursuing sails.

From Luth to the caves was six days of hard traveling by buthom, but I had no idea how long it would take to make a wide circle far offshore to reach the smoking mountain—surely three or four times six days. Meantime, we must have food. There was nothing to eat on board, and we had no supplies with us. It occurred to me that the ocean teemed with good fare, and I set the idle fishermen to baiting hooks and tempting the hungry denizens of the water. In a short time they had caught many fish, some of weird and wondrous shapes and some which seemed good to eat. Amidships was a sheet of bronze upon the deck where a fire might be set, and over this we roasted the fish and broke our fast. I saw by the smoke from my other ships that Mancor and Tundor had adopted the same expedient.

Carrying some choice bits of roast fish upon a plate I entered the cabin where lay Arsinhœa, but the poor girl was still deadly ill and cried out in anguish against the food. Then, realizing that the closeness of the cabin might be the reason why she suffered still, I returned with two men and carried her upon a couch out into the fresh air.

I was losing my fear of the sea, for it was sparkling like blue gems in the sunlight and was smooth and pleasant. The ship now rolled very gently. After all, my ancestors had sailed fearlessly upon this great watery waste, these fishermen spent their lives upon it, and it was bearing us rapidly along our way safe from our enemies. I remembered that myriads of Atlantides had been carried away upon it in great ships, and many of them had sailed for months and landed upon unknown shores at the time of the forced exodus; surely our brief journey around the island with land always in sight was no very hazardous enterprise, and I knew from my boyhood that storms at sea were infrequent.

Arsinhœa lay pale and still just outside the cabin, her eyes closed, her milk-white skin contrasting brilliantly with the golden splendor of her hair, and I thought she had never looked so beautiful. Toward night she roused and smiled at me, and I hastened to her, dropping upon my knees at the bedside.

"Pagneomon," she said, "I am not so ill now. I do not think I shall die yet. I wish to tell you I grieve that I called you a fiend incarnate. What was that terrible power you used to slay our enemies?"

"It's a device manufactured in the caves, known as a 'fire ball.' " I assured her, joyous at her forgiveness and her gentle sorrow that she had hurt me. "No magic, I assure you. I have two others still to be used in case of need."

"It's a wondrous and terrible thing. Think you I shall ever reign in Luth?"

"Can you doubt it after our miraculous achievements already?"

"If I do it will be because of your leadership," she said, her eyes very soft and kind. "Am I very ugly when I am ill, Pagneomon?"

"Princess, you are more beautiful than ever."

"Do you mourn for Murnova?"

I nodded. "I must. To her self-immolation we owe our lives."

"That is true. When I am queen I will build a statue to her. Do you know, I think I could eat something—but not fish."

"Alas! We have nothing else."

"Then I must fast until I am more hungry."

For a week we sailed on smooth seas under a smiling sky, seeing a sail far off now and then. We varied our diet by trapping sea birds whose flesh was tough, but a relief from the fish; and we amused ourselves by sword practice on the deck. Arsinhœa joined in our sports and wished me to teach her sword play, so every day I worked with her, teaching her tricks of fencing

which might offset her less powerful muscles—though being sure in my own mind that she would never be called upon to defend herself from an enemy while I lived.

To be with her day after day caused me to grow more intensely in love with her so that I lost my appetite, grew pale and sad. She noticed this and twitted me for it. Yet the oath she had forced me to swear prevented me from telling her the cause of my trouble; difficult as it was, and more difficult with every sun, I kept my word, avoided looking into her blue eyes, sought her only when she summoned me, and tried to behave as a devoted servant, nothing more.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE FALSE QUEEN.

OFTEN we were able, so smooth was the blue sea, to run close to our consorts and exchange greetings; all was well with them as with us, and one and all no longer feared the sea. On the tenth day we espied a black speck on the ocean afar off, which the master told me was a small boat with two men in it. I marveled at the range of his eye for I could see naught but a black dot.

"They are shipwrecked," he said. "It is the rule of the fishermen to rescue one another, as such a thing may happen to all of us. Shall I run down to them?"

At first I thought it unwise, then, disliking to leave two men in straits, I nodded acquiescence. Perhaps the fellows were lately from land and might have news of interest.

In half an hour the boat drew alongside and two fishermen crawled on board our ship. They were immediately brought before me.

They had put out from a near-by port the night before and their ship had struck upon a submerged rock. These alone had escaped and one was the master of the sunken ship. They marveled to see soldiers with arms on board, for such a sight was never known on the sea of Atlantis.

"What are the reports from the city of Luth?" I demanded.

"There is great search for certain scoundrels who tried to kill the king, and the whole army is spread over the continent, entering all houses, leaving no stone unturned."

"There is no rebellion in Luth?"

"Why, no," replied the man. "King Negor and Queen Arsinhœa reign happily."

"What?" I shouted so loudly that he quailed. "How can that be?"

"Where have you been, lord, that you have not heard that his majesty wedded the Princess Arsinhœa ten days past? The marriage feasting lasted three days and everybody in Luth drank free wine."

Stunned by this information, I could make no reply for a moment.

"I was told that the princess had fled and there was no wedding," I said at length.

"A slave of the lord of Lanthore told me four days ago that he had accompanied his lord to the city, stood in the street outside the palace and saw the king and queen ride around the great square on their wedding night," he declared.

"Feed these men and put them to work," I commanded of the master of the ship, while I retired to the cabin where Arsinhœa rested, to communicate to her this preposterous assertion.

At first I thought the man lied, then I saw he spoke what he believed to be the truth, and now I began to comprehend the great guile of the tyrant Negor.

The escape of the princess had been almost a mortal blow to Negor because, once she was his wife and queen there was no purpose in raising a revolt to place her upon the throne she already

occupied. I had thus expected his frantic effort to secure her person and fasten her fate to his, but his insistence that it was Murnova who had fled with me, and his order that my head be brought to him but that she be slain and cut to pieces and fed to dogs, had been incomprehensible. Now I began to understand his ferocious audacity. While Arsinhœa lived, she menaced him; she would be the standard of revolt.

If he could not wed her, from his standpoint she were better dead; but without the legitimate heir of Atlantis at his side his position always would be unstable—there was no divinity to hedge him around and another noble might do what he had done to win the throne. Yet Luth expected a wedding and Negor had provided one. How? Arsinhœa had guessed he might give out she was ill and postpone the marriage—a dangerous expedient, and far better to pretend she was still in the palace and that the ceremony had taken place. Yet this fisherman had said she was seen riding with Negor through the great square, and that could not be, for she was before me in the cabin of this miserable ship.

In great trouble I entered, dropped upon my face and waited the word to rise, which she gave rather pettishly.

"Why are you so absurd, Pagneomon?" she snapped. "I am not on my throne, and there is none to witness your worship."

"I obey the injunctions you have laid upon me," I said as I rose. "I have extraordinary news for your ear, princess."

"Well, sit here beside me and impart it," she said, smiling.

"If you please, I may not. You know why."

"Very well," she said with a sigh. "Now what have you to tell me."

