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JUNE 7,
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LIVE CARGO
BY
FRANCIS LYNDE
COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE



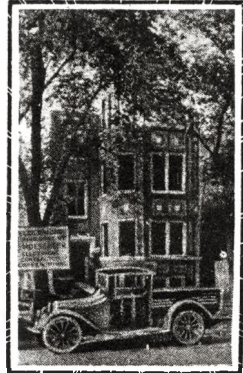
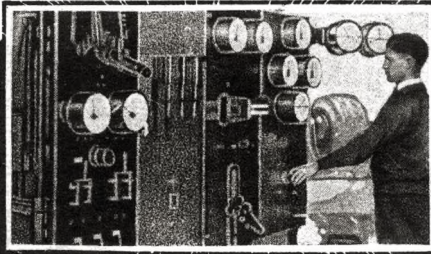
Lawrence
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JUNE 7, 1926
VOL. LXXX, No. 4

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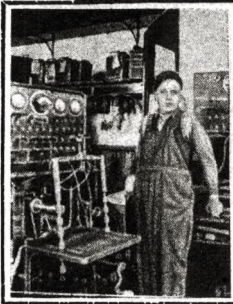
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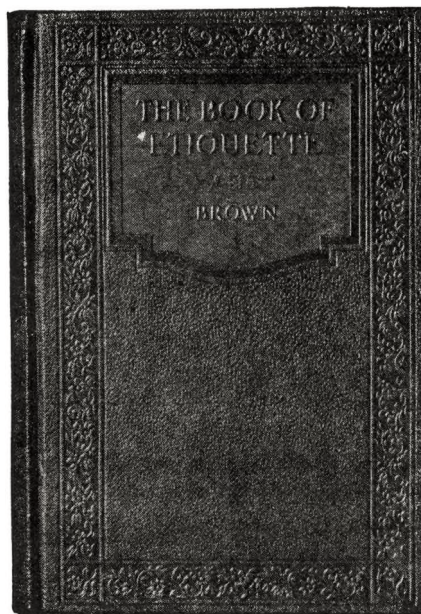
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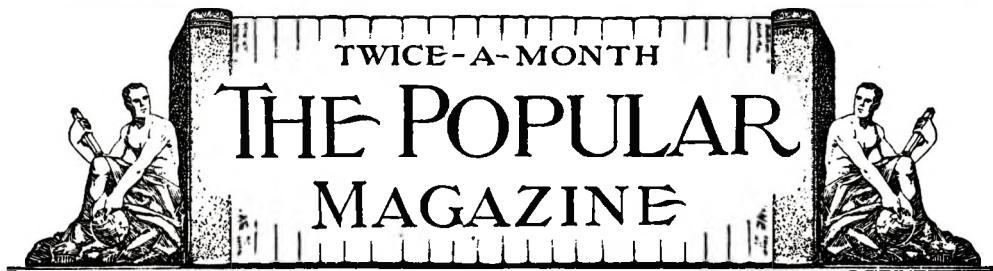
STREET & SMITH CORP., 79 Seventh Ave., New York

A complete book by Ellery H. Clark, called "The Lost Galleon," will be published in the next issue of THE POPULAR. It is an adventure story, a mystery story, and a search-for-treasure story—and you'll get it all in the next issue of the magazine. Tell your news dealer to put aside a copy for you.

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Twice-a-month publication issued by Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York. Ormond G. Smith, President; George C. Smith, Vice President and Treasurer; George C. Smith, Jr., Vice President; Ormond V. Gould, Secretary. Copyright, 1926, by Street & Smith Corporation, New York, Copyright, 1926, by Street & Smith Corporation, Great Britain. All Rights Reserved. Publishers everywhere are cautioned against using any of the contents of this magazine either wholly or in part. Entered as Second-class Matter, September 20, 1909, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian Subscription, \$4.72. Foreign, \$5.44.

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"We novelists are the showmen of life," said a famous English writer once, putting in other words Shakespeare's comment on holding the mirror up to nature; and to be sure it is the writing people who show us how thrilling a thing life can be. They can come with their little words on paper into our commonplace surroundings and change drab existence into glorious adventure. They can take us away with them on desperate affairs, send us to face the most overwhelming odds, give us romance within book covers that transforms all our workaday world.

It is sheer nonsense to say that we Americans are not romantic, that we spend all our time in pursuit of the almighty dollar. As a matter of fact, we are the most romantic of all peoples on the face of the earth to-day. Compared with us, most Europeans are a skeptical, cold, materialistic breed. It may be because we are younger than Europe, because it is still possible for us to cherish the illusions of youth.

Whatever the cause, it is true that we sit at the feet of our story-tellers and listen to their romancing, just as little children gather round some beloved maker of magic.

This is nothing to be ashamed of. We have our achievements in the world of material things. We are unsurpassed in the matter of industry, of organization, of invention. Ours is the right, then, to dream a little, if we will, to find in good fiction escape from modern struggle and strife.

To meet the need that is in all of us for romance, a great publishing house has called on the best of the fiction writers of the day, giving them free play to let their fancy wander, asking that they tell us stories that will hold us in their spell.

Here are reviewed some of the most recent books which that house has published. They are books about the great West, books of mystery, fine, clean love stories. They are Chelsea House books, your guarantee of good reading. The four mentioned here may be had from any reputable bookseller in your neighborhood. Ask your dealer or write to Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, for a complete list of these books.



WANDA OF THE WHITE SAGE, by Roy Ulrich. Price 75 cents. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

Continued on 2nd page following

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements



The Cruise of the Colleen Bawn By Frank Carruthers

Author of
'Terror Island.'

Shanghaied!

Certain big business interests wanted Sid Livingston out of the way for a while. That was how he came to be shanghaied on board the clipper-built schooner, *Colleen Bawn*, for a voyage to the Pribilof Islands, in Bering Sea.

As you follow Sid Livingston in his adventures, you have the sense of being at sea; you live with the scoundrelly crew of the *Colleen Bawn*; the tang of the ocean brine is in your nostrils; the spindrift lashes your face; you feel the heave and surge of the deck beneath your feet. You participate in Livingston's desperate perils and his attempt at escape—one of the most dramatic episodes in sea fiction.

Glorious Adventure

fills the pages of "The Cruise of the *Colleen Bawn*"—adventure that will make the blood run fast and cause the pulse to quicken, that will set the nerves atingle.

Readers who like a good sea yarn will be delighted with this work of Frank Carruthers. It has all the thrill of an old-time pirate romance, with the novelty of being laid at the present time. The story is filled with drama, action, and tense situations. Men are tested by the sea as by no other element. In its grip, weaklings rise to the heights of heroism, while physical giants quail before its terrors. Frank Carruthers has made a fine contribution to the literature of the sea in writing "The Cruise of the *Colleen Bawn*."

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AFTER THE BOOK HAS BEEN LAID ASIDE

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Into a boarding house, where young Dan Chadwick was dreaming dreams of high adventure, walked a beautiful girl—a stranger to Dan, though she said she knew him.

Before they had spoken together for five minutes, she offered Dan a job that carried with it a retaining fee of \$25,000 a year and all the adventure he wanted. Then, before he could catch his breath, she bluntly informed him that part of the job was to marry her.

Mr. Ulrich in this fast-moving story whirls his readers into one amazing situation after another. If you like books with real pace and go to them, "Wanda of the White Sage" was written for you. It is a love and adventure story of the finest type, one that I have no hesitancy in recommending to the most "choosy" of my readers.



MR. CHANG OF SCOTLAND YARD, by A. E. Apple. Price 75 cents. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

"A murder without a motive is the height of stupidity," thus spoke the remarkable Mr. Chang when finally his pursuers caught up with him. But there were many real motives behind certain of the strange deeds of Mr. Chang that were far from stupid. The story of the unraveling of these motives that set into action this debonair, quick-thinking Oriental is a fascinating one. How well Mr. Apple tells it! He leads you on from one exciting scene to another in masterly style. He makes you hate and admire and almost respect his outstanding character. For those whose appetite for detective stories has become a bit jaded, I recommend "Mr. Chang of Scotland Yard" as a first-class fillip.

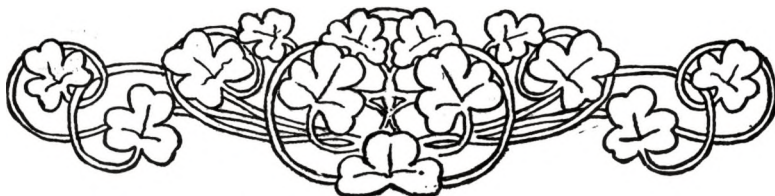
BACK OF BEYOND, an Adventure Story, by Ethel Smith Dorrance and James French Dorrance. Price 75 cents. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

Do you know what a "chechahco" is? Not to keep you in suspense, it is the Yukon expression for tenderfoot; and Doctor Kirkland and his daughter were all of that. Otherwise, they would never have insisted on pushing on to Back of Beyond Valley in the middle of a raging Yukon winter. No one could dissuade them, however, and the adventures that befell them make a thrilling story of the great North, the sort of yarn that you like to read stretched out in comfort away from the heat of an approaching summer. The book is the tale of as intricate a crime as ever the Canadian Mounted were called on to solve. How well they did the job is for you to say. I think you will agree at the end that here is a smashing and unusual story of real folks in a real situation.



THE WAGON BOSS, a Western Story, by Emart Kinsburn. Price 75 cents. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

Those who have read Emart Kinsburn's "Boss of Camp Four" will remember a certain delightful character in that book called Chet Fanning. Those who have never met Chet now have the chance to see him in very lively action. There's a conspiracy to ruin Chet's boss, the famous "Spookmule" Paxton, and Chet goes right after the conspirators. The result is a book that once more gives life and color to the picturesque scenes of the construction camps of the West. An unforgettable yarn that should be in your library.



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"I told him it wasn't too late if he would only make the start and he said he was going to send in one of those I. C. S. coupons right away.

"I hope he does, because an I. C. S. course is the very thing he needs to get out of the rut. I wouldn't be making anywhere near \$75 a week if I hadn't started to study just when I did."

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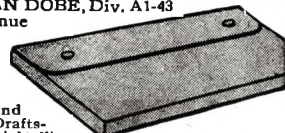
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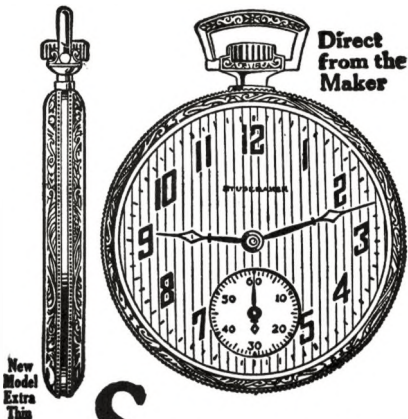
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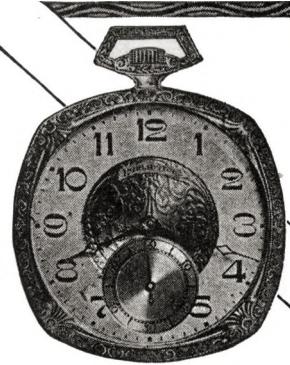
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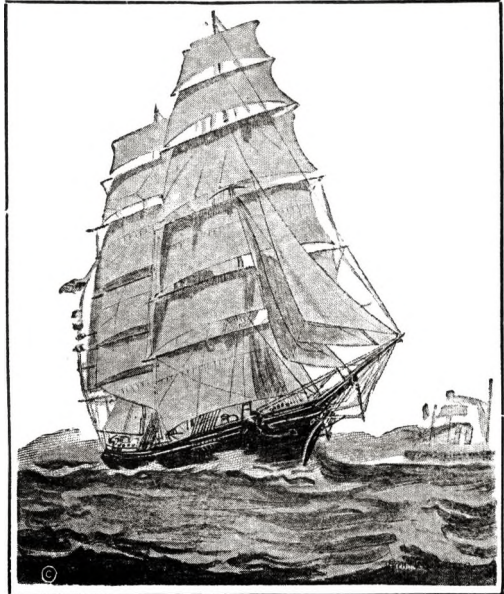
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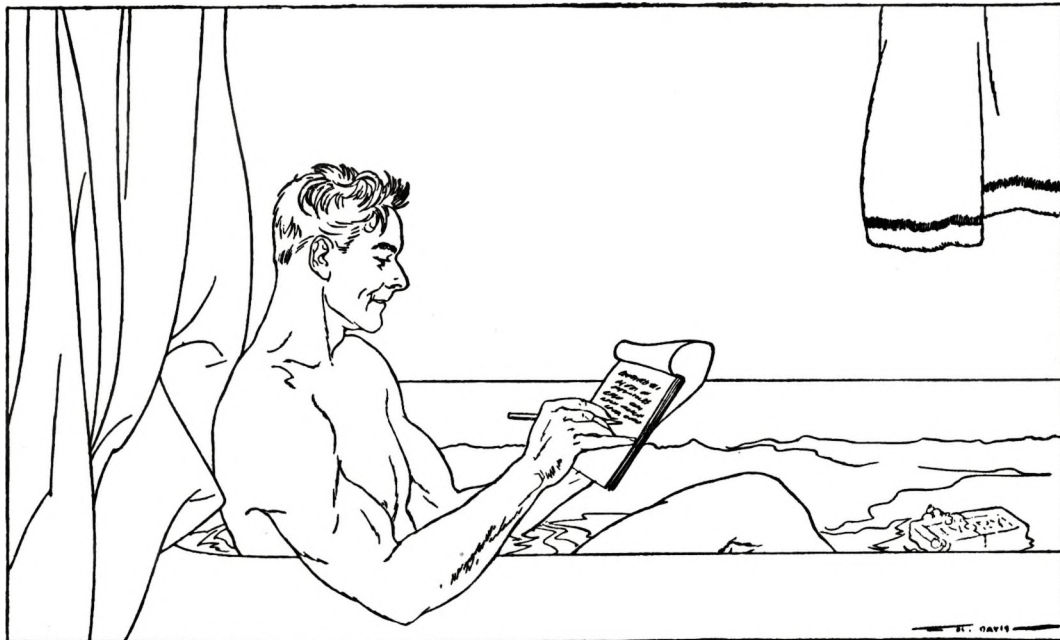
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1 If you waste 5 to 10 minutes in the morning chasing an elusive cake of sinker-soap along the tub-bottom, what happens to a soft-boiled egg for breakfast?

2 One man sings while he bathes; another sputters in wrath. What soap does each use, and why?

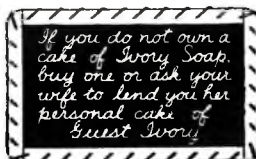
3 Of the 55 good reasons for using Ivory Soap in the bath, which comes next in importance after "It floats"?

4 Bathers for nearly fifty years have compared Ivory lather to (a) clouds, (b) foam, (c) whipped cream. Can you think of a better comparison? (A correct answer to this question insures a passing mark in the examination.)

5 If an airplane travels at the rate of 3 miles per minute, how much faster does Ivory lather rinse off?

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LXXX

JUNE 7, 1926

No. 4



Live Cargo

By Francis Lynde

Author of "The Shoestring Company, Limited," "Old Boreas Cuts the Cards," Etc.

Cuba has ever played a sinister part in history. Her position of easy isolation from the teeming mainlands of America has made of her swampy jungles a clearing house for contraband humanity. But a while ago it was a black African who stood upon her mangrove shores awaiting the short, tumultuous passage across to America and a life of bondage; and now the note has changed, and it is a European, who, overtopping his national quota, relies upon the hawklike smugglers' sloop to bring him to the land of opportunity.

CHAPTER I.

A QUESTION OF IDENTITY.

PETERSON sipped his black coffee and grinned across our table-for-two at me, remarking that the post-college years hadn't changed me any to speak of, that I was the same red-headed, impulsive fool I'd always been, especially where women were concerned.

"Why, you poor goof," he went on, "haven't I just been telling you that Havana is swamped with all sorts of foreign cast-offs trying to pry their way into the good old United States? I grant you the girl doesn't look the part; but, Lord, you can't tell anything by looks!"

It was this way. Two months earlier I had been pulled out of the home-plant engineering staff in Milwaukee

and sent to Cuba to boss the setting up of a big bill of machinery on a down-country sugar plantation. My job was finished, and I had reached Havana that afternoon and had made my preparations to take passage in the next day's United Fruit ship for New Orleans and home.

Peterson, resident agent for American Steel, and incidentally a college classmate of mine and the only American in the Cuban capital whom I really knew, had been telling me across our hotel dining table how Havana had become suddenly overrun with a horde of Europeans and Orientals, all trying to dodge the provisions of the new immigration act; the horde including a lot of—er—well, unchaperoned women from various and sundry European capitals.

To point the moral and adorn the tale, he had called my attention to a young woman sitting a couple of tables away on our left, saying that she was one of the unchaperoned. When I asked for particulars, he had given them. He had been in the American consulate the day before and had overheard the story which, as he phrased it, she was "trying to put across." She had admitted that she had lived practically all of her life in Roumania, but claimed to be the daughter of American parents, asserting that her father had been one of the American engineers who had gone over years before to develop the Roumanian oil fields.

Both of her parents had died in a cholera epidemic when she was a small child, and she had been adopted by a childless Roumanian couple. She had a Roumanian passport made out in the name of Mircea Brancovan, the surname being that of her Roumanian foster parents; but she insisted that her real name was Marcia Clemence.

So far, so good; but the chocking of the wheels, it seemed, came in the fact that her passport didn't have the visa

of our consul at her European port of embarkation. When asked to explain this, all she would say was that the consul wouldn't give her the visa.

I had been watching the girl while Peterson told the story, and his implication—that she was not what she ought to be, that she was one of the "horde," and that this was the reason why the consul had refused to O. K. her passport—didn't fit in—not a little bit! She was small, with dark hair and eyes—eyes that had long, curling lashes like those of a child—and she was pretty enough to quicken the tempo of a heart a good bit older and stiffer in its valves than mine was.

She was dressed quite plainly and was wearing a little pot hat that made her look still more like a child. Though she was sitting at a table with half a dozen others, it was perfectly evident that she was alone—in the sense that she didn't know any of her table mates.

AFTER Peterson had finished his story, I remarked that I was going to help the little one out of her tangle, if I could; and this was what had earned me the impulsive-fool epithet.

"What do you think you can do, anyway?" Peterson demanded. "Of course, I suppose you might contrive to smuggle her in, one way or another; but the immigration sleuths would promptly fire her back to the old country as soon as they got sight of her. Since she has been to the consul here, they've got her tabbed and catalogued as an 'undesirable,' and they'll be watching for her."

"I don't know yet what I'm going to do," I told him, "but it's a lead-pipe cinch that I'm not going to turn my back upon a fellow countrywoman in distress. She *is* in distress, isn't she? Didn't you say she cried when the consul turned her down?"

"Oh, that!" he grinned. "I'll admit she played her part letter-perfect; she's

a neat little actress, so far as that goes. Don't you know, I more than half believe if she could have spoken English without an accent, she'd have got by with her story of being the child of American parents? But her talk gave her away."

"Um!" said I. "How old did you say she was when her father and mother died?"

"She said she was five."

"Well, what would you expect of a child of five years, brought up in a foreign country in a family of foreigners? Wouldn't it be rather a wonder if such a child could speak any English at all?"

Peterson laughed. "You've got it bad, Larry, old son," he chuckled. "Go to it and burn your fingers, if the spirit moves you to. I know you too well to try to argue with you when you get set on running that red head of yours into a briar patch. But don't say I didn't try to tip you off!"

I didn't mind Bob Peterson's ragging; I'd had four years of it in college, and some since. I'm not saying that I hadn't earned it. Cold calculation, which seems to come so easily to some people, had been left out of the ingredients when I was put together, and I never could see just why, when a thing appears to be the one only right thing to do, a fellow should sit back and weigh the pros and cons and let "I dare not" wait upon "I would." That isn't the way the biggest things we know have got themselves done—not unless all history is a liar.

While Peterson was maundering on, I was studying the face of the little one at the other table. I couldn't see any Poppæa or Aspasia or any of the—er—unchaperoned women of history in that face. It was more like the face of a lovely child; just now the face of a bewildered and troubled child. Moreover, I noticed that she was making a sorry bluff at eating her dinner, and

what few adventuresses I have known have always had excellent appetites. Peterson passed me a cigar, but I didn't light it. I was waiting for the girl to finish and leave the dining room. Then I meant to follow her and butt in, man-fashion.

I didn't have to wait long. The waiter had brought her the Roman punch and black coffee, but she only toyed with both for a minute or so and then got up to go.

Peterson showed his teeth in his joshing grin. "That's your cue, Larry," he prompted. "If you get in over your head, yell for help and I'll throw you a rope."

I WASN'T more than a yard or two behind the girl when she went into the lobby, and in the short chase across the dining room I'd had a chance to see that her figure matched her face; all soft lines and easy curves to help out the childlike idea. In the lobby, I thought maybe she'd make a bolt for her room without giving me a chance to break in and say my few blunt words; instead, she turned aside into the little ground-floor reception parlor.

I strolled across the lobby and back a time or two, just to give her a few minutes to get settled, and then went in. She was alone in the stuffy little side parlor, sitting in a big chair, with an elbow resting on its padded arm and her chin propped in her palm, and the expression of her face made me think of a lost baby I'd once seen picked up in the busy street of a great city.

There didn't seem to be any chance to go at it by littles, so I didn't try the soft-pedal approach.

"Miss Clemence," I began, dragging up a chair to face her, "my name is Larry Kendall, and I have just found out that you are a countrywoman of mine and in some trouble. If I can help you over the bumps, I'm yours to command."

For half a second her face was a study for a painter. Only an inspired actress—which I was sure she wasn't—could have given such a faultless mirroring of surprise, astonishment and a lot of other emotions, if they weren't real.

"But—but how will you make to know anything about me, Mistare—Mistare"—she struggled with my name, but finally got it out as one long word—"Mistare Larrykendall?"

I explained briefly the how and why, telling her that a friend of mine had happened to be present when she had had her run-in with the consul, and that he had just now pointed her out to me in the hotel dining room.

She raised those dark, bewitching eyes to mine and said, with a little grimace, half funny and half pitiful: "Is it that all the world shall know how ver-y foolish I am?"

"Oh, no, nothing like that," I hastened to say, being considerably more than two thirds hypnotized by those intoxicating eyes—the most wonderful eyes I had ever looked into. "It was just a happen-so on the part of my friend. As I've said, he heard you talking to the American consul about your passport."

"He hears what I am trying to tell to the consul?"

"Yes—or part of it, anyway."

"It is all most true. I am American. I cannot make to speak the language ver-y good, but that is because I am living all my life in Roumania. So they will not believe me—any of them."

Here was my chance and I hopped in. "I'll believe you—every word," I said. "Go ahead and tell me the whole story, if you feel like it."

The story she told was just about as Peterson had repeated it to me, with some few amplifications. Her father and mother had gone to Roumania when she was only a baby in arms. She was their only child, and when she was

five years old, an epidemic had carried off both of her parents. She had been taken in and adopted by the Brancovans, who were of the "little nobles"—*petite noblesse* was what she said—and were at that time well to do. They had been good to her, as good as her own parents could have been; but now the war had left them old and broken and poor, so she must no longer burden them.

AFTER she had finished, I asked if she was going to relatives in the United States, and the question seemed to embarrass her rather curiously, for some reason.

"There is not anybody now but the—but the friend who sends me money to come," she said.

I suppose Peterson would have caught at her hesitation, and that rather suggestive word "friend." But I passed it up. I hadn't the right to pry into her affairs any deeper than she chose to let me.

"How about your passport?" I asked. "What was the trouble with that?"

"About that passport, I am foolish again. When Father Michael Brancovan gets it for me in Bucharest, he does not give my American name; he forgets, I think, and says 'Mircea Brancovan,' and so it is made that way. But when I am come at the seaport, the consul say, 'No, no more Roumanian can go to America now; the quota is full.' But I say, 'I am not Roumanian; I am American.' Then he say, 'You must show me.'"

"Then I show him all I can; some letters that will come to my father and mother long time ago, and at the last the writing that my father gets when he is through the college; what you call the-m-m"—patting her lips with a forefinger—"I can not remember how to say it in the American."

"His diploma?" I helped out. Her quaint stumblings in what should by

rights have been her mother tongue only made her the more adorable.

"That is it—the deep-lo-ma. I show him this deep-lo-ma and that makes it all ver-y bad. He say, quick: 'This is for Henry Clemence, and your name is not Clemence; it is Brancovan—it says so here in the passport.' Then I try to tell him how that is come, but I think I shall do it most badly, for when I am through, he gives me back the passport and say: 'No, I think now you are not a good girl; not the kind we want in America. I think these papers belong to somebody else.'"

THUS far, she hadn't named this wary consul, nor the port at which he was stationed, but I was mentally giving him his just dues. How any man serving under the American flag could look into those eyes with their child-like innocence—and curling lashes—and calmly accuse their possessor of lying and theft and maybe worse was altogether beyond my limited comprehension.

"That consul was a hard-boiled brute," I said. "What did you do then?"

"I am thinking I must go back to Bucharest, to Father and Mother Brancovan, and tell them I cannot be let to go to America. Then the steamship man is come to the hotel where I am stopping, and he tells me it is all so easy; that I shall go to Havana, and from Havana it is but such a little step to America. So I come."

"Another brute," I commented. "That steamship runner knew well enough you'd have precisely the same trouble here you were having in the old country. But the whole thing was started off on the wrong foot. Your parents were American and you were born in America. That being the case, you have the same right to enter that I have; that is, without any passport at all. If you had called yourself by

your right name, instead of the Roumanian one——"

"That is it!" she broke in eagerly. "It is all wrong from the first—from Bucharest. But Father Michael did not think, and I did not think; and when the name is written in the passport——"

"I see," I said. "You couldn't very well change over, after that. But now another thing: You registered when you came to this hotel—wrote your name in the hotel book. Which name did you use then?"

She made a little gesture of despair.

"What could I—when my passport says I am Mircea Brancovan?"

That was it; what could she? Of course, that made it all the worse. Without knowing very much about it, I took it for granted that our immigration authorities were on the job and were keeping track of the "undesirables." That being the case, they would know she had registered as Mircea Brancovan; and that fact, taken together with her stumblings in English, would stamp her as a Roumanian in spite of all she could say to the contrary.

"How about telegraphing your friend in the States, telling him how your passport has tangled you up?" I suggested.

Again, as at the former mention of this "friend," she seemed confused and embarrassed.

"I am more foolish than ever, now," she faltered, with the pretty eyes downcast. "I—I have lost his letters. I keep them here"—with a hand on her bosom—"but when I wish to show them to the consul, they are gone."

"Well, his letters needn't make any difference about telegraphing him," I said. "You know his name and address, don't you?"

"I know the name of the place where he live. I do not know how to speak it, but I can make the letters: B-r-e-w-

s-t-e-r-c-o-l-o-r-a-d-o," she spelled slowly.

I had to swallow a smile at the way she ran it all together as one word, just as she had my name.

"Oh, yes, Brewster, Colorado," I said, pronouncing it for her. "I have been there, put in a couple of months near there two summers ago, setting up the machinery in a cement plant. I am an engineer—as your father was, you know. What is your friend's name?"

Again she made the little gesture of despair.

"I am telling you that I am all the most foolish. I—I have forgotten his name. It is like a little child to do that, is it not—yes? I try and try, but I cannot make to remember. It is a ver-y long name."

Here was a mystery and a most astonishing one; that she should have a "friend" in the distant Colorado city with whom she had exchanged letters, and who had sent her money to pay her passage to America, and yet whose name she could not remember.

"What you need, Miss Clemence, is a friend present—not absent—and you have one," I said; and after we had talked a while longer, and she had shown me the old letters written years before from America to her father and mother—which, of course, didn't amount to anything as an identification for her—I asked her if she had nothing else in the way of documentary evidence.

She shook her head. "I have not anything, but the Bible of my mother."

"Any writing in it?" I asked.

"It will tell when my father and mother are married, and when I am born."

I asked her if she would mind showing me this Bible, and she went up to her room to get it. While she was gone, I had time to ask myself where I stood, though it was hardly necessary. She'd captured me, horse, foot

and artillery, and I would have staked all I had or ever hoped to have upon her truth and innocence, all the Peter-sons in the universe to the contrary notwithstanding. I *knew* she was telling the truth.

When she returned she handed me a small Oxford Bible in limp-leather binding and which bore all the proper marks of age and much handling. It had no blank leaves between the two Testaments for the recording of marriages and births and deaths, but a folded sheet of note paper had been pasted in for this purpose.

On this was recorded the marriage of Henry Clemence and Marcia Langworthy, with the date and place—Lima, Ohio—and under this the birth of a daughter, Marcia. On the fly leaf there was an inscription, showing that the book was a gift from Marcia Langworthy's minister in Lima.

"This ought to be enough to identify you," I said, returning the Bible and getting up to take my leave. "To-morrow morning, if you will let me have this Bible and your passport, I'll try to straighten things out for you. I am leaving to-morrow for New Orleans by the afternoon boat, and maybe it can be arranged so that we can go that far together."

"Oh!" she said, clasping her hands and looking up at me as if I were an angel with sprouting wings. "You are so good to poor me, Mistare Larrykendall. When you come to me a little while ago, I am not know what I shall do. I can never, never thank you enough!"

Her gratitude before the fact almost made me blush, and I hastened to say: "Here, hold on—I haven't done anything yet; I'm just willing, that's all. But I think we may be able to unwind some of the red tape, if we go at it right. Meanwhile, you get a good night's rest and don't worry, and we'll meet at breakfast and get a fresh start."

CHAPTER II.

NO ADMITTANCE.

WHEN I went down to breakfast the following morning I found my little lost sheep waiting for me in the ground-floor parlor and we went in together. Getting my first square look at her after we were seated across from each other at the small table Peterson and I had had the evening before, I saw at once that my offer of help and her night's rest hadn't taken all the troubled look out of her eyes.

"See here," I began, after the fruit had been served, "I'm afraid you didn't do as I told you to, after all—get a good night's rest."

A faint flush crept up under her eyes, and she made that queer, quaint little grimacing smile that was half comical and half pitiful.

"Am I like that? Everybody reads in my face what I am thinking?"

"Oh, I guess it isn't quite so bad as that!" I laughed. "Just the same, I can see that you are still worrying about something. Can't you tell me what it is?"

"This Co-lorado—is it ver-y far?" she asked.

"Quite some little way, yes," I said. Then I asked her if they didn't teach geography in the Roumanian schools.

"Oh, yes, the geography of Roumania and of Europe. But of the United States not so much."

"Well, then, let me see: Denver—that is the capital of Colorado—is something like two thousand miles from here, counting in the sea voyage to New Orleans; and Brewster is a couple of hundred miles or so beyond Denver."

"Oh—so far as that?" she exclaimed, with a little catching of her breath.

"We don't mind distances in our country—yours and mine," I told her, smiling at her European idea of metes and bounds. "There is an excellent train service from New Orleans. You

just get into your Pullman sleeper and make yourself comfortable and ride."

For some reason or other she seemed curiously unresponsive as I went on, telling her about the comfort of the fast trains, the cities she would pass through, and the vast plains and mountains of the farther West.

It was near the end of the meal, that I switched from the generalities to the particulars.

"See here," I said, "you're not eating enough to keep a chicken alive. It's running in my mind that you didn't tell me all of your troubles when we were talking last evening. Can't you unload on me? My shoulders are good and broad."

"This—this so long distance to Colorado," she faltered. "I am not knowing about that. The steamship man in the old country told me it is but such a little way."

"That scamp would have told you anything to get your passage money for his company," I frowned; then, all at once, I had a flash of understanding and wanted to kick myself for not having had it sooner. "You must be perfectly frank with me, little girl—Miss Marcia. Are you thinking of the added expense? That it may be more than you were counting upon?"

For answer she passed a small netted purse across to me.

"That is all I have. I will have some more, but it is lost with those letters I am losing. Please you count it and tell me if there shall be enough, after I pay the hotel for three days."

I emptied the purse on the tablecloth and glanced at the contents, which were in American gold—half a dozen five-dollar pieces and one ten.

"Maybe not quite enough," I qualified; and not for the world would I have let her know how far short it fell of being anywhere near enough. "But that needn't give you any trouble." I went on, chuckling inwardly at the

thought of how Peterson would take this as a brass-bound proof of my asininity where women were concerned. "I can lend you whatever you may need in addition."

"Oh, but my good friend—I must not let you do that!" she protested.

"I don't see how you are going to help yourself," I smiled. "I'm pretty well used to having my own way, you see, and I'm fairly careful not to start anything I can't finish."

"If you trust me like that, I shall pay you back when I am come to this Colorado."

"We won't quarrel about the money part of it," I said. "The first thing to do is to get you safely into the United States. If you will let me have that passport of yours and the Bible——"

She gave me both, and as we were leaving the dining room together we met Peterson coming in. He merely said "Good morning" in passing, but his sardonic grin was not thrown away upon me. I told myself that I knew perfectly well what I was about, and that it was nobody else's business.

This is what I was still telling myself when I started out to inquire my way to our consulate in the National Bank of Cuba Building. But I was soon to learn that it was somebody else's business; the business of several somebodies, to be strictly accurate.

IN the consulate I met a kind-faced gentleman who seemed determined to hold me, from the minute I stated my errand, as a young man desperately in need of good advice.

"You mustn't let these women play upon your sympathies, Mr. Kendall," was the form the advice took. "This one you mention was here day before yesterday, and I investigated her case very thoroughly. She is merely one of many; I've been bombarded with them ever since the new law went into effect."

"But look here!" I broke in. "Miss

Brancovan—or rather, Miss Clemence—is an American citizen and is entitled to enter without a passport!"

"Ah?" he said, still as pleasant as a basket of chips. "Then you know her personally, do you? Tell me about her."

Of course, he had me there. I had to admit that I didn't know anything at all about her save what she had told me herself; but I rubbed it in good and hard that I believed every word of that. Thereupon I got some more good advice.

"Your good intentions do you credit, Mr. Kendall; it is the way I'd like to be able to feel, myself. But just look at the facts for a moment. She comes here with a passport made out in one name while she claims another and quite different one. She says she is an American, and is going to friends; yet when I question her she can't give me a single name of anybody in America—merely says she had some letters from her friend or friends, but had lost them. She didn't show me this Bible, but there, again, you see what the inference is; if she has become possessed of some other woman's passport, the Bible may have come by the same route. No, my dear fellow, if you were as familiar with all the dodges as I am, you wouldn't let her story weigh with you for a moment."

While he was talking, a man came in and stood back a little way as if he were listening. I didn't pay much attention to him, save to get a sort of fleeting impression that he looked like the pictures of that fellow in Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables"—the one who was always chasing the poor galley convict from pillar to post. I was too busy arguing with the pleasant-faced gentleman at the desk to let myself be distracted by side issues. But, after all, the busy-ness was no good; and when I saw I was merely wasting time, I asked for the address of the United

States minister. It was given readily enough, but with another bit of advice thrown in for good measure.

"You may carry it up if you wish; I don't mind your going over my head with it, not in the least. But I imagine you'll find yourself referred back to me. The minister doesn't trouble himself with these routine matters. There are too many of them."

I'll confess I left the consulate in something of a frame of mind. The workings of the thing seemed so inhumanly mechanical; like a machine set to grind whatever might fall into its hopper, regardless of everything but the grinding process. In going out I tried to close the door behind me; thought I did close it; but after the latch clicked, it swung open an inch or so. It was while I was reaching for the knob to try again that I heard the man who had stood listening say:

"Yes, I got onto 'em last night in the hotel. She's hooked him all right enough, laid for him when he came out of the dining room. They had a long confab in the ladies' parlor, just the two of 'em."

"Who is he?" asked the other voice.

"Oh, he's all right and straight enough. A young engineer fellow who came over from the States with machinery for the mills at Valdamia, and is on his way back. I'll keep an eye on him, just the same. There's no tellin' what even a straight young fellow'll do when a pretty woman gets her claws into him."

Naturally, this bit of inside talk didn't make me feel any more charitable toward the immigration authorities. I was still pretty warm under the collar when I reached the United States legation; and there I found that the minister was out of the city. The young chap who answered for him was of the superiorly aloof type—I learned afterward that he was substituting for the regular secretary—and what I got

out of him could have been carried away on the point of a penknife blade. No, those matters were all in the consul's hands, and the minister plenipotentiary had nothing whatever to do with them.

THESE two attempts to unsnarl the girl's tangle having failed beautifully, I went next to interview the German manager of the bank where I had kept my money during my stay in Cuba. Here I told my story—or, rather, the little girl's—again, and asked what I should do. For by this time I was bound and determined to get Miss Marcia Clemence into the United States, if I had to go to jail after it was done.

"You can do nodings at all with the passport, ven it hass nod the visa of the consul at the port of embarkation," was the first thing the genial little German told me.

"Well, then, that's a back number, and we'll so consider it," I said. "What's next? You see, I'm going to get this young woman in, or break a leg trying to. She is as much entitled to entry as I am, only she can't get anybody to believe it."

"There is dis you might try: You go to New Orleans dis afternoon in the fruit steamer, you say? Subbose you take passage for her in her American name, und shlip her aboard vit you quietly. If dey shall ask you questions on the ship, you say she iss an American lady under your escort, *nicht wahr?*"

"Why, sure!" I agreed. "I never thought of anything so simple as that. But supposing, by some awkward fluke, it doesn't work. What's the alternative? Or is there any? What can you suggest?"