As briefly as possible I repeated what I had learned from the shipwrecked fisherman, watching her mobile countenance which expressed astonishment, anger and dismay.

"You know I am Arsinhœa," she said at length. "Mancor also can identify me."

"Of course."

"But none other of your men. Don't you see what Negor has done?"

"He has pretended to have married you," I replied.

"His great purpose. He has found some woman who may resemble me and presented her to the people as myself."

"But you are known in the palace; all the court has seen you as I did standing beside him as he sat on the throne. The queen must appear in public with him at his audiences, and such a deception quickly would be discovered."

"You think yourself very wise," she replied with impatience. "He has shown this woman in the twilight or the darkness, and all are convinced she is Arsinhœa. He has proclaimed that you escaped with Murnova, and if his men catch me they will cut me up beyond recognition. As for his audiences, he can give out that I am ill or have refused to appear with him—and who will venture to deny his utterances? To all intents and purposes he has married Arsinhœa."

"But he has not," I said stubbornly.

"Yes. When you set up my standard in the wilderness and ask the loyal men of Luth to rally round me they will laugh, for they will believe me an impostor. They think they know that I am still within the palace walls. He has made it very hard for us, Pagneomon, and I do not think I shall ever sit upon the throne of Atlantis."

Dumfounded, I gaped at her. The young girl had divined the true purpose of this mockery of a royal wedding, where I had overlooked it. Having carried off the princess I had assumed that the wedding would be abandoned, Negor confounded, and all Luth and Atlantis aware that the true queen had

fled from the city, and an army would arise to drive out her father's murderer.

Instead he had convinced the populace that the woman who had fled with me was a creature named Murnova, so that, if I took the field in the name of Arsinhœa, all would assume that the princess was an impostor, that she was, in truth, this same Murnova who was now a corpse buried secretly in the cellars of the palace. Truly he had made my task difficult if not impossible.

"There must be some way of exposing him," I ventured weakly.

Her laugh was bitter. "I cannot think of one. He will hunt us down and sooner or later kill us miserably. Even your own followers will lose heart when they hear this news and desert us, for they have only your word that I am Arsinhœa."

"My men know Murnova and know that you are not she."

"But they do not know who I am. How do they know that you have not been deceived?"

"I stood silent for I had no answer, whereupon the princess left her seat and glided to me so that she stood but a few inches distant.

"Yet, Pagneomon, do not despair too much. I would have killed myself before I would have wed that monster. You set me free and for ten days have kept me safe. Far better to be here with you on the beautiful ocean, though we eat humble fare and suffer discomfort, than be the queen of that murderer and monster, Negor. I thank you for what you have done."

"At least on these ships you are queen of Atlantis," I said, choking with emotion, "and I swear——"

She checked me with the touch of her little hand on my shoulder.

"No, swear no more. You are already encumbered with solemn oaths to fulfill which you find very difficult. What shall we do? Continue on to the mountain?"

"Yes. Thoro is very wise and already he has learned from Fedrath that you are on the way to him. The brotherhood has extraordinary methods of disseminating news, and you may be sure that Luth will soon begin to buzz with the rumors that a false queen reigns with Negor, while Arsinhœa calls on her loyal friends and supporters to drive out the usurper."

"Perhaps," she said doubtfully. "Yet we cannot sail forever. I would we might, for peace reigns at sea."

"You have yet to experience a storm, princess. Then you will wish that you were on dry land even though surrounded by enemies. I pray that the weather holds good until we sight the smoking mountain."

Three days later we sighted a smudge upon the horizon which could be nothing but the great volcano, and then the master turned the ship farther out to sea. At this end of the island the land was very rocky, and ledges and fingers of rock made navigation dangerous. He had never been this far before and he dreaded the coast and feared the mountain of Magor.

The bottom lands, protected by sea walls, ended here, as I have said, and the country had few inhabitants. We had been favored by steady winds and made greater progress than I had dreamed, yet now our perils were increased, for if the ship were wrecked most of us would drown. Very few Atlantides ever learned to swim, and it was an art I had not been taught at the caves.

As we neared our destination I pondered how to dispose of the fishermen, for they could not be permitted to return to their homes to report where they had landed us. They might be useful, too, if we were again forced to take to the ocean to avoid our enemies, so I determined to take them with us to the caves, after pulling up their ships on the shore, in the hope of having

them at hand in case we happened to need them.

Given the choice of joining my band or being put to death there was no doubt of their decision. My weakness had always been a reluctance to take life, even the lives of rogues like these, unless it was necessary to serve a purpose.

The fellows had probably been greatly worried as to their fate when they landed us, for shortly afterward the master came to me, fell at my feet and implored me to state my intentions toward them.

"Land me in safety and your lives are spared, but you must join my forces and you will gain wealth and honors thereby. I shall make you all free men and absolve you from further fealty toward your lord. Refuse and you die."

He did not hesitate a moment.

"We thank you and we shall not refuse," he assured me.

The following night we landed in a remote cove behind the burning mountain. My own soldiers drove ahead of them the thirty fishermen and three masters, after they had pulled their ships high on the shore, where I hoped that we might some day find them if we needed them—though it was more likely that patrols of the king would discover and destroy them.

To be continued next week.

AFTER SIXTY YEARS

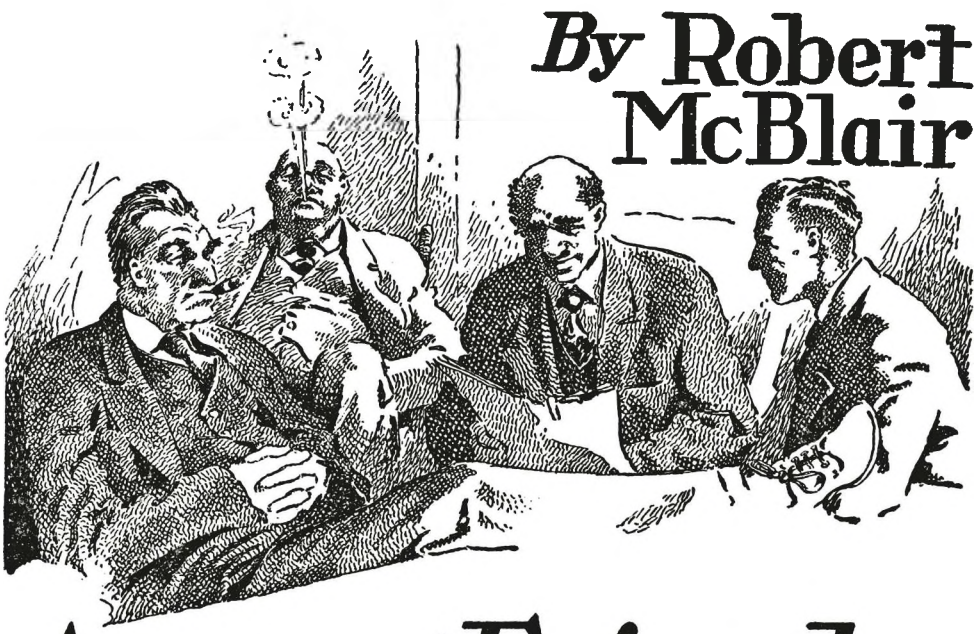
THAT the task of the pioneer in Alaska has not been in vain is evidenced by the fact that during the sixty years that the northern territory has been under the control of Uncle Sam, products valued at $1,302,280,142—more than one hundred and eighty times the price paid by the United States—have been shipped to the United States proper.