The little German smiled broadly. "Yess, dere vill be von odder vay. If she iss your wife, she goes in without questions."

That made me laugh. "That would be a last resort, right! Badly as she needs to get in, I don't believe she'd be willing to take that route. We'll try the escort dodge. It looks as if it might work."

GOING from the bank to the steamship office, I booked two passages by the afternoon boat and then returned to the hotel. There I found my pretty responsibility waiting for me in the small reception parlor. She sprang up at my entrance and ran to me, hands outstretched and eyes dancing like those of a happy and much relieved child.

"You have make them to understand?" she cried. "Oh, how will I ever accomplish to thank you!"

"Hold on—wait a minute," I protested, leading her to a seat and planting myself beside her. "It isn't quite so simple as all that. In fact, the passport tangle stands just as it did before. They are all mixed up on your two names; your real name and the one in the papers—that, and the fact that you can't produce those letters from your friend in Brewster.

"But I've hit upon another plan," I went on, "and it's one that ought to work without a hitch." Whereupon I explained the "escort" dodge.

"You think they will let me go like that?" she queried, half doubtfully.

In the light of that bit of overheard talk in the consulate, just as I was leaving, I had a doubt or two of my own upon that point; but I didn't add them to hers.

"There oughtn't to be any reason why they shouldn't," I evaded. "If any questions are asked, I can tell them you are an American lady traveling in my charge—which will be the truth." Then, suddenly, I remembered something else. "You must let me do all the talking. You have—a—er—well, a little foreign accent, you know, and it—"

She nodded brightly. "I cannot to speak American well; I know that, yes. I shall be—what do you call it?—dumb. They shall not make me to say one little word."

"That's the idea," I approved. "We'll put it over as easy as rolling off a log. It isn't as though we were doing anything wrong, you know. The law just happens to be a bit clumsy and blind in your case; that's all."

Her pretty eyes widened. "How is that you mean—'rolling off the log?'"

I grinned. "That is just a bit of American slang. You'll hear a lot of it after we reach the good old United States. Now about your baggage—'luggage,' you call it in Europe. You have a trunk, haven't you?"

"Juze one, and it is not so ver-y big."

"Whereabouts is it?"

"I will have it in my room."

"I want to see that trunk. Will you take me up?"

She took me up to her room and, as I had anticipated, I found her trunk liberally disfigured with pasted labels in a number of different languages—a dead give-away that it had come across the Atlantic.

"Get me a wet rag," I directed; and when she did it, I proceeded to scrub and scrape all the labels off. "No use advertising to the people on the boat that you have just come from Europe," I explained, and, when the job was finished: "Now we'll send this one and mine to the wharf, and that will be that."

"You think—you think——"

"We're not going to do any thinking until the time comes. We'll just get the baggage off our minds and then go to luncheon. You are all packed, aren't you?"

"All but this," she said, indicating the Bible which I had returned to her; and after she had put the book in her trunk, I helped her shut and lock the box, and we went downstairs.

On the lobby floor I made the needful arrangements to have the trunks brought down and sent to the wharf—and earned my word of praise from the little one.

"You will know how to do everything—juze like Father Michael Brancovan!" she murmured. "It is so good that you take all these troubles for me."

"We'll eat now," I told her. "Our ship is already in, and we can go down and get aboard any time we please."

Considering our short acquaintance, the luncheon was quite chummy; at all events, I did my level best to make it so, egging the little one on to talk about her life in Roumania, and of her experiences in crossing Europe and on the voyage to Cuba, doing this partly for her sake, and partly for my own. For one thing, it was an ecstatic pleasure to watch the play of her features when she forgot her present troubles and became her own sweet, natural self; and for another, I was willing to dodge, for the moment, certain doubtful speculations as to the outcome of the bold break for liberty which we were about to make. For already the "escort" expedient suggested by the little German banker was beginning to look rather too simple to succeed.

AFTER making the luncheon last as long as I could, I braced myself to take the plunge. Glancing at my watch, I said: "It's getting along into the afternoon, and though our ship doesn't sail until four o'clock or later, I suppose we may as well go down and get aboard."

As we were leaving the table, she handed me the small netted purse with the gold pieces in it, and when I asked what that was for, she said:

"It is for the hotel. I am three days here, you know."

"I have plenty of money," I told her, returning the purse. "You'd better keep this by you—for emergencies."

She didn't want to take the purse, but when I made her, she said, as calmly as though she fully expected to find a barrel of money rolling uphill when she reached her destination, "I will pay you back when I am come to this Co-lorado," and I found myself wishing she hadn't rubbed this paying-back business in on me again.

In the lobby I paid the double hotel bill and had a taxi called. On the drive to the wharf I began to speculate upon what precautions, if any, were taken to keep unauthorized aliens from boarding the ship, and to rawhide myself for not having made inquiries about this while there was yet time. It was too late to do so now.

At the landing stage, I saw one of the ship's officers with a tall man standing at his elbow, a man whose sharp-featured face seemed somehow vaguely familiar. Before I could remember where I had seen the face, the man had moved away, and the ship's officer, to whom I was showing our passage credentials, was shaking his head.

"Sorry, Mr. Kendall, but the lady can't go aboard," he said. "She is an alien and her passport is not in order."

I knew there and then where I had seen the tall man with the sharp-featured face; it had been in the consul's office. Just the same, I waded in and did my persuasive best.

"Let me explain," I said. "This business has been messed up all around. This lady is in my charge, and she is an American citizen, needing no passport. Her friends in Europe merely made the mistake of not having her go before our consul over there to declare her American citizenship before she started."

It was no manner of use. The ship's officer was polite, but he was also adamant. I could take passage, of course, but my companion couldn't. The penalties imposed upon the steamship companies were far too severe to be lightly

risked where there was any doubt whatever of a passenger's right to enter the United States.

"It is no use, my good friend," said the girl. "You cannot make to do anything for me. You wish to go home, and you must not trouble yourself any more. I make you many, many thanks for the kindness of your good heart, and——"

"Wait a minute," I cut in hotly; "if you think I'm going off to leave you stranded here this way, you've got another guess coming!" Then I ripped out at the gangway-guarding Cerberus in uniform: "If you won't take this young lady, you won't take me; that's all there is about that!"

And with this little flare-out to ease my mind, I took her arm and marched her off the wharf to the taxi stand.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEEP END.

BY the time we got back to the hotel, I had cooked up some sort of a story to tell the hotel people to account for the sudden change of plan which had caused us to postpone our departure from Havana; and after this I had to do some swift hustling to recover the trunks, which had already gone to the steamer. That done, and the money paid for the passage reservations refunded, I was back again right where I had started.

Perhaps it will be as well to confess, first as last, that my interest in the fate of the little one from far-away Roumania had now grown to be something much more personal than a mere good-natured prompting to help the helpless. I mean that whenever this little Marcia person let me look into her eyes, I—— Well, if you are a man, you know how it is. I was asking myself rather dazedly if I hadn't just happened to stumble upon the one woman in all the world.

That being the case, I was more than ever determined to do anything that might be necessary to make good my promise to get her over the hurdles. But just what sort of a break to make next was beyond me. True, the eighty-odd miles of sea intervening between Cuba and the nearest coast of the United States was only a short jump, but it might as well have been eight hundred for any way I could imagine of getting her safely across it.

After walking the streets and cudgeling my brains to no purpose for an hour or so, I made another call upon the friendly little German bank manager, told him how his suggestion had blown up at the critical moment and asked him if he had any other to offer. This appeal brought a smiling reminder to the effect that the one unbeatable way of getting my charge over the barrier was still open—this with a sly dig at the looseness of the American divorce statutes.

"You might maig it a marriage of the conveniences," he said, with another of the broad smiles. "Your American courts would sweep it away—so!" He made a gesture illustrating how easy the sweeping would be. Then he added: "But maybe the case iss nod so desperate like that."

On my way back to the hotel I was asking myself just how desperate the case really was, and the answer seemed pretty conclusive. The little one was alone and utterly friendless in a strange land, and practically without money.

Reaching the hotel a little before dinner time, I found that she had not yet come down. Upon looking around, I saw Peterson sitting apart in a corner of the lobby, smoking and reading a newspaper. I went over, pulled up a chair and fell upon his neck.

"Bob," I began, "last evening you said that if I got in over my head you'd throw me a rope, didn't you?"

"Sure thing," he admitted.

"All right, I'm about to sink for the third and last time. Put that paper down and listen to my tale of woe," and thereupon I recited the story of the day's fiascos.

He heard me through patiently, and with no unseemly jeers interthrust. But when I had made an end, he said his say.

"Far be it from me to hint that you are making a bally ass of yourself, Larry; or that the young woman in question is not——"

"Just a minute, Bob," I broke in warmly. "You may think what you please about her—I can't help that. But just remember that I am taking her story exactly and precisely at its face value."

He looked as if he were a bit sorry for me, but nodded good-naturedly. "We'll let it go at that. I'll admit the girl is pretty enough to knock any soft-hearted fellow out of the box at the first crack. You say you've convinced yourself that she has a right to cross the border into the promised land, and that settles it. You may count on me to the limit, of course. You have tried all the legitimate dodges?"

"Yes, all two of them!" I grinned.

"In that event there remains only the illegitimate one. How are you fixed for ready money?"

"I have plenty. I brought a few hundreds down here with me—just in case the climate should get away with me and put me in the hospital."

"Good! Money is the first requisite. Now, how about time—your time? Is that any object?"

"Not particularly. My vacation is due; I was promised a month off after this Cuban job should be finished."

"That is also to the good. Now then, suppose you and the girl take ship to Mexico—say to Tampico. You can do that with no questions asked, either here or there. From Tampico, there is a railroad through Monterey to the Rio

Grande at Laredo. The Laredo gateway will probably be picketed, but at Nuevo Laredo on the Mexican side, you might hire a couple of horses and ride up or down the river until you find a quiet spot and a Mexican with a boat to ferry you across. How does that strike you?"

"It is one way?" I assented, "but it is pretty clumsily roundabout, don't you think?"

"It is," he agreed, adding: "There is a shorter and uglier way, if you are game to take the chance."

"You mean the fly-by-night smuggling schooners across to Florida?"

"Yes, that's it."

"I'm game, of course, but——"

"But the girl may not be?"

I took a moment to consider. "I can't say definitely, until I ask her, but I believe she will consent to anything I propose."

He nodded sapiently. "All set to go off the deep end with you, is she? You are a fast worker, Larry; I'll say that much for you. But in bare justice you ought to make her understand the risks she'll have to take. As I told you last evening, this alien-smuggling business is in the hands of a bunch that, if the tales we hear are only half true, would put the old, walk-the-plank buccaneers to the ruddy blush."

"I'll tell her, of course."

"In that way the agony would be short; a mere night's run across the straits," he went on. "I dare say you could hold your own for a few hours—perhaps with a good gun in evidence to inspire the buccaneers with a proper degree of respect. But I can warn you of one thing in advance: These pirates will stick you good and plenty for passage money. They're not in it for their health."

"I can pay," I said shortly. "Where do they land their cargoes?"

"Now you've got me; I can't say. Probably never twice in the same place;

also, probably in the loneliest place they can find on the Florida coast. You'll doubtless have to take your own chance of finding your way to civilization and the railroad, likewise the chance of having an immigration sleuth drop on you at the last moment. They tell me the East Coast trains are being watched pretty closely."

"Never mind the chances; I'm game if Miss Clemence is," I asserted.

Peterson gestured toward the elevators. "There she is now," he said. "Go on to dinner with her; I'll not butt in. If you need me later, just give me the high sign. I've some work to do this evening, and you'll find me in my office to-night, up to nine o'clock or thereabouts."

I JOINED the girl as she was crossing the lobby toward the dining room.

"You will have been trying to find some other way?" she asked, in low tones.

"You'd know I would; and I have found a couple of them, at that. But we'll eat first and talk afterward."

At the dinner table, as I had at the midday meal, I steered the talk away from the involvements—all of them, and was rewarded by seeing her eat with something like a healthy appetite. After the dinner, over which we did not linger unduly, I led her to the small ground-floor parlor, which I was glad to find otherwise unoccupied.

"Now then, we'll try to see just where we stand," I began, as I took my place beside her. "First, let me ask you this: If you had the money to pay your passage, would you give up and go back to your foster parents in Roumania?"

She shook her head decidedly. "I must not do that—no. It is for them that I must go to America."

I didn't ask her what the special urgency was, because I thought I knew.

In the talk of the previous evening, she had given me to understand that she had left Roumania so that she might no longer be a burden upon the old people.

"All right; that's that," I said, adding: "I spoke of it first because, if that were what you wanted to do, I could give you the passage money."

When she looked around at me, her pretty eyes were starlike. "You would do that—for somebody you would never see or know at all until last night?"

"For you, yes; if it were what you wanted."

She looked away, and when she spoke again it was to say: "I did not think there was such a good man in all the world. You are like the one I shall be reading about in an old book that belongs to my mother—my own American mother."

"Oh, see here!" I protested, and I guess—or hope—I was blushing. "You mustn't say things like that! I'm no better than lots of other fellows. Just the same, I'm mighty glad to have you think so well of me, even if I don't altogether deserve it. Who was the man in your mother's book; I mean, what was his name?"

"I cannot make to speak it; it is Gal—Gal—something."

"Galahad?" I hazarded.

"Yes, that is it. Gal-ahad."

If I blushed again, I think I had a good right to. Naturally, I had only a hazy schoolboy recollection of my Tennyson, but I couldn't very well help remembering the immortal knight of the Idylls. I wanted to laugh at the sweet naïveté of her comparison, but the laugh got choked up in my throat and made me see things as if I were looking through a very beautiful mist.

"There are no Sir Galahads nowadays, I am afraid," I said very gently. "But I am glad you feel that way about me—that you feel that you can trust me. I'd have to be a much worse man

than I have ever dared to be to do anything to make you sorry. You say you don't want to go back to Roumania, so we'll call that settled. Before dinner, I told you I had found two ways of helping you to get into the United States. One of them is very easy, and the other may turn out to be pretty hard and uncomfortable, or even dangerous. Shall I tell you about the easy way first?"

I thought she would say "Yes" to this, but she didn't. Instead, she said: "I am not afraid of the hard things; I shall like to know them first."

AS I went on to tell her all about the smuggling process, I was wondering if her woman's intuition had warned her that the easier way might have some drawback that would put it entirely out of the question. Though as yet I knew nothing more about the smuggling game than the little Peterson had told me, that little was enough to make it figure as a pretty hazardous undertaking for a woman. But when I was through, it was not of the hazards that she spoke.

"This smuggling," she said. "It is against the law?"

"It is indeed; that is why only the most desperate men are engaged in it."

She was silent for a moment. "I shall not like to do anything that would break my country's law."

Here was another good and sufficient proof that she wasn't one of the "unchaperoned." They wouldn't care how many laws they broke.

"Your case is entirely different," I explained. "Really, the law has nothing to say to you, because you are an American citizen. If you are obliged to go over in a smuggler's vessel, it is only because a series of mistakes and misunderstandings has made it impossible for you to get your rights in a legitimate way. I don't like the crooked dodge any better than you do,

but, so far as I can see, there is only one way of escaping it if you are to get into the United States."

"You will tell me about that other way now, please?"

I drew a long breath and went at it. "It is this: My citizenship is unquestioned, of course; I can go and come as I please. As my wife you could enter the United States openly and aboveboard, and in spite of all the immigration laws that were ever enacted. Wait, please! Don't say 'No' until you have heard me through. I don't ask you to tie yourself up for life to a man who is the next thing to a total stranger to you, just for the sake of getting across the border into your own country. It needn't be that, you know; the marriage need mean nothing more than you may want it to; it would merely be your passport to enable you to land in New Orleans without question. After that, you would be free to go on to Colorado, and you need never see me or hear of me again, if you shouldn't want to. And, in due time, our easy divorce laws would set your marriage aside. That is the easy way."

For a long minute she sat perfectly still, with her hands clasped in her lap and her eyes downcast. But when at last she turned to face me, I saw that the dark eyes that were lifted to mine were no longer the eyes of a child; they were the eyes of a woman grown.

"You would do this—give your name to a woman that you do not know at all?" she asked quietly. "What if I am not the same that I have told you I am? The consul in Europe say I am not a good girl. Maybe he is right?—yes?"

"And I said the consul was a brute," I returned. "You needn't consider me in the matter at all. I am my own master—don't owe anything to any other woman; you'll have to take my word for that. Besides. I shall only be a figurehead."

"But if I am not what I say I am?" she insisted.

"I have told you that I believe you, and I do. You are trusting me to the limit, and it's a pity if I can't hand a little of that trust back to you. However, that cuts no figure. As I have said, it would be a marriage only in name, and it is the simplest, easiest way out of your trouble. I——" I was holding myself down by main strength by this time. There was a look in her eyes that made me wild to take her in my arms and tell her there wouldn't be any make-believe about it on my part, that I'd be ecstatically willing to spend the next year or so trying to make her learn to love me. But I forced myself to go on calmly. "You see how it is; I want the right—the lawful right—to stand by you. I am not going to leave you stranded here, without money and without friends."

Again there was an interval of silence, and at the end of it she was shaking her head as one firmly determined.

"My dear good Sir Gal-ahad, it cannot be that way—to marry," she said softly. "It would be a sin—before God—to—to marry when we should not mean to marry at all. And by and by, when it is all over, you would never forgive me—and you would have right. No, it—it cannot make to be that way."

If I had wanted any proof of her utter and absolute innocence—which I didn't—her refusal would have furnished it. If she had been the kind of "undesirable" that everybody seemed to think she was, she would have strung me for an easy mark, there and then.

"All right; we'll forget it and start over again," I said. "There still remain the smuggling ships. You still think you have the nerve and courage to take that route?"

She looked up quickly. "You think maybe I shall not have the courage? I will show you!"

"That is the way to talk!" I said. "As I've told you, I don't know much about this 'last-resort' chance yet, but I am going after the details right now. It is just possible there may be something doing at once—to-night. If there is, I'll come to your room and let you know." Then, as I got up to go, not because I wanted to, but because I was afraid if I didn't break away there would be things said that I had no right to say, I added a word of heartening. "Just leave it all to me, and don't worry. As I have said before, I'm going to stay with you and see you through—all the way through."

CHAPTER IV. INTO THE NIGHT

IT was still early in the evening when I left the hotel to go in search of Peterson; and when I found him, he was just closing his desk preparatory to leaving his office.

"Luck!" was his greeting. "I was about to try to trail you. How about it? Is the little Roumanian nervy enough to try looping the loops with you?"

"She is no more Roumanian than you are, Bob; get that straight in your mind before we go any farther," I shot out, a bit warmly, perhaps. "As for the nerve, I'll furnish that. She'll do whatever I ask her to do."

"Good! We won't scrap over her nationality; we'll say it is enough that she is a woman and up against it. I've been doing some phoning for you. One of the smuggling boats makes a run to-night. Don't ask me how I found out. I'm supposed to be a reputable business man and I can't afford to let it be known that I have even a nodding acquaintance with the Havana underworld. Can you get ready on short notice?"