The territory was taken over October 18, 1867, with the Russian Governor, Prince Maksoutoff, representing his country, and General George Lovell Rosseau representing the United States. The formal transfer took place at New Archangel —now Sitka—which was the capital.

There followed a period of military rule, then of naval rule, and finally a year that had no law at all. In 1884, however, Oregon's laws became the laws of Alaska. It was not until 1912 that a legislature was created and the territory was allowed a delegate in congress.

There are about forty thousand white persons in the territory, and thirty thousand natives—Indians and Eskimos.

Alaska's greatest wealth to-day is considered to be its tourist trade, which is just being developed. Hunters from all parts of the world are coming to the territory every year for big game. The collector of customs would include that item as evidence of Alaska's worth to its paternal country—America. He says: "By this I mean the tourist, the visitor, game hunter, angler, the resource and historical investigator, all of whom leave here with an abundance of knowledge of magnificent scenery, wonderful hunting, attractive angling, and rare historical facts. These cannot be estimated in dollars and cents, but they are one of our main assets."



By Robert McBlair

Among Friends

Author of "Star Light, Star Bright," "Mr. Kelly's Corpus," Etc.

When Sam Whipple went to settle up his affairs with his dead father's former partners, they assured him he was "among friends." Sam was taken in, for a while.

THE agent is here again, Mr. Sam."

The housekeeper's voice dropped like a bomb into the truce which the sunlight, filtering through the yellowed lace curtains, had brought to Sam Whipple's nerves. He remained motionless in the deep chair, staring through the polished window at the dusty green of the elm in Gramercy Park.

"He can't wait any longer for the money, he says," the woman continued.

Sam Whipple lifted himself, turned to catch his weight on the right foot, and picked up his cane. The ridge of a plaster cast showed beneath the dark serge coat at the lower points of his shoulder blades, and the tall young figure drooped at the shoulders. As he took the bill for the eight-room apartment, the lines wrinkling his high forehead contradicted the youthful, almost childish quality of the wide-apart gray eyes and the humorous mouth.

"It isn't a matter of money, Mrs. Grimes," he answered.

He flushed at his inability to find words for what was so clear in his mind. His glance rested upon the date at the top of the paper—June 1, 1921. It was to have been three years, according to the doctors, before his shattered nerves would recuperate. More than three years had gone by since the wing strut had snapped and his plane had crashed on that muddy road in Flanders. Although it had grown gradually fainter, something of the old fiery

crackle still leaped through his blood to his brain whenever there was anything difficult or disagreeable to be faced, as there was now.

"It's just that since father—since the funeral," he went on, "I have put off going down to talk to father's partners. I don't know why; I would be among friends, but——" He flushed again at the realization that he was disclosing an indecision which was becoming habitual. "Don't tell sister I am going. When you have told the agent, would you mind finding me my hat?"

He pulled the ancient slouch hat over his tousled light-brown hair, after she had returned from the hall, and patiently permitted her to hoist the tweed overcoat over his arms and shoulders, for she insisted that there was a tang to the air. As he dragged his left foot along the rich carpet, he felt the crisp legal papers in the overcoat pocket. They reminded him that he had neglected as yet to look in the safe-deposit box which, for a month now—or was it longer?—he had legally had access to. It wasn't likely that there were bonds in it. He remembered his father to have said that he believed in keeping his money busy working for him, not for other people. But there might be an insurance policy—probably was.

The temptation assailed him, when he limped out into the sunny street, to put off calling upon his father's partners, and go to the safe-deposit box instead. The agent's disagreeable ultimatum, however, reminded him of how long he had been plucked at by urges to action which daily had grown less insistent. He raised his cane to a passing taxicab, and in a gust of imaginative ambition—after he had ridden a few blocks downtown—knocked on the window and told the driver to stop at the drug store on the corner.

He got out of the cab, somewhat brusquely rejecting the driver's offer of aid, and in a telephone booth gave the operator the number of Lucy Terrill. Lucy had always loved him; he was sure of that. There would be money enough from his father's estate for him to marry on, and to support sister, too. The way to face life was to face it. And, although his quick dream of strength and conquest had begun to fade—as it so often did—within a few moments of its conception, he held to his plan of action when Lucy's clear voice, as soothing to him as the sunlight and the elm's green leaves, floated to his ear. It seemed to brace him up.

"I want to come to see you to-night about something important."

"All right, Sam," she answered. "When will you be here?"

"Some time between eight and twelve."

He hung up, and, feeling masterful and strong, dragged his left foot out to the cab and climbed inside. He examined his reflection in the mirror made by the glass partition. It was a strong and intelligent face, he concluded; the chin showed strength, the nose was straight and dominant, the head was broad at the temples and high in the brow. He was twenty-six years old, and there were lines in that face which belonged to a man of fifty. Very well. If the crash had telescoped the years as well as his spine, if it had made him live ten years in a moment, he would put this added age and sophistication to use.

He braced the plaster cast in the corner of the seat back, eased his left knee up over his right, and fell into such agreeable musings that he was startled when the driver shouted that they had reached their destination. His daydreams had lifted him lightly over the year or more in the Paris hospital, had floated him on a stream of pleasant recollections through the months which he had spent at college, being "rehabilitated" at the expense of the government. His father had wanted him to

stay at home, but his own sense of helplessness—as he could see now—had fired him to be his own man. And so it had gone, until the wire had come informing him of his father's sudden death.

He paid off the driver and, placing the cane carefully, limped up the stone steps of the office building on lower Broadway and dragged his foot along the slightly worn flags of the brown-marble corridor. A flash of nerves tingled in his limbs and brain as he went up in the latticed-iron elevator. How little he really knew of what he was doing! After all, he had skipped out of college and worked his way abroad to join the French army when he was nineteen—too soon to have learned much of anything about what his father did in the way of business.

He remembered his father—ruddy, lean and white-mustached—presiding as host over impeccable dinners at the apartment; and he remembered the guests, the male guests, as combining in their persons the virtues of old acquaintanceship and present prosperity. Some of these men, he recalled, his father privately had disliked, and he recollected his own youthful distaste at this mixing of business life and the social life. There floated into his mind the refrain of a complaint his dead mother so often had uttered. "I wish you would leave those partners of yours," she would say to his father. And as Sam stumbled through the elevator door at the seventh floor, he remembered the refrain of his father's patient reply: "Just a temporary association, my dear, while I am recovering from the bankruptcy. It is paying very well—and we don't have to have them at the house."