"We are as ready now, this minute, as we ever shall be."

"Good again! You are sure you have money enough to see you through?"

"I hope so. I checked out my bank account this morning."

"You'll need it. I don't know how much these pirates will pinch you for, to get you across the straits, but it will no doubt be a sheer robbery. That is one thing, and here is another: If you go across to-night, you'll sail with a man who has the name of being just about the worst cutthroat of them all, a fellow named Miguel Silvio. They tell some pretty hideous stories about him."

"For example?" I prompted.

"Well, they say that one night, when he was running a cargo of Chinamen, his schooner was chased by a revenue cutter. The story goes that he drove the chinks into the schooner's hold, battened the hatches down and made a run for it. When he finally got clear and made land, a good half of the poor devils were dead—stifled to death by overcrowding in a floating 'Black Hole.' I don't vouch for the story; you may take it or leave it. But there is no smallest doubt that Silvio is a beautifully cold-blooded villain, with mighty little regard for human life, a regular pirate."

"Well, I suppose there is no choice; we'll have to endure this Silvio brute for the few hours we'll be aboard his hooker." I said this coolly, but the coolness was pretty much from the teeth outward. When I thought of taking a woman aboard such a hell ship as Peterson's story portrayed, the fly-by-night expedient took shape as a fairly hazardous business. Still, there seemed to be little prospect of finding an alternative.

"Yes, it will be only a short run," Peterson agreed; then he asked about our luggage—how much we had—and I told him that Miss Clemence had a trunk and I had one.

"Whereabouts are they?"

"They are checked and in the trunk room at the hotel."

He shook his head. "You can't very well take them with you. Besides, when you get across to the mainland, you may have to travel light for a time. Better leave the checks with me and let me ship you the trunks when you wire me an address."

I gave him the checks and told him he was a lot better and more nearly human than his pose, adding: "Make the shipment include the hand bags, as well; we'll leave them behind, too. And there is another thing: There will be a small unpaid hotel bill—two dinners, and whatever they may charge for half a day's use of two rooms. Will you pay that for me? I shan't want to check out when we leave—not with Miss Clemence 'under observation' by these immigration dicks"—and I gave him the money.

He nodded. "Call it done. Any other dying request?"

"Nothing that I think of. How am I to find this fly-by-night smuggler?"

"That part of it is up to me. Have you a good gun?"

"The best in the world—but it is packed in my trunk at the hotel."

"Humph! Un-get-atable, of course—without making talk." He opened a desk drawer and fished out an army revolver, with its holster and belt. "I'll lend you this. You can express it back to me when you are through with it. Can you carry it so it won't show?"

I stripped my coat and put the belt over one shoulder so that the holstered weapon hung under my left arm. With the coat on and buttoned, the gun was well concealed.

Peterson smiled. "I see you've been there before. That fixes you all right. The next thing is to go back to the hotel and slip out with the girl—careless like, as if you were going for a turn in the Prado. When you're in the street, wait for me; I'll be along

in my car. Be ready to make your disappearance as unostentatiously as possible. You say your young woman is under observation by the immigration people—which is evident from the fact that she was tipped off to the officers of the United Fruit ship. So you'll have to do a bit of dodging."

"I'll see to it that we don't advertise our get-away," I promised. "Do we have to go far to take ship?"

"That I can't tell you, because I don't know. I only know that the time is short. I told you I'd been phoning. The arrangement is made—provisionally, of course. I was told that if I had any 'freight' for Captain Silvio, I was to drive to a certain street corner where I would pick up a man who would pilot me. These scoundrels are not giving anything away over the wires, as you'd imagine."

"I see," said I. "Well, beggars can't be choosers. I'll look for you; you'll find us waiting in front of the hotel." And I took my leave.

Reaching the hotel a few minutes later, I went up to my room—first making sure that the hawk-faced man who had blocked us at the United Fruit wharf was not among the lobby loungers. In my bedroom, which was on the second floor, I got the light overcoat I had left out for the intended voyage to New Orleans, and, taking nothing out of the suit case but my shaving kit and the few toilet appliances I could stuff into the coat pockets, I went to the floor above and tapped at the young woman's door. It was opened at once.

"The time has come," I told her, entering and closing the door against a possible eavesdropper. "We are to cross in a small vessel to-night—to be smuggled across. It is strictly unlawful, and we may be headed for trouble—a lot of it. The men who operate these smuggling ships are desperadoes—criminals—and if trouble comes, they will save themselves if they can, at

whatever cost to their passengers. I want you to know the worst before we start. Are you still game for it?"

She smiled and shook her head. "I do not know what is that word, 'game;' but I am not afraid. But you must not make to go with me. There is no need that you make hardship for yourself in going to this America. You are not like I am—expatriate'."

"You needn't talk that way!" I broke in. "Why, my dear girl, I wouldn't any more think of turning you over alone to the tender mercies of these modern buccaneers than—— Well, I simply wouldn't; that's all! Get your steamer wrap; it is all you can take with you. We shall have to send for the luggage after we get across. A friend of mine, the one who is to take us to the ship, will forward it to us when we let him know where we are."

"We go now?" she asked.

"Yes."

IF we were under any sort of surveillance in leaving the hotel, I was unable to detect it. In the street, Peterson's touring car was already waiting, with Peterson at the wheel and a little dark-faced man with upcurled mustaches sitting beside him. We got in and the car started.

Though I had been in Havana a number of times in connection with the work at the sugar plantations, I knew only the business section of the city. But a general sense of direction told me at once that Peterson was not heading the car for the harbor; on the contrary, the course he was steering was away from the water front and through the western suburb, which was speedily traversed and left behind.

There was no moon, but the starlight was bright enough to make passing objects dimly distinguishable. A railroad track appearing now and again, running in the same direction as our road, was, I inferred, the line running

to Guanajay and Bahia Honda. This meant that the smuggling schooner must be lying by in some out-of-the-way cove or harbor on the near-by northern coast.

It was at a point which I thought might be some fifteen miles out of the city that the small man in front spoke again to Peterson. The car, with headlights dimmed, was swung short to the right into an obscure road which soon came to an end at the broken-down gateway of what appeared to be a deserted plantation. Peterson twisted himself in his seat to say:

"This is the jumping-off place. I can't get any nearer with the car."

I got out and gave my companion a hand, and the small man in front got out also. Peterson reached down and shook hands with us.

"Here's wishing you both a quick passage and the best of luck," he said, as heartily as if he were seeing us off on a liner. "Let me have a cable when you reach the promised land, and I'll do the next-friend act with the luggage. Our Mercury, here, will take you down to the beach and see that things go right. Adios!"

I TOOK the little one's arm and we followed the dark-faced guide's lead through the broken gateway. When the dimmed headlights of the car no longer lighted the way for us, the small man snapped the switch of an electric pocket flash and threw its beam on the path ahead.

After a time we came to a place where we could hear the splash of little wavelets on a beach: there was a descent through the tropical thicketing, the footing changed suddenly from earth to sand, and a star-lighted horizon appeared, delimiting the curve of a small bay. A short distance offshore, lying as a dark blot upon the water, and showing no lights, was the smugglers' vessel.

Thus far, our guide had uttered no word, nor did he speak now. Standing a little way apart from us, he signaled to the vessel with his flash light. There was no answering signal; but a creaking of blocks and a splash announced the launching of a boat.

As the boat's bow grated upon the beach, one of the three men in it, the one who had been steering, ran forward over the rowers' thwarts and sprang out. I saw him only as a dark figure, hatless, but with his head bound around with a cloth of some sort.

Before I could see more, he had snatched the flash light from our guide and was directing its blinding beam full in my face. And under the spot of white light that was dazzling me, I saw the blunt muzzle of an automatic, lined up to hit me in the place where it would do the most good.

It was at this crisis that I came mighty near acting impulsively. Barely in time, and as I was actually reaching for the butt of the gun slung under my left arm, I realized that the light holder had beaten me to it, and that a duel in which I would doubtless get the hot end of things would leave my companion at the mercy of the scoundrel who was menacing me.

"What are you doing?" I said, as calmly as I could. "Take that gun away!"

"*Yo no tengo Ingles,*" growled a voice behind the dazzling light; but the lowering of the menacing weapon promptly gave the lie to the smuggler's assertion that he didn't know English. Then I was beckoned peremptorily aside and a demand for money was made—this also in Spanish.

"*Cuánto?*" I asked, drawing upon my scanty knowledge of the foreign tongue to learn how much I was to be held up for.

The sum named, "*quinientos pesos Americano*"—five hundred dollars American—for the two of us was the

baldest robbery, of course, but Peterson's warning had prepared me for that. Luckily, I had kept a little more than that sum out of my money belt, and I counted it out, with the smuggler holding the light for me. With the money in hand, the man waved toward the waiting boat with a growled out: "*Vamos!*"

I turned to my charge. "We'll go aboard now," I said, and I helped her into the small boat and over the thwarts to a seat in the stern.

The short pull out to the schooner was made in silence. When the boat rounded to at the vessel's side, I lifted the little one over the rail, following her quickly and leading her aft. So far as the starlight revealed it, the deck of the smuggler appeared to be in most unseamanlike disorder; but at the stern I found a coil of rope to serve as a seat for the girl.

"Awfully rough going for you, as I was afraid it would be," I said, in low tones. "But I guess we can stand it for one night. Are you all right, so far?"

"I shall not care, and I am not afraid," was her answer. Then: "That most terrible man! He is point a pistol at you!"

"I know," said I. "He is an outlaw, and he wasn't taking any chances. That is all over now. He has his money, and he won't meddle with us any more."

As I spoke, the deck became the scene of sudden activity. The shore-going small boat was hoisted to its davits; the anchor was broken out; and the sails, flapping in the land breeze, began to climb the masts. A shuffling figure came aft to take the wheel, and before the broad spreads of canvas were fairly sheeted home, the schooner was heeling to the breeze and the shadowy line of the shore was fading to its vanishment astern.

"We are off!" I announced. "Let us hope that the next land we sight will

be the good old United States. Are you tired and sleepy? You have a good right to be both."

"A little tired, yes—but not so much sleepy."

"You must get what rest you can." With my overcoat I padded a niche for her in the angle between the coil of rope and the bulwark rail, and after she had nestled into it, I covered her with her steamer wrap, saying: "It will be cooler when we get farther offshore. You are not sorry you came?"

"I am sorry only that you make yourself to come with me. It is too much."

"Nothing of the sort," I denied. "It's an adventure, and I am enjoying it, this far. Try to go to sleep. Nothing more is going to happen to us to-night—or we'll hope there isn't."

FOR an hour or more, during which time the smart schooner, catching a fresher breeze, slashed its way through the choppy waves of the Gulf Stream, I kept my place beside her, sitting with my back to the bulwark. Save for the silent figure at the wheel, the after deck remained deserted.

Forward, beyond a group of figures in the waist which I took to be the watch on duty, the little vessel seemed to be carrying a deck load of freight of some sort, and I fell to wondering what sort of merchandise, other than liquor, would be worth a smuggler's risk in transporting.

After a time, when the regular breathing of the young woman beside me seemed to indicate that she was sleeping, I got up cautiously and, avoiding the watch lounging at the starboard rail, made my way to the foot of the mainmast. From this nearer point of view, I saw that the curious deck load consisted of human bodies stretched out or huddled in all conceivable attitudes and completely covering the forward half of the deck, and a peculiar and unmistakable odor was wafted back to me

from the sleeping multitude. The sleepers were Chinese.

It was in no very comfortable frame of mind that I went back to my crouching place beside my charge. Peterson's story of the stifling of half a cargo of victims—Chinese, these were, too—seemed less incredible now. There was a good breeze to fill the schooner's sails, but I wished it would blow even harder. The ominous voyage could not be completed any too soon to suit me.

This fervent wish had scarcely taken shape when the little figure at my side put out a hand and groped for and found one of mine.

"Yes?" I said. "What is it? Can I do anything to make you more comfortable?"

"You will been getting up and going away juze now. What is it you see?"

"I thought you were asleep. I went forward to find out what other passengers there are on board. We have a deckload of Chinese coolies. Barring the crew, which may be made up of blacks, for all I know, I shouldn't wonder if we are the only white persons in the ship."

"You do not like that?" she queried.

"I'd feel better if there were more of our kind, of course. But we won't borrow trouble. Try to go to sleep again. That will make the time pass more quickly."

She made a pillow of my shoulder; and when I was pretty sure she slept again, I slipped an arm around her to support her. In the act a sudden spasm of grim mirth seized me. If anybody had told me, twenty-odd hours earlier, that within a little more than a double circling of the clock hands I would be sitting on the deck of an alien smuggler with my arm around a sleeping young woman whose very existence was then unknown to me—

I put the grimly mirthful thought aside—rather, it was swept away in a rush of emotions that were hard to

define. There is no appeal so strong as that made by trustful innocence. I wondered, with due humility, what I had said or done to inspire such trust, wondered again in what sheltered nook of far-away Roumania this girl had been reared that she saw no evil, thought no evil, feared no evil. And with the wonder came a thrill of exaltation in the thought that I should be the chosen one to be the guardian of such a precious human jewel in a world of pinchbeck!

If the ominous voyage were only over, if I could succeed in getting her into the country which was hers as truly as it was mine, and to the place where she would be—

I was planning, or trying to plan, the campaign which would open after we were once fairly ashore in Florida, when the rise and fall of the little sailing vessel came to be like the rocking of a cradle, and my eyes closed and I slept.

CHAPTER V.

ORDERED OFF.

IN the nature of things one doesn't sleep very long at a time, nor very soundly, when morning promises to bring a crisis the demands of which cannot be foreseen or provided for. One thing only was certain about our landing and the time and place of it; namely, that our buccaneer skipper would consult his own safety, with small regard for the subsequent well-being of his live cargo.

Meanwhile, the straits crossing was being made without incident. Some time past midnight the wind shifted into the southeast and came fresher, and the schooner, running free, swept over the surges in long, swinging rushes as if it were some sentient thing eager to reach its goal. Recalling my somewhat hazy recollection of directions on the map, and checking the course of the

schooner by the position of the stars. I saw, to my disappointment, that we were not making for the line of keys over which the railroad passes on its way to its terminus at Key West, and from any one of which we might hope to get quickly in touch with further means of transportation.

Instead, the course was almost due north, which probably meant that we were to give the keys, and even Key West, the go-by, making our landfall, goodness only knew where, on the Gulf of Mexico coast of the mainland.

It was in one of the past-midnight waking intervals that my pretty responsibility, who, I had supposed, was sound asleep, spoke.

"I am thinking you will not make to sleep ver-y much, is it not?" she asked, with self-reproach in her voice. "You should not trouble to take such good care of me."

"But that is what I am here for—to take care of you," I interposed. "Have you been resting any at all?"

"Oh, but yes! I am sleep quite much, than~~g~~ you. Where will we be now?"

"We ought to be nearly across. We have had a fair wind all night, and we've been making good time."

"That so-terrible man who points the pistol at you—he is not trouble any more?"

I hadn't even seen the cutthroat smuggler skipper in any of my waking moments, at least, not to recognize him, and I said so. For that matter, save for the man at the wheel, our after-deck seclusion had not once been disturbed.

"After we shall come to the land, what is it that we do then?" she asked.

I told her what I hoped to do—to find the way to the nearest town and railroad, and there to take a train for New Orleans, from which city I could telegraph Peterson to send on the trunks and hand bags.

"Then I can put you on your train for Colorado and your troubles will be over," I added.

She drew a long breath, which I took to be a sigh of contentment and relief.

"I am not knowing what I shall do if you have not come to me last night in the hotel," she murmured. "I am loving you ver-y much, dear Sir Galahad."

Heavens! I had to get a quick grip upon myself when she said this. I realized that she didn't know the difference, in English, between the meaning of the verb "to love" and the others that stand for gratitude and regard and thankful obligation.

I found myself saying: "I wish from my heart you really meant that, Marcia—may I call you Marcia?"

"But yes—surely you may call me by my name! I like to hear you speak it. And why should I not mean it when I say I am loving you? Is it not right that I should say it? If I could have a brother, I think he could not be kinder to me than you are—yes?"

"Oh, a brother, of course," I said, though I was sure she knew as little of brotherly love as she did of the other kind. Then I went back to the matter of names. "If I may call you Marcia, you must call me Larry. Will you?"

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "I am so ver-y foolish with the American talking. I am all the time thinking that is juze a part of your father name."

"No," I replied; "the father name, as you call it, is just Kendall. K-e-n-d-a-l-l."

"'Larry,'" she repeated softly, "I am liking that name 'Larry.' It will be saying something to me that I cannot make to say in English. Some time, perhaps, after I am studying some more in the English books, I can tell you."

"Bless your innocent heart!" I burst out. "You don't have to study any more to make me understand what you mean! I love you just as you are."

There! It was out, after all. But the word which meant so much to me—so much more to me than it did to her—fell quite harmless.

"That is nize," she said. "But I am knowing that since last night, when you come to me and tell me I am to have you for my friend."

I got up and lifted her to her feet, saying she must be cramped and stiff, sitting the night through on the hard deck—as I was myself. Almost at once she called my attention to a light showing away to the eastward, asking if it were another ship. Though my education in things maritime had been sadly neglected, I knew it wasn't a ship's light. Then I remembered that there was a lighthouse on Key West, and the conclusion the northerly course of the schooner had led to was confirmed. Captain Silvio meant to go around the keys and dump us in some no man's land inside of them.

A FEW minutes later, the bandanna-wrapped head of the ship's skipper emerged from the companionway. The sight of the distant light set him to barking out commands in Spanish to the watch on deck. As the men jumped to their stations and began to haul on the sheets, the captain came aft for a glance into the binnacle.

As he did this, the faint sheen of the compass light showed us his face, the first sight either of us had been given of it. It was a handsome face, but its beauty was that of the fallen angels; a dark perfection of line and coloring such as a painter of Lucifer might have conceived and put upon his canvas; only the painter could scarcely have caught and fixed the pagan hardness and ruthlessness that lay beneath the perfect featuring. I could easily believe that Peterson's story of the driving of a cargo of Chinese into an unventilated hold, to live or die as they might, was not exaggerated.

With a word to the helmsman, he went forward a little way to stand at the starboard rail. Presently we made out that he was training a night glass upon the distant eastward light, or at least in that direction. Marcia came closer and whispered:

"What is it he will be seeing?"

I suppose it was merely the shore light, and said so; but a moment later I was moved to wonder if that was all he saw. A gibbous moon was showing its diminished face a few diameters above the eastern horizon, casting a ghostly half light over the sea. As the schooner made each lifting reach over the long swells, I heard, or thought I heard, a sound like the breaking of surf on a beach.

Stooping to look under the close-hauled boom of the big mainsail, I made out the dark line of a reef or an island not very far under our lee, and then I knew why the course had been changed more to the east. We were bearing up, to pass to windward of this obstruction.

The location of this reef or key, and its relation to the distant light, gave me a reasonably good guess as to our position. The chain of keys buttressing the point of the Florida peninsula is continuous as far as Key West, but there are outlying coral formations, reefs and small islands, extending still farther, ending finally in the Dry Tortugas. The smuggler was among the small islands of this extension and her skipper was giving Key West as wide a berth as possible, that being a home port for revenue cutters as well as a station for warships.

As we edged along almost within pistol shot of the surf menace to leeward, Silvio lowered his glass from time to time to snap out fresh orders to the watch, the men of which were still handling the sheets. Each order brought a slight shifting of the angle of the sails, and the skipper's object

soon became evident. He was keeping his big spread of canvas as nearly as might be edgewise to the moon and the distant lighthouse, so that it might not be seen.

With the wind three or four points on the starboard beam, it was obvious that this maneuver could not be kept up indefinitely. At each slacking of the sheets the schooner lost way, and it soon became an open question as to whether or not, with her sails now spilling most of the wind, she would clear the reef.

Furthermore, the course as it was now set was bringing us nearer to the light in the east—the lighthouse light; this in a diagonal line, to be sure, but still a decreasing of distance. Silvio's purpose was plain enough. He was trying to hold on until he could reach a channel which would let him swing away to the northward and so escape from the danger zone circumscribed by the beam of the lighthouse beacon.

IT was the continued paying out of the sheets that defeated this purpose. Nearer and nearer we drifted toward the surf, until at last we were no more than a cable's length from the white line of it, showing like the gleaming teeth of some prehistoric sea monster under our lee. Being only a landsman, I was growing a bit nervous. If the schooner should lose way entirely and strike, I made sure there would be a mad panic among the Chinese, with small chance of any of us getting out of the mess alive. When, finally, the crash appeared to be fairly inevitable, I asked the little one at my side if she could swim. She shook her head.

"Then you must just trust to me," I jerked out, and was about to strip my coat and kick my shoes off, when the handsome scoundrel at the starboard rail mouthed a volley of Spanish oaths and shouted the saving orders to the man at the wheel.

Even so our escape was only by a hair's breadth. With her canvas drawing again and her helm hard down, the schooner gathered headway slowly; so slowly that from where we stood at the after rail, a pebble might have been tossed into the breakers, as she swung to answer the dragging rudder and clawed off to safety. My gasp ended in a sigh of relief.

"That's a lot nearer than I ever want to come to it again," I confessed to my companion. "One little minute more and we would have been a wreck."

"But—but why does he do it?" Her query and the shudder that went with it told me she had fully understood our peril.

I pointed to the close-hauled sails upon which the moonlight was now falling, to make them stand out like great white targets.

"He didn't want his ship to be seen from the land over yonder where the lighthouse is. With the moon shining on the sails——"

"That land—— What will it be?" she asked quickly.

"My guess is that it is a piece of our own country—Key West, the little island that lies nearest to Cuba. The railroad ends there."

"We shall not make to go there?"

"You may be very sure we shan't—not in this ship, with its cargo of smuggled Chinese. We are going to give it just as wide a berth as possible."

The nature of the danger threatening from the port was easy to forecast. If our authorities in Havana knew of Silvio's sailing, word had doubtless been flashed across to Key West. In that case a revenue cutter would certainly be on the lookout for us. I wondered why Silvio had not steered for a passage farther westward, but that was because I did not at this time know the dare-devil audacity of the smuggler of aliens.

With the schooner forging ahead and

all of her canvas drawing, her captain was again focusing his glass upon the distant light. Up forward the Chinese were stirring uneasily, and a singsong jabber, querulous and questioning in its intonations, came floating aft to us. As I listened, the little one laid a hand on my arm.

"See!" she whispered. "There is one other light—and it moves!"

I looked and saw that the thing most to be feared was about to happen. The pencil beam of a ship's searchlight was sweeping the sea, becoming a starlike eye when it was turned in our direction. Instantly Silvio leaped into action. An ear-piercing whistle summoned all hands; the schooner was permitted to fall off smartly; and the smuggler captain himself ran to take the wheel.

THE suddenly changed course was taking us swiftly back to the reefs we had so narrowly escaped, but the daring skipper apparently knew what he was about. Ten minutes later the flying smuggler was surging first to port and then to starboard through a tortuous channel with the white teeth of the coral shallows on either hand. Then both the searchlight and the lighthouse eye were blotted out for us by the intervention of a low-lying island on our starboard beam.

None the less, as the event presently proved, the danger of pursuit and capture was not yet averted. Turning the wheel over to the black helmsman he had thrust aside, Silvio ran forward, bellowing out orders to his sailors. With the men falling over one another in their haste to obey, additional sail was made.

Gaff topsails were shaken out, and a huge, nondescript canvas like a segment of a balloon went thundering and crackling to its place between the two masts. Under the added impetus thus imparted, the little vessel heeled until her

lee rail went under, and with an arm around my charge I scrambled for the weather rail.

For a time, while the schooner fled like a frightened bird, flinging the spray from her sharp bow until it fell in showers the full length of the deck, we clung to the rail and took our medicine in silence.

I could do little to protect my companion, though I did bundle her in her wrap and my overcoat and stood where I could take the brunt of the wind-blown showerings myself.

Knowing there must be a cabin of some sort between decks, I was more than once tempted to make a dash for it. But the consciousness that we would both be helpless in case of disaster if we were shut up below deterred me. For, on the face of things, anybody would have said that disaster was postponed only from moment to moment. The masts were bending and crackling under their overload of canvas; and when the wind blew hardest, it seemed as though nothing could save us from capsizing and being spilled into the frothy water.

What with hanging on and trying to shelter Marcia as well as I might, I had forgotten about the threatened pursuit, and it was she who again called my attention to the pencil of the searchlight which was now sweeping the waste of waters far astern. After we had watched it for a few minutes, there was a hoarse shout from somebody up ahead, the shrill yelp of the captain's whistle and a sudden rush of the crew for the sheets and halliards.

"Land!" I said, with a gasp of relief.

There it was, just ahead, a low coast with a white beach darkly fringed by a dense growth of some kind. I hoped it would be the mainland, though again my hazy recollection of the geography of the Floridian waters was telling me that it couldn't be, that we couldn't possibly have come far enough after pass-

ing Key West to reach the peninsula, even at its nearest point.

However, there was little time given for speculation as to our exact whereabouts. In a trice the schooner had rounded a point of land and was brought up in the bight of a small bay. Then, almost before we could realize what was taking place, the entire crew, including the gigantic black at the wheel, had rushed forward and, armed with clubs, were driving the shrieking Chinese overboard from the bows.

THE thing was so sudden, so unexpected and so utterly brutal, that for the moment it seemed grossly incredible; it appeared impossible that a whole deckload of human beings should be driven into the sea to sink or swim as they might. True, the distance to the beach was not great; but, lacking the ability to swim, any distance is too great. Above the angry shrieks of the beaten, we could hear the bubbling cries of the drowning. It was a wholesale massacre. The cold-blooded smuggler of aliens was jettisoning his incriminating human cargo.

Half paralyzed for the moment by the frightfulness of the tragedy, I could think of nothing better to do than to whip out Peterson's loaned revolver and to place myself in front of the woman I loved. As I did this, one of the coolies broke through the cruel line of club swingers and ran down the deck toward us.

Out from the shadow of the flapping foresail the smuggler captain darted in pursuit, overtaking the flying Chinaman in half a dozen pantherlike leaps. I saw the quick flash of a knife in the moonlight, heard the miserable victim's gurgling death cry as the murderer stooped and heaved the body over the rail, then——

In two more bounds the assassin was facing me, knife in hand, brandishing his red-stained weapon and ordering

me, with fierce cursings in Spanish, to go overboard with my charge. I thought then, as I have many times since, that I could never be grateful enough to Peterson for making me take his pistol. Without it I should have had to tackle the furious pirate barehanded, with the probable result that I would have suffered the fate of the poor coolie. As it was, I had the captain covered before he knew I was armed, had made him drop his knife and was backing him, hands uplifted, toward the open companionway a few feet behind him.

"Down below with you, you devil!" I snapped at him.

Before I could repeat the command in Spanish, he had proved that he understood English, if he couldn't speak it, by retreating to the head of the companion steps. There he stopped and his right hand came down, to snatch at a pistol stuck in his sash. Luckily for me, the weapon caught and I had time to knock him backward down the steps before he could disentangle it.

Jumping for the slide, I slammed it shut, just as a bullet came up through it. The lead sped harmless. I got the hasp over its staple to fasten him in before he fired again. With a shout to Marcia to follow me, I ran to the boat falls amidships.

The horrible *mêlée* at the bow was nearing its murderous end, but it gave me time to cast off the hitches of the falls and let the boat drop. From that to catching Marcia up, lowering her over the side and following her was but the work of a few fleeting seconds, and a hasty unhooking of the tackles freed the little craft.

Pushing off, I groped for the oars, found one, and was using it as a pike pole to shove the boat still farther from the murder ship, when a thing happened that I might have foreseen, but which I was powerless to prevent. The schooner was lying broadside to the

beach, and the water on the shoreward side of her was thick with struggling Chinese. Before I could shove off, dozens of clutching hands were clamped on the gunwales of the little craft.

At that, I knew there remained only one chance for us. Dropping the useless oar, I took Marcia in my arms, told her to hold her breath and, stepping upon one of the thwarts, leaped to clear the clutching hands which would have dragged us down, even as they were dragging the sinking small boat.

CHAPTER VI.

THIRST.

THOUGH I had held a handicap endurance record in swimming in my college days, I realized that I had my job cut out for me when I went overboard with the girl. Knowing that my armful would immediately begin to struggle and fight if she wasn't holding her breath, and finding her perfectly self-controlled and quiet, I swam with her under water as far as I could, to avoid coming up in the midst of the drowning Chinese.

Brief as our submergence had been, a glance over my shoulder showed me the murder ship already under way again and gliding out of the bay to resume her flight. I was sorry then that I hadn't shot her skipper and heaved his dead, instead of his living, body down the companion steps. Around us there were black heads bobbing in the wan moonlight, proof that there were some swimmers among the jettisoned Chinese. But I knew that many must have drowned in that human spillway.

"You must do exactly as I tell you to and not be frightened," I said to the girl quietly. "Put your hand on my shoulder, and don't try to do anything but to keep your head above water. If you should happen to go under, just hold your breath until you come up.

It is only a little way to the shore and we'll make it all right."

"I will not make to be afraid," she returned, following my directions as obediently as a biddable child; and at the touch of her hand upon my shoulder, I struck out for the shore.

Fortunately, since my clothes and shoes, the heavy revolver and my gold-filled money belt were handicaps, the swim didn't have to be greatly prolonged. After a few minutes of it I got my feet on the bottom and we waded out upon a beach which already held a number of squatting, chattering Celestials, with more coming up out of the sea.

If I had been alone, perhaps I shouldn't have had any hesitancy about casting in my lot with those who were our companions in adversity. But with a woman to protect and care for, it was different.

"Those chattering heathen are probably harmless enough, but we'll not mix and mingle with them," I said, as we splashed through the shallows to the beach.

We turned aside and let the shadows of the encroaching beach growth of tangled vegetation swallow us up—a dripping, bedraggled pair, bareheaded, soaked, and with the water squelching in our shoes as we walked.

It was after we were well out of sight and hearing of the Chinese survivors that my companion spoke.

"That horrible, horrible man!" she shuddered. "Why is he do this awful thing to us?"

I explained briefly. The schooner was in American waters and the smuggler was breaking the law by trying to enter a cargo of aliens. It was up to him to get rid of his cargo before he should be overhauled by the ship that was chasing him and have his schooner searched for contraband, and he had done it.

"We'll hope that ship from Key West

will catch up with Señor Silvio and find some reason for giving him his just deserts," I concluded.

As I said this, we saw the beam of the revenue cutter's searchlight. She was well offshore and going at racing speed. I could fancy the crafty smuggler would maneuver to draw her as far as possible away from the scene of his crime before permitting himself to be overtaken, which was doubtless just what he was doing.

Wishing to put ample distance between us and the Chinese, I kept the beach-circling walk up until we had left the little bay a good half mile or more behind us, pausing only when the dawn began to break in the east. Our stopping place was in the bight of a small cove, sheltered by the thick matting of mangroves which everywhere lined the beach. Here I gathered twigs and dry leaves and bits of driftwood for a fire, hoping—almost against hope—that the matches in my metal pocket box had escaped a wetting, but trusting that I might be able to get fire from one of the revolver cartridges, as I had seen Western cowboys do, if the matches failed.

Happily, the match box proved to have been waterproof, and I soon had a good fire blazing before which we could stand and turn around like mechanical lay figures in a show window and dry ourselves out. In a little while the sun came up, and since it was a subtropical, midsummer sun, it presently put the camp fire to shame as a clothes-drying proposition.

"You are sure you won't take cold?" I asked for the third or fourth time, as the dear girl took down her hair and shook it out to let the sun's rays dry it, preparatory to plaiting two thick, lustrous braids.

"I? I will not be ver-y big, but I am strong like a—like a— How will you say it in English?"

I grinned. "I don't know the Euro-

pean-English phrase, but in America we say 'as strong as an ox.' But it would have to be a very small ox in your case."

This brought the cheerful little twisty smile I was fishing for, as she asked: "You say we shall be in our America now?"

"On one edge of it, at least," I ventured. "After our clothes are dry and we have had something to eat, we'll try to find out just where we are, and what we shall do next."

She looked around. "The breakfast—I am not seeing where it will be coming from."

"Just wait!" I laughed. "It will be very singular indeed if I can't find something to keep us from starving."

CLAMS, or shellfish of some sort, were what I thought of; but a little later a careful scrutiny of the beach didn't reveal any signs of the presence of the familiar bivalves. And the wood, what there was of it, was only the gnarled and stunted mangrove thicket, offering nothing in the shape of food. True, there were some scattering palms farther inland, and they may have been of the coconut variety; but if so, there were no nuts on them.

Finding none of the little ooze holes in the sand that mark the lurking places of the succulent clam, I took my shoes off and began to wade in the shallows in the hope of turning up something fishy—anything that could be roasted and eaten. I had scarcely stepped into the water of the cove before my bare feet were surrounded by dozens of crabs that came scuttling up from all directions bent upon finding out if my toes were edible. By going at it cautiously, I soon caught a number of them.

During my stay at the sugar mills on the Cuban coast, I had learned that the orthodox method of killing shell crabs is to drop them into boiling water; but having no pot, I had to take

the still crueller method of impaling them upon sharpened twigs of the mangrove and roasting them before the fire.

By the time we had finished eating, the sun was well up and blazing at us with truly torrid heat. During our oneviand meal I had talked mostly foolishness—for a purpose; I wanted to pry the little one's thoughts as far as possible away from the frightful tragedy we had so lately witnessed. But underneath the forced cheerfulness, there were sobering worries in plenty. Though I knew we couldn't possibly be cast away on one of the Dry Tortugas, being far to the eastward of them, that word "dry" was giving me a lot of anxiety. Thus far in our wandering we hadn't seen a sign of fresh water, and without it—

I put the alternative aside by main strength. We'd simply got to find drinkable water; that's all there was about it. With the cleaning out of the final crab claw I got up and said:

"Well, shall we go in search of a—er—of our railroad?"

"She hesitated a moment and then said: "I should ver-y much like a drink of water first."

I knew this was bound to come, sooner or later, but I answered as if the needed drink were just around the next corner.

"Sure," I said, "I'm thirsty, too! We'll go look for a spring right now. The railroad can wait."

We set out along the shore to the eastward, which was away from the place where we had left the Chinese, keeping to the beach because the thick growth of mangroves formed a barrier through which, as it seemed, nothing short of an ax could clear a path. I was hoping to come upon a stream of fresh water flowing into the sea. But after we had followed the ins and outs of the beach for quite a long distance without finding so much as a trickle of drinkable water, the prospect began to

look rather appalling. Food for the sheer necessities, the teeming ocean would supply, as we had just proved; but without water we should soon perish miserably.

BUT the greatest shock came later. We had kept on following the beach line without paying any particular attention to directions, and upon the doubling of a capelike point we found the forenoon sun shining squarely in our faces across a semicircular indentation of the sandy land—a crescent-shaped bay.

On the bay beach, a few hundred yards around its perfect curve, there was a group of bareheaded, black-haired figures sitting or lying upon the sands. They were the survivors of the Chinese cargo, and in an interval which couldn't have measured more than an hour and a half or two hours we had completely circled our barren, waterless island.

I turned quickly, hoping to keep my companion from seeing what I had seen and drawing the disheartening conclusion. But I was too late.

"*Les Chinois!*" she said, naming them in French. "We shall have come all the way around, is it not? And we find no water at all!"

"We've got to find some." I insisted. My tongue was like a dry stick in my mouth; and I knew that she, too, must by this time be suffering cruelly for a drink. "As you say, we've gone around this island, but we haven't gone into it yet. There are palm trees inside, and they can't grow without water. We must try again."

Retreating behind the point of land to be out of sight of the Chinese, we began to search the mangrove fringe for an opening through its tangled thicketing. A short distance back over the way we had come, we found a place where we could squeeze through, and again the prospect was depressing to a

degree. As far as we could see, and I fancied we could see almost all of it, the island interior was nothing more than a flat, sandy barren, with a scattering of palms and little or no other vegetation, excepting bristling palmettos and a broad-leafed plant that looked like the familiar elephant's-ear of northern lawns.

In a few places the palms were in groups, but they all looked as if they needed water. And that wasn't all. In our circling of the beach I had kept a pretty constant eye to seaward—and there had been no other land in sight. Our island was not only barren, it was isolated.

Pushing on inland, we went from clump to clump of the palms, but found no signs of water. Yet I knew in reason there must be water—fresh water—underlying the tree roots. It was in the shade of the largest of the tree groups that I went on my knees to dig in the sand, first with my bare hands, and presently with the blade of my pocketknife. I did it without much hope of finding water, or of being able to attain a depth at which water could be found. For soon, as I knew, I must come to the coral rock which underlies the thin sand or soil surface of all the islands in the key region and that would stop me.

After I had scooped out a hole maybe a foot deep, the sand was damp, but that meant nothing. Still, I kept on, loosening the packed sand with the knife blade and pawing it out, dog-fashion, with my hands. At a somewhat greater depth the dampness increased and the handfuls of sand scooped out were wet enough to stick together in moist balls. Encouraged by this, I dug faster; but at a depth which was almost as far as I could reach I came to the rock, and that was the end of it.

The little one had been crouching beside me in silence as I dug, and now

she said: "You will think to dig a little well, my Larry?"

"If I had anything to dig with, it might be a well—with water in it," I returned huskily. "But I can't dig in the rock with nothing better for a tool than a jackknife. We'll try another place."