The sight of his father's name in gold letters on frosted glass relieved his feeling of uneasiness. There it still was, just as it always had been, the partnership symbol:

MYERMAN, STAUB & WHIPPLE
Agents and Brokers
Coal, Lumber, Machinery
Structural Steel

"There will be money enough, and that's the important thing," he added mentally, as he pushed open the door. A pimply-faced boy approached him with hostile mien; and when the lad, in a change of manner, had gone off with his card through the heavy oaken door marked "Private," Sam Whipple leaned on his cane with the sudden realization that his back was aching again. He remembered having come to this office years ago. The girl at the switchboard was different now, there were different men at the flat desks along the wall; and before there had not been this small crowd of men in the anteroom awaiting an audience. But the scratched mahogany furniture was unchanged.

From beyond the oaken door another door slammed upon the corridor. There was a wait before the corridor door slammed again. Then the pimply lad reappeared, gave him a curious look, and said:

"Mr. Myerman and Mr. Staub will see you now, sir."

In the private office, spears of sunlight from the harbor window made a fretwork of the blue layers of smoke. Mr. Myerman, the burly man with feet on the desk, was holding out his hand, and when Sam had dragged his left foot past the spittoon and had shaken hands, and had moved then to shake hands with Mr. Staub—the fat man sitting propped against the wall—his back ached so that he hardly heard the two voices speaking in unison:

"This is Mr. Brill, our lawyer."

Sam Whipple let himself thankfully into a chair, pulled off the old felt hat and ran his fingers through the mop of light-brown hair. No one spoke. Mr.

Myerman was a bulky individual, with a ridge of reddish hair like a cock's comb running back from a receding forehead. His head was very narrow at the pale blue eyes, which accentuated the height of his cheek bones and the dominance of his broken nose. His lips were full and red, and made a succulent, rhythmic sound about the cigar, which he seemed to be engaged in swallowing.

"It's a nice day."

Mr. Staub spoke in a thick, buttered voice. He sat erect in the propped-back chair, and his eyes, in thick lenses, stared at Sam like opera glasses. With his yellow pompadour, his powdered and overlapping jowls, his pale-gray suit and linen vest, he seemed to Sam's fatigued imagination like an owl made of bread and butter. A spiral of smoke rose from the Turkish cigarette held between two white, jeweled fingers.

"A very nice day," said the hawk-faced lawyer.

The silence came down again. Sam knew that he should speak, but the crackle of fire ran through his body. Mr. Myerman reminded him of a rooster he once had owned—was regarding him now much as that rooster would have cautiously regarded a shred of raw meat before he gobbled it up. It was like the nightmare of dread Sam had dreamed so often in the hospital, of falling in his plane behind the opposing lines, surrounded by enemies.

Then the fit passed. He drew a deep breath. Out of the window, misty through the reflected sunlight, he could see the gallant figure of the Statue of Liberty. He was back from the war. He was among friends now.

"I came down," he said, "to talk about drawing out my father's interest in the business."

"Ah, yes," said Mr. Staub, expelling a long breath.

"Now, wait!" Mr. Myerman's fist had struck resoundingly upon the desk, his bulk in the mustard-colored coat plunged forward. "You let me do this, Staub!"

He turned to Sam. The cigar, forced to a mouth corner, twisted his face askew. His red comb stood up straight.

"What you mean, interest in the business?" he demanded.

"Why," Sam answered, "this was a partnership. And there are all kinds of corporations mixed up in it, too." He waved to where a long list of corporation names on the frosted glass of the corridor door showed their indecipherable black backs to the room.

"He didn't give you any list of his claims, did he?" demanded Mr. Myerman. "No, I know he didn't. He died suddint. Well, then, I'll tell you, Mr. Whipple, your father was a big value to us, with his acquaintance, but he drew out what he got as fast as it was collected from each deal. Besides, too, it's been three months now since he croaked, and the overhead's been going on the same. Am I right, Staub?"

"You mean——" asked Sam, and stopped to swallow dryly.

"Not a cent," retorted Mr. Myerman loudly.

"Wait a minute, Myerman," put in the lawyer, smiling till the nose came down over his yellow teeth. "There might be a few odds and ends. I mean on account of old friendship," he added hastily as Myerman sought to interrupt. "Mr. Whipple is among friends. I think he would take a thousand dollars, and give us a receipt in full."

The lawyer nodded intently to Staub and then to Myerman.

"You make out the check on your bank, Staub."

Staub chuckled hoarsely at Myerman's humor.

As if this were the preliminary to an ancient routine, each whipped out a check book from an inside pocket and wrote out a check. The lawyer took the

checks, read them carefully, wrote a few words on the back of each, and handed them to Sam. Two checks, each for five hundred dollars.

"That's all right, and everybody happy," cried Mr. Myerman. "You was in the war, wasn't you, Sam? Your dad was mighty proud of that. Fine man, your dad, Sam. What you plan to do?"

Sam Whipple drew a deep breath. On his father's desk, his and his sister's photograph, as children, stood in a silver frame beside the silver inkwell. It was across the large room from the desks of Myerman and Stub. On the dun wall hung photographs of cargo vessels.

"I guess I'll have to go to work," replied Sam, flushing.

"A good idea," boomed Myerman. "We left the name on the partnership. People come in, you know. Why don't you take a desk in the outside office, Sam? We'll let you have it rent free, won't we, Staub? You can pick up business. Brokers on Broadway are as thick as fleas now, the way the British coal strike has sent buyers over. You could find some export coal, I bet, with your father's acquaintance. We'll buy it, if you do. We're your friends."

"Sure," agreed the buttery Staub. "He can use the desk space and in a few weeks he'll be making enough to pay us for it."

"I'll do it," said Sam Whipple, and felt himself rise soaringly on a gust of strength and power. If his father had kept an eight-room apartment on Gramercy Park, with every luxury, just because of his acquaintance——

"I'll—I'll start in to-morrow," he added uncertainly, as the dream began to fade. He lifted himself from the chair, and, after an awkward good-by, dragged his left foot painfully from the room.

The hard thing was to explain it all to sister. Reaching home, exhausted, he found her sitting in a deep chair before the unlighted fire. The same age as himself, she looked ten years younger. In the black dinner dress, her lovely light-brown hair coiled high on her head, and her gray eyes kind and brave, she reminded him of his dead mother, of Lucy Terrill, of all that he loved. And she was not equipped to fight with life.

"Sister," he said, "there is nothing left in the way of an estate except ten thousand dollars in a savings bank. That belongs to you and will bring in four hundred a year." He didn't tell her that this was the insurance policy, which he had arranged should be paid to her. "This, with my government allowance, will take care of us in the little apartment I found to-day on Tenth Street. What we don't need of this furniture will pay off the back rent here and the outstanding bills. I'm sorry, darling."

"Poor kid," she said. "I know you've been worrying about this. Why, we can get along wonderfully!" She was actually smiling happily. "Why don't you go to see Lucy to-night? It'll do you good."

"I did intend to go to see her to-night," Sam answered, "but I called her up and told her I couldn't make it."

They had an amusing time at dinner, planning how they would furnish the new little apartment and make both ends meet. Afterwards they strolled around to see it. Sam felt more alive than he had felt for years, and what his sister said when he was telling her good night came as something of a shock.

"I never did trust those two men, Myerman and Staub. And," she added as an afterthought, "Mother didn't, either."

The next morning he went down to business. The vague uneasiness which his sister's words had brought him did

not last. For one thing, the alertness required to adjust himself to the new environment, he found after the first week, had made his nervous spells less frequent. For another, he made, almost at once, a small amount of money.

Some months earlier the British coal miners had gone on strike. The industries of Europe and South America, deprived of the coal which they had always secured from Great Britain, scoured the world frantically. The only adequate supply lay in the bituminous fields of West Virginia and Pennsylvania. European buyers flooded New York with inquiries for coal, wrote to their bankers, cabled to the firms that supplied them with machinery, steel, or anything else. The American mines, on the other hand, had always sold on long-term contract to domestic consumers, and had no export-sales agents. They sold very little coal abroad.

There was a wide gap between the would-be buyer and the willing-to-be seller. As a result, New York became infested with overnight "brokers." If a man, clinging to his derby, was seen to run across Broadway, it was assumed that he was a broker who had found a mine willing to sell some coal. If he was pursued, it was assumed that the second man was after a split on the brokerage for having made the introduction. If—an hour later—a third man was seen to run across Broadway, it was assumed that he was a man who knew a man who knew a foreign buyer who wanted a big shipment of coal.

Sam Whipple, after a while of gossiping with the other men in the office, listening to the telephone conversations, and talking with the brokers, happened to remember that a patient in his hospital in France had come from West Virginia. He remembered the name of the town and the fact that the man—a weather-reddened, warm-hearted, merchant sea captain who had been smashed up—to his shame!—by a taxicab on the streets of Paris, and who gloried in the name of Tommy O'Brien—had said that his brother owned a coal mine.

Sam limped out to the near-by telephone exchange, located a mining company in Bluefield, West Virginia, which resembled in name the company he thought he remembered, put in a long-distance call, and, after some shouting, succeeded in learning that he was talking to Thomas O'Brien's brother, Will.

"I know you," Will shouted. "Tom talked a lot about you. Glad to learn you're on your feet again. Can you hear me? I say Tom is off on a trip, as chipper as ever. Hello! Well, I won't keep on gabbing on your time, Sam, old boy. Next time Tom comes back—he's expected at Norfolk some time the end of next month—I'll tell him where you are, and he'll sure be tickled to run up and see you. Anything I can do for you, Sam, in the meantime?"

"Yes," said Sam. "I want to buy some coal for export."

"You do? Well, we sure have got it, son. A big gas and traction company up in Cleveland laid down on us to the tune of fifty thousand tons. We'd sure like to get some of that export stuff, if the fancy prices I hear about are true."

"All right," Sam had shouted. "I'll find you some orders and call you back. Be sure and tell Tom where I am!"

And that very day, on going back to the office, he located a man who knew a man who wanted to buy five thousand tons for some people who knew some European buyers.

Sam sold it to him. The buyers seemed to expect as a matter of course that he would not disclose the name of his mine, so he made the sale in his own name. It did not occur to him that they gave his signature respect because the name "Whipple" was on the door and on the stationery of Myerman, Staub and Whipple. Sam made the sale as a

principal but got his share of the commission, which was split ten ways. He passed the order along to Will O'Brien for delivery and found himself five hundred dollars richer.

"You still got that fifty thousand tons, Will?"

"That and more," Will had answered.

Sam had limped out of the telephone booth and had gone up to call upon Messrs. Myerman and Staub.

"I think you said, Mr. Myerman, that if I found any coal, you'd buy it. Well, I've found it."

"How much you got?" Mr. Myerman pushed the cigar to one side of his cheek and swung his tan Oxfords to the floor. This sounded like business.

"How much do you want?" asked Sam. Both Mr. Myerman and Mr. Staub laughed uproariously.

"Well," spluttered Mr. Myerman, wiping his close-set blue eyes and blowing his broken nose, "to tell you the truth, all we need is about fifty thousand tons. What's more, we need it bad. We've got two men out in the fields hunting for it, and it ain't to be had. The hell of it is, we got a foreign government contract, and we've put up forfeits."

"I can sell you that fifty thousand tons," said Sam.

"Listen, Sam," replied Mr. Myerman, after he and Staub had finished laughing. "You only been in this game a short time and you've been letting one of these Broadway brokers, with a coal mine in his derby, fill you full of bull. I tell you, I wouldn't buy that much coal from J. P. Morgan & Co. unless they put up a ten-thousand guarantee to load the first cargo not later than the tenth of next month."

"I'll put up that ten-thousand guarantee, Mr. Myerman. In an hour I'll be back here with the money."

An hour later, fresh from an interview with his sister and a visit to the savings bank, Sam dragged his left leg briskly into the partnership's private office.

"We got our lawyer," said Mr. Myerman, succulently indicating the little hawk-faced man. "The Myer-Stau Trading Corporation will buy this from you, and give you a receipt for your guarantee. Here's the purchase contract, usual terms. We run each of these big deals through a separate corporation—don't we, Staub?"

"That's all right," agreed Sam, who had been thinking of his duties toward Tom O'Brien's brother. "But I've got to protect the mine. If prices dropped, and this corporation were buying this coal on speculation, the mine might be left holding the bag."

Mr. Myerman looked at Mr. Staub's floury face.

"Show him the contract," said Staub.

And Mr. Myerman, after a visit to the iron safe in the corner by the radiator, showed Sam Whipple the contract they had with a big South American government for fifty thousand tons of coal. It was on legal cap, bound in blue covers, and decorated generously with seals, including a couple of ribbons at the bottom. Mr. Myerman handled it tenderly and with reverence.

"There's the joker!" exclaimed Mr. Myerman, indicating the clause which required the first shipment not later than noon of the tenth of next month. "We don't ship then and they can cancel the whole contract and collect our forfeit, which I don't mind telling you is something heavy. And the other four shipment dates, the same. If anybody tries to tell you it's easy to skin them South Americans, you tell 'em I say they're cuckoo. Say! Sam's got the money all right—in cash, too!"

The papers were duly signed; and sealed by Mr. Staub with a squeeze seal which he selected from a group of similar ones in a bottom drawer of his desk. Hands were shaken.

"I hope you got a good profit in it for yourself, Sam," added Mr. Myerman. "Staub wanted me to wait and see if prices didn't drop next week and coal loosen up on account of the British prime minister's speech. But I told him I'd rather have it tied up tight right now. These coal prices are too uncertain."

In the privacy of a telephone booth at the cigar store downstairs, Sam called up Will O'Brien at Bluefield, West Virginia. It was after six o'clock, and the mine office apparently was closed for the day, for he got no answer. The next morning early he called from his apartment and learned that Will O'Brien had gone off for the week-end and would not return until Monday. The mine office, however, told him no one was authorized to make sales except Will, so Sam felt safe until Monday. He spent the week-end driving his sister through the sunny hills of Westchester in a hired car. He hadn't been to see Lucy Terrill since he had found out that, instead of being comfortably off, as he had expected, he was poor. He was nearly down and out.