She put a hand on my arm. "You must not to be worry for me. I am not so ver-y thirsty."

"You mean that you won't admit it; but I know. We can't stand many hours of this sun without water. We've got to find it somewhere."

We shifted to another clump of trees and I dug again, this time with even less success than before. We went from place to place, each change of location taking us farther from the northern shore where the Chinese were, and each shallow hole that was dug adding one more to the tally of disappointments. Everywhere the coral rock was near the surface; the first hole I had dug was deeper than any of the others.

AFTER an hour or more of this sand pawing, during which time the heat had become almost insufferable, we found ourselves on a southward-reaching point of land which, lying opposite the point inclosing the crescent-shaped bay on the north, made a thick-headed, roughly shaped "T" of the island outline. It was here, while I was seeking another place to dig, that we came upon a horrifying sight.

In a circle partly shaded by the scattering palms and hedged in by a denser growth of the spike-leafed palmettos, we stumbled upon what at first appeared to be a camp of sleeping men. There were seventeen of them in all—some of them sprawled on their backs with arms outflung, others doubled up in all sorts of contorted shapes as if drawn together in agony. It asked for only a second glance to determine that they were not sleeping men—they were dead men.

I gasped in surprise and would have caught up my companion to run with her, but she wouldn't let me.

"No," she said, putting my hands aside, "maybe it is that they are not all dead. We must see. We cannot leave them so. Come!"

As bravely as if she had been a battlefield nurse she went with me into that awful circle, and together we made the unnerving round. Having been with a labor battalion in the World War, I had seen little or nothing of the carnage at the front, but I told myself that what we were seeing was quite as dreadful as the corner of any European battlefield.

The men—they were white men and evidently southern Europeans—had plainly been victims of thirst or famine, or both. Clearly there was nothing for us to do, but when I would have hurried Marcia away, she knelt beside one of the ghastly figures, a mere boy he was, with the soft down of adolescence on cheek and chin and lip, and laid her ear to his breast.

"He is not dead—his heart will be beating yet!" she exclaimed. "He is young, so he lives longer than the others. Oh, my Larry—if we should have some water!"

There was no water, but I picked the boy up—he was a mere shadow for weight—and carried him out of that dreadful circle of death to lay him in the thickest shade that offered. Marcia knelt beside him and began chafing his hands, and her compassionate attempt to help made my eyes blur and a hard lump come in my throat.

Sometimes a blind, mechanical impulse may be an inspiration in disguise. I never knew afterward what it was that made me wheel suddenly and race to that first hole I had dug in the sand, the one in which the underlying rock had been reached at the greatest depth. Nor do I know what I expected to find when I got there. But what I did find

made me cry out a choking "Thank God!"

In the bottom of the hole there were at least three inches of clear water, a still, quiet little pool of seepage with no visible source of supply, but nevertheless a spring of living water.

CHAPTER VII.

UNDER THE MANGROVES.

DIPPING up a handful of the water in the shallow sand well to make sure it was drinkable and not mere seepage from the sea, I chased back to where I had left Marcia kneeling beside the boy.

"Water!" I croaked. "We've got it! In that first hole we dug!"

Between us we carried the boy and put him down beside the tiny well, made a cup of one of the elephant's-ear leaves and fed him water a few drops at a time, patiently, steadily, while the noon-day sun blazed at us through the inadequate shade of the palms.

After a long time the poor victim's eyelids fluttered and he became conscious. But when he tried to speak, his swollen tongue wouldn't let him. Though we kept on feeding him water as long as he would take it, he presently lapsed into unconsciousness again and it seemed as though he was sinking, in spite of our efforts to revive him and keep him alive.

It was Marcia who suggested that the poor fellow might stand a better chance if we should carry him to the beach where the breeze, what there was of it, might temper the terrible heat a bit. Accordingly, we got him across to the southern edge of our prison island, found a place where we could get through the mangrove barrier with him, and laid him down on the sand in the shade with my folded coat for a pillow.

There didn't seem to be anything more we could do for him. I brought more water in a leaf and tried to make

him take it, but he couldn't. It only strangled him, and I had to roll him over on his face quickly to keep him from choking to death.

AFTER an hour or more in which we tried in every way we could to revive the boy—tried and failed—I left Marcia to sit by him, fanning him with a palmetto leaf, and made another trip to the glade of death on the southern point of land, letting duty and our necessities answer for a hurried search of the dead.

A few letters in a foreign language that I did not recognize, and a couple of empty bottles which had contained liquor of some sort, were all that I found. The absence of anything of the slightest value left the broad inference that the poor victims had been systematically stripped of everything worth taking before they were marooned.

Cleaning the bottles as well as I could with sand and sea water, I filled them at our little seepage spring in the center of the island, trying, as I did so, to figure out our obligation to the Chinese, who were doubtless suffering as we had suffered before we found the water. If I had been alone, I should have sought them out at once and led them to the water hole, sharing chances with them if the slowly seeping supply should not be enough to go around. But there was my companion to be considered.

While I was hesitating, the problem was solved for me by the appearance of a couple of the coolies, worming their way through the mangrove thicket on the northern side of the island. Knowing that they could scarcely fail to find the water hole, I made off quickly with the two filled bottles, dodging among the trees and palmettos and keeping out of sight until I reached the shelter of the beach mangroves.

Looking back, I saw the two Chinamen come to the little well and throw themselves flat to dip up the precious

fluid in their hands. After a few minutes of the thirst quenching, they got up and set off at a shuffling run to carry the news to their fellows.

Relieved to know that they had discovered the water for themselves, I made my way along the beach to where I had left Marcia and her charge. There was no change in the boy's condition, save that his breath seemed to come even more feebly than before. The little one's dark eyes were brimming.

"I shall think he will not make to live ver-y long," she said, in low tones. Then, knowing upon what errand I had gone, she asked what I had found.

The water-filled bottles spoke for themselves, and I handed her the salvaged letters. She shook her head as she glanced over them.

"They will be from Jugo-Slavia. I can speak that language a little, but I cannot make to read it when it is written."

"It is no matter," I said. "We'll take the letters with us when we go and turn them over to the proper authorities."

She glanced up with the grown-woman look in her eyes. "You will be saying 'when we go.' I am not a little child, my Larry. I am seeing for myself what you see. You will be thinking maybe that terrible man will come back for us, yes?"

I couldn't lie to her, though. Heaven knows I wanted to. "No, my dear, I don't believe he will come back," I admitted soberly.

"You know ver-y well he will not be coming back; he did not come back for these"—with a gesture toward the starved boy.

"But some one else will come," I hastened to say. "I know about where we are. We are not far from the coast of Florida, and we must be even a less distance from the line of keys—*islands*, you know—over which the railroad passes."

Again her gesture made the unconscious youth stand for himself and his dead comrades.

"Nobody will have come for these, and they all die. But I am not afraid."

I sat beside her and took her hand. "You are a brave little woman, Marcia, dear, and I'm not going to try to treat you as a child. We are in a bad situation; I don't deny it. Yet while there is life, there is always hope. We can live on crab meat for a time; and as for water——"

She broke in quickly. "You must tell the others—*les Chinois*—about the water, my Larry."

"I don't need to tell them; they have found it for themselves." I paused. "There may not be enough water for all of us."

"I am thinking of that," she returned calmly. "But that must be as the good God wills."

For a long time we sat together in silence. From this beach on the southern side of the islet, I knew we must be looking out toward the cluster of islands in which the long line of the Florida Keys ends, and to which, doubtless, our tiny dot of sand-covered coral belonged. But, so far as our unaided vision went, sea and sky met on the wide horizon, with no sign of other land and never a fluttering sail to break the monotony.

If we hadn't found that horrifying array of Jugo-Slavians, it wouldn't have been so disheartening. But the very fact that these men had lived and died with no hope of rescue, no sight of a welcome sail, stood as a grim warning of what might be our lot.

Along in the middle of the afternoon I asked Marcia if she were hungry, and she said "No." She was kneeling again beside the boy, alternately fanning him and chafing his wasted hands. Leaving the two bottles of water with her, I went along the beach to where I could get a sight of our well.

The Chinamen—all the survivors of the tragedy, I thought—were grouped about the little life hole in the sand, some sitting and some lying flat, with an inner ring pressing close to the shallow well. I knew what they were doing. They had drained the small pool and were waiting for it to fill again. I wondered if, after a number of drainings, it wouldn't dry up completely and stop running in. It was a mighty disturbing thought.

WITH the way clear to the opposite side of the islet, and knowing the Chinese were safe to stay where they were until the slow-seeping water hole had allayed their thirst, I made a wide detour through the palmetto growth, to come out upon the shore of the bay into the waters of which we had been driven from the schooner's deck.

Here, as on the other side of the island, the sea was blank, though on the farthest northwestern horizon I saw a dark smudge which I took to be the smoke of a steamer. Straining my eyes to keep sight of it for a few minutes, I made the course of the distant and unseen ship to be somewhat to the west of south. This confirmed my guess as to our location; our islet lay to the eastward of the steamship lane between Tampa and Key West. There was no help to be expected from the regular liners.

Next, I scanned the shore and the shallows near it in the hope of finding the swamped small boat which I had last seen sinking under the weight of a dozen drowning men. It was a wooden boat and, even though water filled, it should have floated. But there was no trace of it to be seen.

Though there was no sign of the boat, the oars had drifted ashore. After I had gone a few hundred yards around the bay crescent over the route we had taken in the early morning—that is, to the eastward—I came upon one of

them; and a little farther along, I found its mate. Though I could think of no use that the oars might be to us without a boat to ply them in, I hid one of them in the thicket of mangroves, marked the place so I could find it again, and took the other with me.

After getting a viewpoint to the eastward in the hope of sighting a ship, and finding the same blank waterscape stretching away to infinity, I retraced my steps around the curve of the bay and made a complete circuit of the elongated western end of the island. Here the rays of the setting sun half blinded me, but I thought I could still see the smudge of the steamer's smoke on the far horizon—the same smoke I had seen to the northward.

THE sun, now figuring as a great golden disk, was dropping for its plunge into the sea when, remembering that I had made no provision for another meal, I took off my shoes and began to wade in the shallows to try for our supper. But for some unknown reason there were now no crabs to come scuttling to nibble at my bare toes. Thinking that perhaps I had picked an unlikely place, I tried others, all along the western shore, with the same result—or no result. Our single source of food had failed, for the time being, at least.

Reproaching myself for not having caught more of the shellfish in the morning while the fishing was good, I was about to strike inland to make my way back to Marcia and her charge on the southern shore when the miracle was wrought. First I saw an agitation of the water in the shallows, as if a shower of pebbles had been tossed into the sea.

Next, a school of little fishes, minnows in size, began to break the surface in tiny leaps. Just behind them, I saw dimly a silvery shape darting to right and left. I had the oar in my

hand, and the impulse that made me poise and hurl it like a clumsy javelin was purely automatic and mechanical.

Call it a sheer accident, or Providence, as you will, the miraculous fact remains. There was a splash, an up-boiling of sand to roil the water, and when I looked again a handsome Spanish mackerel was floating, belly up, beside the oar. Crazy lest the stunned fish should recover and dart away, I dashed in after it, got it, recovered the oar, and sat down on the sands to dress and clean my prize while the daylight still served.

Marcia was still crouching beside the unconscious boy when I came back to her. Her murmured, "Oh—I am so ver-y glad!" was a sharp reminder that I had left her alone a good deal longer than I had intended. To my question as to the boy's condition, she shook her head sadly.

"There is no difference. I shall be thinking we have come too late. He lives, but that is all."

Selecting a place a little way apart, where the mangrove screen was thickest, I built a fire and broiled the fish. When the meal was ready, I called the little one, and we were in the act of eating thankfully when a slight noise in the thicket at our backs made me cock my ears and listen.

The noise was not repeated, and I should have thought no more of it if I hadn't seen a sudden and startling change come into the eyes of my companion. I saw her lips move to frame a soundless "*Les Chinois!*" and on the instant I was afoot, with Peterson's gun in hand.

I suppose it was the glow of our fire that had led them to us. Anyway, there they were, thrusting yellow faces, avid with hunger, through the mangrove screen and glaring down upon us. As I leaped up, a singsong clamor of cries burst out, with eager hands outstretched toward the broiled fish.

"Get back!" I shouted at them.

Though it was probable that they understood no word of English, the brandished revolver was something they did understand, and the clamor died down. But when I would have followed up my advantage, my great-hearted little one began to plead for them.

"No, no!" she interposed. "They are hungry—they have nothing! Give them the fish. See, they will not hurt us! They are begging!"

Of course, there was not enough of the fish to afford them a mouthful apiece all around; but I divided it up as best I could. When it was gone, I made signs to them to go away and leave us to ourselves. They went, but I think it was only because they saw there was nothing more to be had of us—that, and possibly a wholesome respect for an armed white man.

When they were gone, I took my fellow castaway to task for her compassionate generosity, telling her that self-preservation was the first law of nature, and that we had deprived ourselves without having done any of them any good.

"It is no difference," she countered. "I could not make to eat another mouthful when I shall have seen those hungry faces, my Larry. It makes me ver-y sad."

Having given away our supper, or the most of it, there was nothing to do but to make preparations for passing the night. As may be imagined, these were simplicity itself. I put a log of driftwood on the fire to keep it going so that it might serve as a beacon, and that was about all there was to do. The dry sand under the mangroves would have to answer for our beds, for which there would be no coverings; Marcia's wrap and my overcoat having been abandoned in our dash for life from the schooner's deck.

On the bare chance that the poor

famine victim might recover consciousness and need something that we could do for him, Marcia suggested that we divide the night into watches, and I agreed to this, the more readily since I was still a bit uneasy about the Chinese. The yellow men were half famished, and famished men are little better than savages. True, they had nothing whatever to gain by attacking us; still, I was uneasy, and thought I should continue to be, so long as we were cooped up on a few acres of barren sand with them.

I TOOK the first watch, and the long hours of it passed without event. Left to keep my vigil alone, I was free to pass the grotesquely subversive scene shiftings of the past twenty-four hours in review. A double circling of the clock hands in the past, we two had been guests in a comfortable hotel in a considerable city, with all the necessities and conveniences, and even the luxuries, of modern civilized life to be had at the pressing of a button or a bell push. Now, as it might have been at the wave of a magician's wand, we were projected into a situation and environment that I had supposed never existed save in the imagination of the fiction writers—castaways on a desert islet, with only the beach sand for a bed and even the next meal purely problematical.

From considering the hazardous involvement in which the passing of a single night and day had entangled us, my thoughts dwelt upon the childlike and most adorable little girl-woman who was so courageously taking things as they came. If I had admitted any unworthy doubt as to the utter truth of the story she had told me, of her innocence and purity—as, thank God, I hadn't—it would have vanished after our experiences. Also, if there had been any doubt as to my emotions toward her—but there wasn't and hadn't been, not from the moment when Pe-

terson had pointed her out to me in the Havana hotel dining room and had told me her pitiful story.

I DON'T know how long I kept silent ward by the side of the poor lad whose life we were trying to save; my watch had stopped with the plunge into the sea the night before and I had no measure of time. But I think it must have been past midnight when Marcia stirred and woke of her own accord and came to take my place.

"You should not have let me to sleep so long," she said reproachfully. "It is not right that you make yourself to take all of the hard things."

"I don't," I denied. "You are taking your full share of them. I think there was never another woman like you, Marcia."

She knelt beside the boy and laid a hand gently upon his forehead. "He is juze the same?" she queried.

"He hasn't moved. I'm afraid he is past help. It is very pitiful."

She turned and put a hand on my arm. "I know how the great heart of you is being sorry for him, my Larry. You say there are no other women like me; I am not believing before that there are any such men like you in this world."

"There are plenty of better men than I am in the world," I managed to say huskily, much moved. "When you say such things you make me ashamed."

"Ah, but I am all the time knowing," she asserted softly. "You will try to make yourself to be little—but I know. Now you must sleep and let me watch."

After exacting her promise to call me if anything should develop, I went a little way apart and lay down. Almost at once, nature made its imperative demand and I was asleep before I knew it.

Though I had firmly resolved to allow myself only a short nap, the resolution failed to click at the appointed

time, and the half light of false dawn was showing in the east when Marcia woke me.

"It is all over and he is gone," she said quietly, as I sat up and tried to gather my sleep-scattered wits.

"But—but why didn't you call me?" I demanded, having a most disquieting picture of her sitting alone with the dying boy.

"There was no need at all. You could not make to do anything for him."

"Was he conscious before he died?"

She nodded. "For a little while, juze at the last. I am speaking to him in his own language, and he will speak to me—but not much. He tells me how it is they come to be here—he and those other dead ones. They take the ship from Cuba, as we do, and the captain of the ship puts them on this island and tells them his partner will come to take them the other part of the way to our America. And they have nothing to eat or to drink; and they wait and wait, and nobody comes for them."

It was as I had supposed. Their smuggler skipper, like Silvio—or perhaps it was that archvillain himself—had been pursued, as we were, and he had heartlessly marooned his passengers, leaving them to live or die as the chance might befall.

"They were from Jugo-Slavia?" I queried.

"Yes, all. I speak with him in that language. He gives me his mother's name, and the name of her vilayet, and asks me to write to her."

I got up to do what remained to be done. With infinite labor, and with only the oar blade for a spade, I dug a shallow grave in the beach sand under the mangroves, and we laid the poor shrunken body into it and covered it over. At the last, Marcia knelt beside the heaped-up mound of sand and said a little prayer for the dead boy in the

language she knew best; and I was ashamed that I could do no more than to kneel in silence beside her, dumb in spite of the fact that I had been reared in a Christian land.

When it was all done I got a brand from the fire and took my companion's arm to lead her away. And we did not stop until we reached a sheltered cove at the extreme eastern tip of the islet; which was as great a distance as we could put between ourselves and the grave on the southern shore.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BOAT.

AFTER we had a fire kindled on the beach of the eastern cove, I went crabbing. This time, as on the previous morning, there was no lack of luck. The catch was plentiful.

While we were eating, we talked of the starving Chinese, and of what might be done to relieve their sufferings.

"There are as many crabs in the sea for them as for us, if they only knew it," I said. "I believe I'll take a chance and try to show them."

At first Marcia protested, with a captivating little flutter of apprehension and anxiety. "But if they should make to hurt you—perhaps will you, my Larry!"

"Not much fear of that, if I am trying to help them. They are not dangerous yet, but they may be later, after they become sheer hunger maniacs. We must forestall that hazard if we can."

"Yet I am so ver-y much afraid!"

Her fear on that score was quite natural, of course. If I should be knocked out, she would be left alone with these much-abused and desperate yellow men.

"You must be brave again," I urged. "If I can show them how to keep from starving to death, they will let us alone. Anyway, it's almost a Christian duty,

isn't it? Even if they are heathen half savages, we mustn't let them famish if we can help it."

"You will be taking me with you, yes, please?" she begged.