Monday morning, early, he called up the coal fields again, to learn that Will O'Brien had telegraphed that he wouldn't be back from his week-end until Tuesday noon. Sam was considering taking a train immediately for Bluefield and running Will O'Brien down, when his attention was caught by a headline in the newspaper which he was mechanically opening as he rode downtown in the surface car. The prime minister's speech on the method newly proposed for settling the coal miner's strike had reverberated throughout the commercial world. The price of export bituminous at Hampton Roads had dropped twenty-five cents per ton on Saturday.

During this day at the office, Sam found a change in the coal situation. None of the brokers calling at the office was looking now for coal. Brokers called in considerable numbers, but they had coal to sell. Mines which had been holding out for even higher than the current exorbitant prices now had abruptly decided to be more reasonable. There was less reluctance among brokers to split commissions. By Monday evening the price of export bituminous was fifty cents less than it had been on Friday last.

That evening, when Sam pulled on his old felt hat and picked up his cane to start uptown, he arrived at a definite decision. Instead of passing the order on to the mine and taking a commission, he determined to handle the whole transaction himself. If he bought the coal at the present market, he would have a profit of fifty cents per ton, or twenty-five thousand dollars. It was a desperate chance for a big prize.

He was not surprised that his hands trembled on his cane as he rode uptown on the surface car. For with the first decision had come a second. He wouldn't place the order immediately. He would see if prices fell further. Unless a marked change occurred in the outlook, he would not buy the coal until he received from Messrs. Myerman and Staub instructions to load the ship that was to sail on the tenth. And even then he might buy only the first ten thousand tons.

But Myerman and Staub didn't give him instruction to load.

The first of the month came; then the fifth. The coal could be bought and loaded in twenty-four hours, but Myerman and Staub's government contract provided that the ship must sail not later than noon of the tenth, and any slip-up—in view of the slump in prices—would see the contract canceled. When the morning of the eighth came, with no order from the partners, Sam sent them word by the pimply lad that he

would like to see them. They sent back the message that they were very busy. His efforts to see them during the preceding week had met with the same response. And coal prices had gone off a dollar.

"Mr. Whipple, will you help check this charter party?"

This was not an unusual request from the blond stenographer. While she read aloud from her stenographic notes, Sam followed his finger down the printed form and saw that the items which she had typewritten corresponded. A prickle of nerves ran through his blood before he was halfway down the first page. The charter party was with the owners of a steamer called *The Golden Gulf*. It called for the carrying of ten thousand tons of bituminous coal from Hampton Roads to Buenos Aires, the vessel to sail not later than noon of the tenth.

Sam Whipple lifted himself to his feet, and before the pimply lad could intervene, opened the heavy oak door and entered the private office. Mr. Myerman's close-set, pale-blue eyes glared at him angrily over the soles of his tan Oxfords on the desk. Mr. Staub's dull, floury countenance achieved a startled expression beneath the butter-colored pompadour.

"I want to know when you gentlemen are going to give me loading instructions on the first ten thousand tons," said Sam.

"What the hell you mean by busting in here like this?" cried Mr. Myerman, jumping to his feet. He pulled his cuffs up threateningly as he moved on the intruder. "You get t' hell out!"

"I have a contract with you," replied Sam.

"You got a contract with the Myer-Stau Trading Company," Mr. Myerman shouted. "That company went blooey weeks ago. Don't you never read the bankruptcy notices? Now you get out!"

"You bought fifty thousand tons of coal from me," answered Sam, trying to keep his voice steady. "At the present market, I've got a profit in it of fifty thousand dollars. You're trying to get that profit for yourself."

"Git out, I told you!" The man was hustling him to the door. "Now you git, and stay!"

Myerman pulled the door open and shoved Sam through so violently that his weak leg collapsed. He fell, wrenching his spine, and lay there twitching and helpless, as Mr. Myerman violently slammed the door.

The blond stenographer and the clerk helped him into a chair and brought him a glass of water. They wanted to phone for a doctor, because his face was so white; but after a few minutes he lifted himself painfully to his feet and dragged himself out into the corridor and to the elevator. Mr. Irwin Terrill, Lucy's father, had been his father's lawyer; his office was but a block away. After a walk which seemed ages long, and a giddy rise in an elevator, he was admitted presently into the sedate office of a courtly, antique gentleman with snow-white hair and Vandyke beard.

"My advice to you, my son," said Mr. Terrill kindly, after he had heard Sam's story and had received the information for which he had dispatched two young assistants, "is that you go home and to bed. You're looking pretty peaked. It seems obvious that these persons, Myerman and Staub, purchased your coal through this dummy corporation so as to avoid any personal responsibility in the event they desired to void the contract. Why haven't you been out to see us lately, Sam?"

"Can't I attach their cargo of coal?" asked Sam, swallowing.

"Before it is loaded, it isn't theirs," replied the attorney; "and after it is

loaded they will probably arrange it so that it is the property of their consignee. I have found that persons of their sort usually act upon the advice of experienced counsel. However, that may involve a point of maritime law, with which I am not familiar. Furthermore, the coal will be loaded in Virginia, and it is possible that there may be a State law affecting the matter. I will give you the name of our correspondents at Norfolk—they knew your father, too, my boy—and you can take it up with them if you wish."

Sam braced the plaster cast hard against the chair back, to rest his aching spine, and eased his left knee over his right.

"You say father told you he had an equity of at least forty thousand in the partnership, Mr. Terrill?"

"Yes, Sam, a week before he was stricken. But as I have told you, the fact that you accepted, and thereafter cashed, or deposited to your credit in the bank, the checks which they gave you, would stop you, I am afraid, from suing them now. You say the checks were indorsed with a full release of all claims against the partners, jointly and severally, in consideration of free office rent and one thousand dollars? Are you sure that is correct?"

"Yes, sir, that's right." Sam ran his fingers through his tousled hair, moistened his dry lips. "Thank you, sir. I'll take the name of those Norfolk lawyers, please. Can't do any harm to try 'em. Good-day, sir."

Sam didn't want to go home. His sister could tell at once that something was wrong, and she would worry. So he telephoned her that he had to go to Norfolk that night on business. He had dinner alone in the railroad station, and took the nine-o'clock sleeper. He was routed out of his berth at five thirty in the morning at Cape Charles for a three-hour trip across the sunny waters of Hampton Roads to Norfolk. Here he limped at once to the office of the attorneys.

"We can put a libel on the cargo as soon as it's loaded," said the senior member of the firm, a stout, affable Virginian, "but all the captain has to do, if he wants to, is pull up anchor and sail. Of course, if the ship *was* delayed —that size ship runs a high daily demurrage—you'd be in for a suit for damages, most likely, and you'd have to put up a bond."

"I'm not looking for a damage suit," said Sam, "but I wish you'd stick the libel on as soon as the ship's loaded. That's our best play."

The attorney informed him that he could catch a New York train, via Richmond, in an hour. After a little more conversation about the details of the libel, Sam limped out in search of a cab. He had found one, and was just opening the door, when he heard a shout and turned to find a stalwart, weather-reddened man in black approaching him with open arms.