"You shall go part of the way—to where you can look on," I compromised; and so it was agreed.

After breakfast I took a lighted brand from our fire and we set out, following the beach around toward the northward-facing bay. Reaching a point from which we could see the Chinese huddled on the sands, I told my companion to keep out of sight under the mangroves and went on alone, with the firebrand in one hand and the other free for the pistol if defense should be necessary.

Shrill cries greeted me as I closed in, making signs to indicate that my intentions were peaceable. There was no attempt made to mob me when I laid the firebrand aside and gathered twigs and wood and lighted a fire, though the poor half-starved wretches ringed me in, chattering excitedly and watching with the eyes of cats every move that I made.

With the fire going briskly, I took off my shoes and socks and rolled up my trousers. Making signs for them to come and see, I went to the water's edge, realizing that the critical moment had arrived. If the small bay chanced to be fertile crab ground, well and good. But if not—

Luck—or Providence, if you choose to put it that way—was with me. Before I had waded knee-deep, the ten-legged crustaceans, bigger ones than any I had yet seen, came sidling up from all directions to have a look at my bare feet. When I began catching them and throwing them out upon the beach, there was a riot. Some of the poor wretches were so nearly famished that they tore the crabs to pieces and ate them raw and alive; others were civilized enough to warm the things a

bit in the fire before devouring them; still others waded in and began fishing for themselves.

The first thing I did after Marcia and I returned to our camp in the eastern cove was to go inland to the fresh-water well and refill our water bottles. I knew the Chinese would again besiege the scantily supplied water hole as soon as they had satisfied their hunger—which is exactly what they did.

DURING the day, Marcia talked much of her childhood in Roumania, and of her foster parents. She had lived a sheltered life in the most emphatic sense of the word. While the family fortunes had permitted, she had had private tutors, and I gathered that her education, especially in music, had been of the best. It was only in English that it had been incomplete; she said she had never had an English teacher, but had got her knowledge of the language mostly out of the few books her foster parents possessed.

In turn, she made me tell her about myself; and this was a short horse, soon curried.

"This calamity of ours is the first thing out of the ordinary that has ever happened to me," I told her. "You could put me in with thousands of other American men and lose me in the shuffle."

"But you will have been in the World War," she said.

"Oh, yes, but if I hadn't been in a foreign land, I should scarcely have known the difference. My year and a half in France was spent in building roads and in buying supplies and helping to get them forward. In all that time I saw nothing of the fighting, and if it hadn't been for the air raids and the long-range bombardment of Paris, I should hardly have realized that a war was going on. There was neither adventure nor romance in it for me."

"Not any romance? Will there have

been no pretty French girls to make the soft eyes at you?"

"If there were, I guess I was too busy most of the time to sit up and take notice"

"Ah! Then you will perhaps leave some nice girl behind in our America when you go to the war?"

I tried to tell her why I hadn't; how I'd had to work my way through the engineering school to the exclusion of most of the social divagations; and how, after I had gone to work as an erecting engineer for the Milwaukee machinery corporation, I had been kept on the go from pillar to post so constantly that I'd never had much chance to get very well acquainted in any one place.

She smiled up at me. "I shall think perhaps it is that you do not care very much for girls, is it not, yes?" she asked demurely.

I laughed. "I guess it is the other way about; the girls don't care very much for me. At least, I haven't noticed any of them falling over each other to get at me."

She was silent for a minute or so, then she said: "I am thinking these American girls, and the French girls, too, are not knowing you ver-y well at all, my Larry. If they should know you the same way I do——"

This talk was helping us to wear out the afternoon, and just here an interruption came in the appearance of a vessel, a small schooner, which at that instant came into view at a distance of not more than a mile to the eastward. With a shout I leaped up and ran to the most exposed part of the beach and began frantically waving my striped coat.

The vessel was beating up against the wind on the port tack, which was carrying her past the end of our island on a course fairly parallel with the beach, and it seemed incredible that some one aboard of her shouldn't see me dancing and waving my coat.

THAT I wasn't seen became evident; there was no stir on the schooner's deck and her course remained unchanged. Though, as I have said, her distance was about a mile from shore, I could see the man at her wheel. Like a good steersman, he was doubtless keeping his eyes upon compass and bellying sails. If he had glanced aside but once, he must have seen me as plainly as I saw him, or so I thought.

It was Marcia who told me why I wasn't seen. She had run out to join me in the frantic bid for discovery and rescue.

"It will be all these trees behind us!" she cried. "We make nothing of ourselves against the trees—we are all of the same color!" Before I knew what she was doing, she had slipped out of her petticoat, which was a bit more conspicuous as to color than my coat, and was waving that.

But by now the tacking vessel had passed so far to the right that her helmsman couldn't have seen us without turning around, and I thought our chance was gone. It was a keen disappointment, but there was another in store for us.

Just off the southeastern point of the island, the little ship jibed and went on the starboard tack. This brought her around upon a course roughly skirting the southern shore, and, seeing that we had a second chance, we ran to keep abreast of her, shouting and waving like two people gone mad.

It was a short race. For a few hundred yards we kept fairly even with the schooner; but past that we had to make a detour around a shallow depression in the island coast and we lost out. By the time we got around, the small ship was far beyond the reach of any signals we could make and our little bubble of hope had burst and vanished.

"Hard luck!" I panted, as we stopped breathless. "To think that it came so near and then missed us!"

I thought almost any other woman reared on the home-sheltered plan would have sat down and cried. But not so the little one, not at all so. She was smiling and holding her petticoat behind her so that I should not see it; and when she spoke, it was not of our disappointment.

"Please, my Larry, will you not make to turn around for juze one little minute? I shall think I am coming—all to—little pieces, yes?"

I turned my back obediently and stood staring out to sea until she spoke again.

"I am all fix', now," she said naively. Together we walked back to the eastern cove, lamenting our failure to attract the attention of somebody on the schooner, and she trying to make light of it and to comfort me, like the brave little comrade she was.

"It is not so bad like that, dear Larry. If there is one ship to come, there will be another—not so? And the next time maybe we shall have better luck." She called it "loke," but that was only one of the small twistings of the tongue that made me love her the more.

I said I hoped from the bottom of my heart there would be a "next time" and that it would come soon. Roast crab, as a change, isn't such bad eating, even without salt, but in taking any sort of look ahead I could see a time coming when any variety of unsalted shellfish, eaten as the beginning, the middle part and the ending of a meal, and three meals a day, was going to grow most horribly monotonous. Indeed, I was already beginning to be ashamed to look a crab in the face.

Nevertheless and notwithstanding, our evening meal, which we presently caught, cooked and ate, was the omnipresent crab; and it was the more exasperating since we could see, in the clear waters of our cove, many other fish which would have bade a most wel-

come change of diet if we could have caught some of them.

THAT night, after I had made a signal fire on the beach, I led the talk around to that Colorado my companion was trying so hard to reach; this in the hope that she would tell me more about the mysterious "friend" whose name she could not remember, and who had yet been interested enough in her to send her money for the journey from far-away eastern Europe to America.

She had never met this man, whoever he was, and she knew of him only through his letters, and through the visit of an agent of his who had come to her in the home of her foster parents.

Asked if she knew this go-between agent personally, she said she didn't, but thought he had something to do with the American legation in Roumania. It was through him she had first heard of the Colorado man, and he had asked her and her foster parents a lot of questions about her parentage, and so on, and she had given him her photograph. It was after this that she had begun to get letters from the Colorado person, and the passage money had been sent her.

It was a beautiful mystery, which she didn't seem to be able to clear up; and the more we talked about it, the more befogged I became. That she would undertake a journey a quarter way around the globe to meet a man she had never seen, solely upon whatever representations he or his agent had been able to make to her, was a fact she was able to explain only vaguely. She had been assured, both by the go-between and by the man in his letters, that if she should come to Colorado she would find herself in a position to help her foster parents in their poverty, and this was really her motive for setting out.

While this bit of information didn't

tend to lighten the cloud of mystery, it made me resolve, there and then, not to set her on her way alone to Colorado at New Orleans—if I were eventually lucky enough to get her landed in the United States and past the immigration authorities.

Our second night on the island of isolation bade fair to be less comfortable, weatherwise, than the first had been—and the promise was kept. Before we had made our beds in the sand, the wind had shifted, and though it wasn't cold, as the thermometer measures temperatures, it was chilling and disagreeable, coming upon the heels of a warm day. When I awoke, at a time which, judging from the position of the stars, was somewhere past midnight, the wind was still blowing and it was chillier than ever.

After I had made up the fire, ineffectually, because there was little fuel wood to be had, I crouched beside it to grind at the mill of invention. Clearly something must be done; something more practical than merely sitting down and waiting supinely for a rescue which might never come.

I tried to think up some way of escape on our own, but the means, so far as I could see, were totally lacking. There were trees out of which a raft could have been built, but nothing bigger than my pocketknife with which to fell them. If we could only have had the schooner's small boat which had been sunk and lost in the night of the jettisoning of the live cargo—

This reversion to the matter of the lost boat set me thinking again. The oars had drifted ashore; why hadn't the boat done the same? True, the clustering bee-swarm of drowning men had sunk it, but it must have come to the surface again when they released it. Had it done so? Or if not, why hadn't it?

Impulsively I determined to find out, if the finding were at all possible.

A few feet away on the other side of the fire the little one was asleep, but she was all drawn up as if she were cold, and I took my coat off and spread it over her gently, careful not to awaken her. Next, I made my way through the first gap I could find in the mangrove hedge and reconnoitered the interior of the island. As I had expected, and hoped, I found the Chinese huddled about a small fire built not far from the water hole, whither they had retreated, doubtless to dodge the chill wind sweeping the beaches.

A FEW minutes later I was on the shore of the northern bay, taking off my clothes and trying to locate, as well as I could, the exact position the smuggler's schooner had occupied when she was hove to. This was difficult, because the dash into the bay had been made in the darkness. Still, I thought I could determine the location approximately; and, wading out to overhead depth, I began to dive and explore the bottom, which, as I remembered, was of hard sand.

It was a groping search, in black darkness, of course; and again and again I was obliged to come up for air. I don't know how many times I had to go down and claw my way over the bottom, but in the end persistence was rewarded, and I got my hands upon the gunwale of the sunken boat. As nearly as I could make out by the sense of touch, it was lying nearly upon an even keel on the bottom; and the weight that was holding it down was a crowding burden of human bodies! The drowning Chinese, in the mad effort to save themselves, had climbed into it until it sank under them, and there they had stayed.

Making another kick to the surface for breath, I went down again to tackle the job of lightening the boat. It was unnerving in more ways than one. At last, however, I got all of them over-

board and the boat rose to lie flush with the surface, a waterlogged hull as unwieldy as a sand scow.

I had to cling and rest and gasp a while before I could swim and shove the boat and its waterload ahead of me into the shallows, where it grounded again. Next came the back-breaking task of baling it, which was accomplished by rocking it from side to side and urging it farther into the shallows as it was lightened. It was a slow undertaking, and a killing one for a single pair of arms, but it was done at last; though at the end of it, when I was struggling into my clothes, I was reeling and staggering about like a drunken man from sheer exhaustion.

Next came a blind search for the oar I had salvaged and hidden in the mangroves. Failing to find it readily, mad rage seized me and I became for the moment a raving, cursing lunatic. But the next moment I had the lost oar in my hands, and was straightway ashamed of the rage fit.

Luckily, there was a sculling notch in the small boat's stern, and at the expense of a good deal of labor and no little time, I worked the little craft around to our camp cove and beached it. The fire I had mended was still burning, and Marcia was still asleep. I stood out on the beach and sought for and found the pointers of the Great Bear. Morning was approaching and there was still much to be done.

Securing the two water bottles which we had drained at our shellfish supper, I crawled through the mangroves and stalked the night camp of the Chinamen. Most of them were asleep, and the few who were awake and saw me as I came up made no attempt to stop me when I went to the water hole and filled the bottles.

What I was going to do might well seem as heartless as their abandonment by Miguel Silvio; but it was not only the thing which might promise best for

their ultimate rescue—it was the unavoidable thing. For if they should discover us leaving the island in the boat, there would be a frantic rush in which nobody would escape.

Back at our cove I stowed the water bottles in the boat, shipped the oars, and then went to awaken the sleeping girl. She sat up at my touch and low-spoken word to say:

"Yes, I am waking. Is it that morning has come?"

"Not yet," I replied, "but it won't be long until daybreak. And sunrise mustn't find us here."

At that, she saw the boat drawn up on the sand.

"A boat? Has a ship then come for us?"

"No, that is the boat we had to jump out of two nights ago."

"But where will you find it?" she asked, wide-eyed.

"In the other bay." I didn't tell her how I found it, nor of the reason it had been held on the bottom. What was to be done had to be done quickly, before the Chinese should find out what was forward. "It gives us our chance, and we must go while we can," I added.

"But those poor *Chinois*," she broke in. "What will come to them?"

"It is their chance as well as ours. When we are picked up, or reach land, we can send a ship after them."

As I gave her a hand to help her to her feet she found my coat in her lap and said:

"What will this be? It is your coat."

"Yes," I returned, "I didn't need it, and you seemed cold when I awoke a few hours ago."

"You will make me to be ver-y much ashamed," she said softly. "You do all for me, and for you I do nothing. I shall be thinking you have the heart of the good God, my Larry!"

"Nonsense!" I said, taking refuge in brusqueness because I couldn't trust myself to meet her on her own ground.

"We must go. Let me help you into the boat."

After she was seated in the stern, I pushed off and sprang in, and a few strokes of the oars took us out of our little cove. And at a few more, the island of dreadful happenings had become a mere dark blot in the starlight.

CHAPTER IX.

EMPTY HORIZONS.

INASMUCH as I was fairly certain that our islet lay somewhere to the northeastward of Key West, and would thus be east of the track of vessels plying up and down the west coast of Florida, it followed that our most hopeful chance for being picked up by a passing ship would lie to the westward.

But now that we had the boat, I was strongly tempted to leave the passing-ship chance—which was only a chance, at best—out of the question. If we should be picked up by a ship, it would be necessary to give some account of ourselves. If we should tell the truth, that we were castaways from a smuggler's vessel, no shipmaster would take the risk of landing us at an American port.

On the other hand, there were two alternatives. I was convinced that our island could not be very far north of the chain of keys over which the Florida East Coast Railway reaches Key West. If we could land on one of the keys, we should be in touch with civilization again, and I thought it would go hard with us if I couldn't bribe or buy our way around to New Orleans.

The other alternative was less promising. Somewhere to the northeast lay the Florida mainland, and the stiff breeze blowing generally in that direction would help us along. But as against this, the distance, as I remembered it on the map, must be anywhere from forty to sixty miles, or

possibly more. If the wind should die down or change its direction, we might be taking an excellent chance of starving to death, since we had no provisions, and nothing to drink but the two bottles of water.

Weighing all these various pros and cons hastily as we were getting clear of the island, I decided to try for the keys; with the North Star for a guide, I headed the boat southward. But very shortly I was to learn that wind and weather have the big end of the argument as against the puny strength of one man with a pair of oars.

Before the dim outlines of the island had entirely faded into the darkness astern, I was doing my best to keep our little cockleshell right side up in the troughs, and after a few sweating minutes of this, I did the only thing there was left to do—put the boat's head to the seas and abandoned the idea of trying to go anywhere in particular, or to do anything save to try to keep the cockleshell from capsizing and sending us to a watery grave.

Dawn and the rising sun found us nowhere, so far as any reckoning of mine could place us. Our island had disappeared, whether astern or elsewhere was a mere matter of guesswork, and the open sea, embroidered with whitecaps, lay in all directions around us. And even this wasn't the worst of it. During the hours of darkness the wind had crept around to the northwest, and being obliged to hold the boat's head up to it to keep from being swamped, we had been gradually swung around until we were now heading away from the line of keys—namely, to the northwestward.

Also, by this time, in addition to being completely turned around and lost, so far as our probable location was concerned, I was about ready to tumble off my rowing seat with weariness. The long-drawn-out strain of keeping the boat from shipping seas or capsizing,

added to the hard work which had preceded our outsetting from the island, had practically done me in.

THAT was the beginning of a day of torment. Shortly after sunrise the wind went down and left us tossing in the little seas and merely drifting. For a time I tried to keep on rowing, but before long a consuming thirst, and the fact that I was utterly in the dark as to which way we ought to go, made me limit the effort to an occasional stroke to keep the boat from rolling into the trough.

Ever since it had become light enough to see, Marcia had been keeping our lookout, and we had scarcely spoken. But now she saw my clumsy handling of the oars, and though she confessed she knew nothing about pulling a boat, she begged to change places with me.

"You will be killing yourself all dead with the hard work, my Larry," she protested. "It is not good that you do that. I am not ver-y big, but I am strong. You must let me——"

I shook my head. I wasn't going to tell her it was thirst as much as weariness that was knocking me out. Neither did I mean to break into our tiny water supply, not for myself, this early in the game.

"You couldn't begin to handle these heavy oars," I told her. "And, anyway, I don't know where we are, or which way we ought to go."

"Then," she broke in with gentle authority, "you must rest. You have not sleep one half of the night; you told me you have not."

I unshipped the oars and took them inboard, and tried to get a little ease by humping myself on the rowing seat with my knees drawn up. But she vetoed this promptly.

"That way will not make to rest you," she expostulated. "You must come this way and lie down with your

head on my knees. I will keep the good watch for a ship."

If I hadn't been half shot with fatigue and the long struggle with the wind and sea I shouldn't have given up. But when she held out her arms I seemed to go all soft and foolish, picturing her as an angel of pity and comforting, the touch of whose hands would make me forget both thirst and weariness. And truly they did; before I knew it I had fallen asleep, lying on the bottom of the boat: with my head in her lap.

THE broiling sun was past its meridian when I awoke and sat up with a start.

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, in keen self-reproach, "you shouldn't have let me sleep so long! And you—you must be cramped to death, sitting here holding my head all this time. Why didn't you——"

"I am not minding," she said. "I make it nize to do something for you when you do so much for me, my Larry. And you sleep so good I shall not like to wake you."

"There has been no ship, or no sight of land?" I queried.

"No, I look around and around all the time. It is all empty—there is nothing."

I reached under the seat she was sitting on and drew out one of the water bottles.

"You must be half dead with thirst," I said, judging her condition by my own. "You knew where the water was; why didn't you help yourself?"

"I do not make to be so ver-y thirsty," she replied, adding: "And I am thinking you will be needing the water more than I shall."

"Nothing like that!" I retorted. Then I tampered with the truth. "I'm not nearly as dry as I was before I went to sleep. You must drink."

I watched her, and as she didn't take

more than two swallows out of the bottle I handed her, I held myself down to the same scanty throat moistening. But the two bottles were only pint pocket flasks, and the four swallows cut half of our supply into half. Corking the bottle, I put it back under the stern seat and crawled forward to my rowing thwart. It doubtless made little difference whether we rowed or drifted; but since the human atom in distress craves action of some sort, however futile, I shipped the oars and began to pull, turning the boat's bow to the southward, or as nearly in that direction as might be, judging from the position of the sun.