There was no mistaking that outdoor grin, those squinting, sea-blue eyes, those wide shoulders, and that snub nose; they could belong only to Tom O'Brien. The two hadn't seen each other since their farewell in the Paris hospital. They hugged each other, then shook hands.

"Sure am glad to see you're out of dry-dock, Sam," said Tom, "and able to navigate under your own steam. How's everything, anyhow? Can't you come on down to the boat with me? I've got a bottle of old White Horse in the locker."

"Nothing I'd rather do, Tom, but I'm mixed up in a business mess and am on my way right now to the train."

"Anything I can do? I've got a couple of thousand laid by."

"No, Tom. Thanks just the same. It's like this." And he gave him a brief summary of the matter.

"There are more sharks on land than in the water," said Tom O'Brien. "You say that fellow's name is Myerman? Has he got a comb of hair a bit redder than mine? He has?" The sea captain's muscular jaw clicked shut and he looked serious. "Well, Sam, if you're going to make that train, you'd better shove off. I'm sailing in a day or so, but next time I'm in port, I'll run up to see you. Meanwhile, good luck!"

Sam caught the train and, after changing in Richmond, arrived in New York that evening after dinner. At the apartment he found a note from his sister, telling him that she had gone to spend the night with Lucy Terrill. He was worn out and aching all over, so he took a hot bath and turned in.

It was only eight o'clock the next morning, however, when the telephone began to ring frenziedly.

"Is this you, Mr. Whipple? This is Mr. Brill—Mr. Myerman's lawyer. I remember you very pleasantly. Say, Mr. Whipple, Mr. Myerman got me out of bed this morning to tell me that there's a libel laid against *The Golden Gulf,* and he's afraid it may hold the boat till after noon to-day. If it does, you will be in for a big damage suit, Mr. Whipple. I just thought I'd tell you. And, oh, yes, by the way—of course that deposit of ten thousand which you made with the Myer-Stau Corporation as security will be repaid to you, you know. I believe Mr. Myerman told you that."

"No, Mr. Myerman neglected to tell me that," said Sam. "I'll have to get you to excuse me now. I'm sleepy."

He hung up, but in five minutes the phone was ringing.

"I just want to tell you, Mr. Whipple —for your own good, Mr. Whipple— that you can't put a libel on this cargo. It don't belong to Myerman and Staub, it belongs to their consignees. I just want to keep you out of trouble."

"Well, if I can't put it on," Sam answered, yawning, "I can't put it on. I thank you for your interest in my welfare."

He hung up again, and when a few minutes later the telephone began ringing steadily, he pulled a pillow over his head and dozed off. He was really quite exhausted, he thought sleepily, after Mr. Myerman's ministrations and the long train trips. He was dreaming of having found a gulf full of molten gold, and of calling up Lucy Terrill on the strength of it, when he was awakened by the persistent ringing of the front-door bell, accompanied by an equally persistent knocking.

He thrust his feet into slippers, and staggered drowsily down the hall. When he opened the door, Mr. Brill, Mr. Myerman and Mr. Staub surged in. Each had a watch face up on the palm of his hand.

"Now, you look here, Sam Whipple!" cried Mr. Myerman. His face was very red and moist, and he had no cigar. Worry was written in his face.

"Shut up, and let Brill talk to him!" Mr. Staub snapped. Mr. Staub's floury face was somewhat blotched, and he, too, was perspiring freely.

"There's only two hours left!" cried Mr. Myerman.

"Two hours to what?" Sam inquired.

"Two hours to noon!" Myerman shouted, ignoring Staub's tugs at his arm. "Two hours for you to lift that libel!"

"But Mr. Brill told me I couldn't libel the ship!"

"You can't!" cried Mr. Myerman, wringing his hands and jumping up and down. "You can't! That's it!"

"I'm afraid I don't quite follow you," said Sam.

"You can't," Mr. Myerman repeated, "but that sea captain feller! That red face——"

"The point is," Mr. Brill put in hurriedly, "that the captain of *The Golden*

Gulf, an obstinate fellow by the name of O'Brien, has accepted service of the libel and contends that he is afraid to sail without a release."

"I see," said Sam Whipple. "And if the boat doesn't sail by noon, Mr. Myerman and Mr. Staub will have their contract canceled and lose the heavy forfeits they have put up. Too bad!"

"Don't laugh!" begged Mr. Myerman. "They's only a hour and fifty minutes now. Do something! Do something!"

"At any rate," Sam agreed, "I will discuss the matter with you, just as soon as I've had a bath and dressed."

"A bath?" exclaimed Mr. Myerman. "You don't need no bath!"

"And a shave," Sam added, and left them.

"Now," he said, when he emerged presently into the sitting room and the three visitors sprang to their feet, watches in hand, "as soon as I have had a little breakfast——"

"Breakfast!" protested Myerman and Staub in chorus.

"Breakfast," repeated Sam firmly, as he selected a cane from the stand, pulled on his old felt hat, and—followed by the three agitated ones—dragged his lame foot out into the sun of the morning and down the street to a restaurant.

"Orange juice, four-minute eggs, toast and coffee," he told the waiter. "For one. And these gentlemen are in a hurry."

The gentlemen sat down, looking at their watches.

"Listen, Sam," wheedled Mr. Myerman in a desperate voice. "We are friends, ain't we? Mr. Brill told you you get back that ten thousand. Tell you what, we going to give you a ten-cents-per-ton commission, too. That's five thousand."

"I think I'd like some crisp bacon, too," Sam ordered.

"This is no time to bargain," put in Mr. Staub, as he mopped his heavy jowls. "Tell us, Sam, what you want."

"I'm not asking for anything," said Sam, sipping the orange juice. "But of course, as we are all friends, you people will want me to get what is fairly coming to me."

"Oh, sure! sure!" said Myerman.

"I can buy fifty thousand tons of coal to-day at a profit of a dollar," Sam continued; and then stopped to break an egg. "That's fifty thousand. Then there's ten thousand which I deposited with you. That makes sixty. And my father's share in the partnership assets is forty thousand more."

"A hundred thousand!" gasped Myerman. "He's crazy!"

"We got sixty minutes yet," snapped Mr. Brill. "The Argentine representative is going to be on the Lambert's Point dock with a watch and a notary public in an hour. You can't afford to lose your profit, and you don't lose anything by giving Sam his." Mr. Brill winked.

"You make him out a check, Staub."

"You make it out, Myerman."

The two partners flopped open their check books and made out each a check for fifty thousand dollars, which they tendered to Sam.

"These will have to be certified, of course," said Sam.

"Only sixty minutes!" wailed Myerman. "He's crazy!"

Nevertheless, two minutes later they were tearing over to Broadway in a taxicab, and in ten minutes more were at the bank, where in another five minutes the checks were certified.

"Now as soon as I deposit these," said Sam cheerfully.

The partners and their lawyer were too frazzled to object. They tagged him to the teller's window and didn't even try to hurry him when he dragged his lame foot leisurely across the street and into the building to their offices. Sam sat down at his desk, after looking

casually at a telegram and a couple of letters, and took up the telephone.

"Twenty-eight minutes!" breathed Mr. Myerman piously.

Sam gave central Lucy Terrill's number.

"Hello! Hello, is this you, Lucy? This is Sam. No, I know I haven't, but I am calling you now. I want to see you about something important. I want to know if you are going to be home tonight. That's fine. Eight thirty."

This was more than Mr. Myerman could stand. He took his head in his hands and beat it against the wall.

"You gentlemen are allowing yourselves to become unnecessarily concerned," remarked Sam as he gathered up from his desk the keepsakes which he had brought from his father's desk in the other office. He lifted himself to his feet, pulled on the old slouch hat. "You seem to be overlooking the fact that this is all among friends."

He realized, with a wave of exultation, that in spite of the fatigue and turmoil his nerves were as cool as steel.

"I had no intention of holding the boat beyond noon." Sam picked up his cane. "I didn't want to have a countersuit for damages. Besides, of course, I could hold up any later shipment, if need be. Here, you see, is a wire from my attorney at Norfolk, saying the libel was lifted at ten thirty, as I instructed."

Mr. Myerman, Mr. Staub and Mr. Brill stood transfixed as Sam Whipple crossed the room and passed out of the office. They listened in silence as from the corridor echoed the diminishing tap of his cane and the fading drag of his game foot over the flags.

"A fine friend *he* turned out to be!" cried Mr. Myerman.

BROWN BEARS—AND GHOSTS!

FROM Lituya Bay, the T-shaped harbor on the Alaskan Gulf, comes the story that Alaskan brown bears have taken possession of the ghost city there—the community that once was peopled by enthusiastic miners on the hunt for gold.

The bay is extremely difficult to enter, it being sought principally as a storm refuge; but at storm time it is most inaccessible, as the waves break across the entrance. LaPerouse, the famous French explorer, first noted this when he entered the place years ago—claiming its beauty rivaled his own Toulon. He claimed the section as France's, and named Lituya Bay the "Port de Français." He lost several men from his boat in the breakers. Since then halibut boats and others have been wrecked, some with loss of life, in the same section.

The community was abandoned twenty-two years ago, largely because of the difficulty found in entering the beautiful harbor. The cabins still contain furniture, even pictures, just as they were left by the miners. And the brown bears are there in such droves that experienced hunters do not molest them; and as a result the bears do not attack the men. It is said that a veritable army would be needed to combat the beasts.

Acre upon acre of wild strawberry vines dot the region, set off colorfully with a background of tall, straight timber. The district is said to be one of the best in the southern section of the territory for agriculture.

A Chat With You

TELL us," writes Daniel Mearson, of Lebanon, Pennsylvania, "something about the writers who help to make THE POPULAR. We like their stories, and we would like to hear something about them personally."

All right. In the present number we open with Mr. J. H. Greene. Born in Australia, a gold miner, a globe-trotter, an actor—his real gift, finally discovered, is writing good stories.

A. M. Chisholm, a ranchman, a hunter, and outdoor man all his life, is living an outdoor gentleman's life in the Far Northwest. Besides writing some of the best short stories and novels published to-day, he raises Chesapeake dogs. Do you know the breed? Part Newfoundland, part spaniel, they are the only definitely authentic breed of dogs to have originated naturally on this continent. We are not excepting the Boston terrier, for that is an artificial, man-made dog. The tale of the origin of the Chesapeakes is that a ship from Newfoundland ran ashore on the old eastern shore of Chesapeake Bay and some of the big black dogs interbred with the native dogs. Be that as it may, the Chesapeake is about the best retriever in the world.

* * * *

AS for Harry Knibbs, who comes next: Like many old Westerners he began life in the East, but kept going West. He was a telegraph operator for a while and many other things. The tale of his adventures would make a good story. Theodore Roberts, formerly an officer in the British army, belongs to a family very distinguished in eastern Canada. Idwal Jones was born in Wales, but has spent recent years in California as a dramatic critic. He is on his way to Europe at present. Here is a letter from him, dated in Costa Rica:

"Back to more or less civilization. I have been in San Salvador, which is a pleasant city, much like Demerara in architecture. The lower classes are dressed in singlet, sombrero and trousers, with ox goads or machetes, the women framed languidly in indigo doorways, and all pretty much as it was in 1830. I stayed at the house of a delightful old dowager who lives in the ormolu-and-plush style of the Queen of Württemberg in 1881. She had Louis Quatorze cabinets in her kitchen, a huge safe in her bedroom and an ebony cot with gigantic silver claws, and a stuffed alligator before her prie-dieu. Barefooted servants pattered all through the house, which was laid in mosaic most beautifully; and, machete at side, carried the dishes to the dining room. Flounder Béarnaise among other things and magnums of champagne. Then she had two marimbas to pound out 'Bye-bye Blackbird' and 'Valencia' while we dined.

"I climbed three volcanoes and camped a lot of the time with Indians. I think I have material for a good novel. Their religious customs are most peculiar, and almost as interesting as those of the Indians of Guatemala who build their shrines on the slopes of volcanoes."

* * * *

THEN we come to Fred MacIsaac. He grew up in Boston. He went to Harvard; he wrote dramatic criticism for the Boston papers. He is the only man we ever knew who was successful

in putting on grand opera in the open air. He did it on a shoe string and he got away with it. Is it any wonder he is a good writer and has interesting stories to tell? By the way, we hope to get him to do some more Peter Pratt stories one of these days. He chopped that series off too short, in our opinion, but Mr. MacIsaac will not write a story unless he has a good one to tell.

Robert McBlair first saw the light of day in Virginia. He was in the lumber business before he wrote for us. He knows a lot about the lumber business, but more about writing.

* * * *

MOST good stories come from things that have actually happened, and most authors have lived lives that would be stories in themselves.

Shakespeare got into trouble in his Stratford home and went to London to hold horses at stage doors and finally to become a strolling player. Cervantes, author of "Don Quixote," was a soldier, was captured by the Moors and sent to the galleys, all before he wrote a line. Dickens worked as a boy in a boot-blacking factory, and afterward was an expert stenographer taking down Parliamentary debates. The author of "Ben-Hur," Lew Wallace, was a general in the Union army during the Civil War. Dumas lived as turbulent and romantic a life as any of his heroes of fiction. Stevenson's life reads like a novel, as does that of Mark Twain. To write good stories it is best perhaps to live them first. The writing of them is a gift.

THE POPULAR

In the Next Issue, January 14, 1928

North-woods Stuff — HOLMAN DAY
A Novel

Bandy — HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

Haywire — B. M. BOWER
A Five-part Story—Part I

Leguerre of the Lost Division (Two Birds) — HOWARD FITZALAN

The Jonah Leg — ERNEST DOUGLAS

The Last Atlantide — FRED MacISAAC
A Six-part Story—Part V

A Matter of Detail — JAMES SAYRE PICKERING

A Chat with You — THE EDITOR

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