Though we half blinded ourselves keeping watch for land or a sail on a sea that reflected the sun's glare and its heat like a vast mirror, evening came without a single hopeful sign having appeared on the blank horizons. By this time I had less than no idea where we were, or how far we had drifted and rowed. One consolation we had as the sun, a red-hot ball, sank below the western sea rim: until it should rise again we should be relieved of its blistering, blinding heat and glare.

For a long time after dark neither of us slept; but when sleep finally came, it came first to the stout-hearted little girl-woman who, throughout the long and terrible day, had set me an example of patience and fortitude that was beyond all praise. I made her as comfortable as I could with my folded coat for a pillow, and then crept away to the bow of the boat to continue the all-but-hopeless watch for a ship's lights. After, perhaps, an hour of this I, too, fell asleep and did not awaken until, measuring the time by the stars, I thought it must be well along toward morning—as it was.

Sitting up cautiously so as not to arouse the little one if she were still sleeping, I swept the starlit horizons hastily. There was nothing in sight,

though I reflected remorsefully that a dozen ships might have passed within hail of us while we were both asleep. After a few minutes, a voice called softly to ask if I were awake.

I went aft. "Are you suffering much?" I asked.

"No," she replied bravely, "only, of course, I shall be a little more thirsty. But you, my Larry?"

"I'm all right," I evaded. "Have you been awake long?"

"I shall not know how long; but yes, for some time, I am thinking."

Silence for a few minutes and then she spoke again.

"Are you thinking that perhaps we die out here?" she asked gently.

"Oh, no, it can't come to anything like that!" I hastened to say.

Another silence, and then: "I shall not be afraid to die; only I should like it to be in our America. But you, my Larry—you will have much to live for, is it not, yes?"

"Not more than other folks; perhaps not so much as a good many others. But I haven't given up yet, and you mustn't. I don't look for another blank day, as yesterday was." And then I explained how there must be many vessels passing to and fro so near the coast, and that we must surely be discovered and picked up before long.

"And you shall be thinking maybe we shall live another day without the water to drink?"

"Let us hope that it won't be that long. We mustn't give up."

Again she said, "I am not afraid;" and then she asked me if I had a pencil and paper in my pocket. When I said I had my water-soaked notebook which would answer for paper, she went on to say that when it came daylight, so that I could see to write, I was to set down the name and address of her foster parents, and also the name and address of the mother of the boy we had buried on the island beach.

"It may be so this boat will be found after we shall not be alive," she went on evenly. "I am thinking it will be hard if Father Michael and Mother Maria shall not know what becomes of me."

This was pretty heartbreaking stuff, and I tried to brush it aside by telling her that our situation was still far from being desperate, that we should live to look back upon this experience as just an adventure, and so on: saying things to hearten her that were things hoped for, rather than believed in. She let me talk along on that line until I had talked myself out, and then she said, quite calmly:

"It is out of your good heart that you say to me these things that you do not believe yourself, my Larry. I shall not be troubled for what shall become of me: but for you—my heart is cut in two pieces for that you shall die when you are only trying to help a poor girl who means nothing to you; or who would mean nothing if you were not like the Sir Gal-ahad I am reading about in the book of my mother."

Oh, good Lord!—if I could only have told her how much she had come to mean to me in the four short days and nights of our acquaintance! But I couldn't do that. I was afraid to do it. Her perfect love and trust were too precious, too childlike, to be broken in upon and perhaps destroyed completely if I should let myself go. So I bit my tongue and told her that I had done only what any halfway decent man would have done in my place; that I had nothing to regret and much to be thankful for, and so forth.

I HAVE no words to tell of the pangs of that second day and the night that followed. Evening came at last, and the only relief it brought was a steady breeze out of the northwest; a cool, moist wind that did something to-

ward allaying the burning thirst that had long since rendered both of us well-nigh speechless. When darkness fell, I crawled back to where my brave little comrade had sat through the long, terrible day scanning the horizons for the sail that never appeared, and made her lie down and sleep. After a time I fell into the lethargy of exhaustion. There were times when, waking, I fancied I saw lighted ships passing and repassing; but what little reason I had left told me that these were only hallucinations.

Dawn came at last, and with the lightening of the eastern sky I roused myself enough to look around. To my astoundment I saw, or seemed to see, a point of land jutting out toward the boat, land with a tree fringe of matted trunks and roots, and waving palms.

At first I thought it was another hallucination. Then the breeze blew the drifting boat past the point and I saw a crescent-shaped bay with a huddle of dark forms lying on the beach sand. After two days and nights of aimless wanderings on the face of the great deep, we had come back to the island of death.

The little stir I made at the shock of this discovery awoke the little one and she sat up. By this time neither of us could talk very much, but I contrived to mumble out, "Water—there is water there," and crept to the rowing seat to get the oars into the rowlocks.

Benumbed as I was by hunger and thirst, I still had sense enough to know that we dare not land in sight of the Chinese. By this time they would be desperate enough to mob us and take the boat away from us. My intention was to row away silently without disturbing them; to skirt the islet to a landing place on the southern shore from which we could reach the water hole without betraying our presence.

But this was not to be. In my weakened condition I couldn't handle the

oars quietly enough, and at the first splashing I made, four or five of the sleeping figures on the beach came alive and saw us. After that, all my feeble efforts to dodge them were of no avail. Before I could double the point of land, the Chinese were up and following along the beach, gesticulating excitedly at us and crying wildly.

To try to land was to face a madened mob which, if it didn't tear us in pieces, would certainly rob us of the boat. True, I still had Peterson's revolver; but what was that against a score of desperate half savages mad with the desire of escape from their prison?

In despair I turned the boat's head away from the land, and the little one saw what I was doing and nodded her head. On the lonely ocean we could at least die a clean death; this is the thought that was in my mind, and I knew it was what she would have said if she could have made her parched lips form the words.

I don't remember much of what happened after this. I have a hazy recollection of having tugged feebly at the oars for what seemed like an endless age, of seeing the island slowly fade into indistinctness, of finally dragging the oars, now grown too heavy to lift, inboard. After this there was a blank and I knew nothing more until I came out of the coma fit of exhaustion and famine to find our small boat drawn up to the side of a ship, with hands, rough but kindly, lifting Marcia over the rail, and with the same hands presently extended to help me to follow her.

CHAPTER X.

THE BARRED DOOR.

FOOD, drink and a little time for recovery soon made me my own man again, and I learned that we had been sighted and picked up by the coasting schooner *Mary J.*, Jackson Huddiwell,

master, lumber laden, out of Tampa for Havana. So much Huddiwell told me after Marcia and I had been given first aid and Marcia had retired to the privacy of the skipper's cubby-hole of a stateroom to lie down and rest, leaving Huddiwell and me sitting across from each other at the cabin table.

"Ain't never asked ye yet how come you two was floatin' round out here—aways in an open boat," the master of the *Mary J.* remarked tentatively, boring into me with a pair of shrewd but not unkindly eyes.

Given time, I might have been able to invent some more or less plausible tale to account for the floating; on the other hand, this lank, lean, kindly eyed skipper of lumber schooners had saved our lives and I thought I might safely trust him with the truth, as was his due.

"Do you happen to know a Cuban named Miguel Silvio, a scoundrel who makes his living by running aliens into the United States?" I first asked.

Huddiwell nodded. "Know of him. Don't know him and don't want to."

"That was his dinghy that you took us out of."

"So? What's the rest of it?"

"Miss Clemence and I were passengers in his schooner, and he had been paid to carry us from Havana to the United States. Off Key West he was chased—by a revenue cutter, I suppose—and was about to be overhauled. He put into a small bay on the coast of a barren island not far from where you found us and drove us, and his cargo of helpless Chinamen, overboard into the waters of the bay and sailed away. A good many of the Chinese were drowned."

"How come you got the boat?"

I told him, giving him a brief account of our experience on the island, of the recovery of the boat from the bottom of the bay, and of our two days at sea. After I had finished, he said:

"What-all was you doin' aboard that smuggler? You ain't no foreigner."

"No, I am not, and neither is Miss Clemence. She was born in America, of American parents, though she has lived nearly all of her life in Europe. There was a mix-up in relation to her passport, made at the European end of things, and a crooked steamship agent sent her to Havana, telling her she could enter all right from there. Of course, she couldn't. I undertook to help her, and the smuggler seemed to be the only means that offered."

"Humph!" grunted the skipper. "You'd ought to've knowed better. I wouldn't trust my ship's cat on board that hooker o' Silvio's."

"I've had my lesson," I admitted shortly. "It's God's mercy that it hasn't cost us our lives."

"You said it," was his comment. "Tell me more about that passport mix-up."

Since I had gone thus far, I told him circumstantially, omitting none of the details.

"H'm! That's sort o' bad," he said. "Seems they've got the little lady sort o' spotted. I reckon they know you're tryin' to run her in by the back door, and they'll be watchin' out for her. What-all ye aimin' to do?"

I shrugged. "We're in your hands, Captain Huddiwell."

His reply was heartily friendly. "If it was up to me, and it would do ye any good, I'd put ye ashore at the Key—got to run in there, anyway, to let 'em know about them Chinamen that are goin' to starve to death if they ain't took off. But, as I say, it's most likely the little lady wouldn't be allowed to land; or if she was, she'd be took over by the immigration folks and shipped back to the old country. She ain't wantin' to risk that, is she?"

"No. I offered to pay her passage back to Roumania, from Havana, but she wouldn't let me do it."

The skipper winked one eye slowly. "Right willin' to take a heap o' trouble for her, ain't ye?" he said quizzically.

"Why—er—yes, of course! She is a fellow countrywoman in distress," I countered, not without stammering a bit over this partial evasion of the purely personal motive.

"Uh-huh!" he agreed. "I see." Then, after a reflective moment: "Don't see what I can do more'n to carry ye both over to Havana in the *Mary J.* That'll leave you right where you begun, but I don't see no help for it. You'd sure have a sight o' trouble if I was to put you ashore at Key West."

"It couldn't be done secretly? Say, at night?"

"I reckon not. We'll be off the Key in a couple of hours or so, and my owners'd haul me over the coals good and plenty if I was to lay up there till night, with no good reason I could give 'em for doin' it."

I still had a well-padded money belt, and if the skipper of the *Mary J.* hadn't been so manifestly friendly and whole-souled and honest, perhaps I might have tried to bribe him. But I had a growing conviction that he would take such an overture as an insult.

"As I've said, it wouldn't do any good for ye to land at the Key, even in the dark. You'd have to take the railroad to get away from there, and they'd spot ye. No, I reckon the onliest thing for you to do is to go back to Havana and start over ag'in. Maybe ye can get that passport business strightened up, if ye go at it man-size and give it another whirl."

I had no further arguments to adduce, and it seemed as though we were again in a blind alley.

TWO hours later, as the *Mary J.* entered the harbor of Key West, the little one joined me on deck, and I was rejoiced to note that she seemed quite

her serene self again; a trifle pale as yet, and with dark shadows under the pretty eyes to tell of the hardships endured; but that was all.

"O-o-o-h!" she exclaimed, seeing where we were. "Is it that we are coming to our America at last?"

I hated to dash her hopes, but it had to be done. "It is our America, as you say, the port of Key West. But it is not for us—not now, at least." Then I repeated the substance of the after-breakfast talk with Skipper Huddiwell.

"It is most sad," she said, when the discouraging tale was told. Then, again, she tried unselfishly to persuade me to unshoulder my responsibility. "It is no use, my Larry, you can do nothing for me. When the ship comes to land, you must go away and leave me. There will be no trouble for you if you do not embarrass yourself with me. I am bad luck for you all the times."

"It is no use for you to talk that way," I objected quickly. "If you think I am going to duck out now and leave you to go back to Havana alone, after what we have gone through together—— Well, I simply wouldn't consider such a thing for a moment. You know I wouldn't."

"Ah, ver-y well do I know your good heart, my Larry! But juze think for one little moment. What can you make to do for me when we are again in that Havana? Have you not try and try before, and find you can do nothing?"

"I don't know what can be done; but one thing is definitely settled: I'm not going to let you go back alone. That is out of the question. What is to be done after we reach Havana is a problem we'll wrestle with when we get there. 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'"

By this time the schooner was dropping her anchor and Captain Huddiwell was preparing to go ashore in Miguel Silvio's small boat, which had

been towing astern since we were taken out of it. He was gone but a short time; and when he returned, the order to weigh anchor and make sail was given at once. It was not until the *Mary J.* was out of the harbor and pointing her blunt nose for the straits crossing that I had a chance to speak privately with Huddiwell.

"Did you find out anything?"

He nodded. "Word had been passed across from Havana that Silvio had sailed with a deckload o' Chinese, and the immigration folks was on the look-out for him. More than that, they'd found out, some way, that you and the little lady was part o' the deckload. I didn't tell 'em how I come to know about the Chinamen bein' marooned; let 'em think I'd sailed past the island and seen 'em. I didn't tell 'em I had you and Miss Marshy along with me. But you see, now, you couldn't 'a' took her ashore, nohow."

"Yes, I see," I replied dejectedly. "Did you hear anything more?"

"Not much; only one o' the government men said that Havana was plumb full o' undesirable wimmen from Europe, a-tryin' to burst into the United States, and they was goin' to be kep' out."

That made my blood boil again. "They are stupid blockheads—the whole lot of them!" I burst out angrily. "Miss Clemence is not that sort! I tell you right now, Captain Huddiwell, I'm going to see that she gets her rights if it takes all the balance of the summer!"

"Reckon I would, too, if I was in your shoes," the skipper said simply; and that ended it.

WE had a quiet and uneventful passage across the Florida Straits. Upon leaving the *Mary J.*, in Havana, I tried to pay Huddiwell for our passage, but the good-hearted skipper was almost offended.

"I ain't got so's I have to take money from shipwrecked folks," he protested warmly. "You're more'n welcome to all you got, and more if you want it."

As we were parting on the wharf, I asked Huddiwell if he were likely to be in Havana any length of time, and he said he might be held for a week or more, getting his return cargo. At that I said we should certainly see him again; and Marcia told him how much we owed him and thanked him.

"That's all right; I ain't done nothin' that anybody wouldn't do," he returned. And then to me: "You stick right close to this little girl, Mr. Kendall, and see to it that she gets what's comin' to her."

It was not until we had started in search of one of the flivver taxicabs with which Havana is fairly overrun that the little one said: "You will make to go to a hotel now, my Larry?"

"Sure," I said. "We've got to have a place to eat and sleep, for the time being, at least."

"But think how we shall make to look!" she protested.

I laughed. Up to that minute I hadn't given a thought to our appearance. We were both bareheaded; we had been in the sea, all standing, so to speak; had slept in the sand and in the bottom of a dirty boat; and—Well, we looked like a couple of stow-aways, costumed to fit the part. No respectable hotel would have allowed us to register.

But money is the great solvent of most difficulties, no less in Cuba than elsewhere, and after we had found a taxi driver who understood and spoke a little English, the liberal tip I gave him made him an unquestioning servant and cicerone. He drove us first to a shop where Marcia could outfit, and next to a place from which I could emerge a little later, shaved, bathed and decently clothed and hatted; and once more we were ready to face a censorious world.

For obvious reasons I did not direct our chauffeur to drive us to the hotel from which we had taken our unceremonious departure on the night of evanishment. I knew of another equally good, and thither we went, and were in time for a late breakfast at the table d'hôte. Up to this time I had formulated no plan of action; but over the hot cakes, served *à la Américain*, with maple sirup, I laid down the first principle to which I meant to adhere, come what might. To Marcia's query as to what I intended doing, I answered:

"I don't know yet; but there is one thing we shan't do. From this time on, everything is going to be open and aboveboard. The next time we cross to America it isn't going to be as 'live cargo.' We are through with the smuggling game."

Breakfast finished, I determined that the first thing to do was to have a talk with Peterson, and through him to get the trunks brought over from the other hotel. Accordingly, after I had taken Marcia up to her room, I stopped at the cigar stand in the lobby to break an overlong tobacco famine, meaning to go immediately to Peterson's office.

As I was lighting the cigar, a man, the same hatchet-faced *Dogberry* who, a few days earlier, had told the consul he would keep an eye on me, strolled in and, after a casual glance around the lobby, crossed to the desk to examine the hotel register. By some crooked twist of the wheel of fate he had learned that we were back in Havana, and he was camping on our trail again.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ONE EXPEDIENT.

KNOWING well enough that the immigration deputy, or whatever he was, had found our names in the hotel register, and was doubtless making in-

quiry of the clerk as to our present whereabouts, I slipped out of the place after the manner of a criminal dodging the police and chased around to Peterson's office.

"Good Lord! Where did you drop from, Larry?" he exclaimed. "I thought you'd be in New Orleans by this time."

"Call it dropping, if you like, but to me it's more like an emergence from the place down below," I said, taking the chair at the desk end, and then I told him what had been happening to us.

"Why, Larry! The murderer!" he ejaculated, meaning Silvio. "You made just one little mistake, my boy. You had a gun, and when he came at you, you ought to have shot him full of holes and rid the world of at least one villain of his kind."

"I've told myself that same identical thing a good many times since," I agreed. "But that is a back number, now. I want to know what we're going to do next."

He was thoughtful for a moment before he said: "No more back-door methods, I take it?"

"Not on your life! If you had been through what I have in the past few days——"

"You've made it vivid enough. How did the little girl stand it?"

"Like an angel. She was, and is, pure gold, Bob. I haven't any words to tell you how clean-hearted and brave and unselfish she is. When we touched at Key West after we were picked up, she urged me to go ashore and leave her to her fate. I'm telling you right here and now that the man who says she isn't all she ought to be, and more, will have me to fight."

He smiled. "Are you in that deep, already, old man?"

"I am in so deep that I'd count it the biggest thing that ever happened to me if she would marry me."

This time his smile was a grin. "Well," he drawled, "what's to hinder?"

"Just this: I believe she'd make any sacrifice for me that the necessity demanded and do it willingly. But she doesn't know what love—married love—is, Peterson. We've been drawn mightly close together in these last few terrible days, but— Well, she's just a pure-hearted, innocent child, after all. The woman in her isn't awake."

"All right," he conceded. "I guess you know; you ought to know, anyway. Now about your dilemma—the job you've shouldered. You are still determined to help her over the hurdles?"

"You know I am. But it's got to be done decently, lawfully. I am taking no more chances of battle, murder and sudden death."

"Fine! But now let me tell you what you're up against. In some way, I don't know just how, the authorities found out that you and the girl had taken passage in Silvio's smuggling schooner last Friday night. I was in the office of our friend the consul, the day after you vanished, and he told me about it; not suspecting, of course, that I'd had a hand in it. Naturally—and you can't blame him greatly—he put the worst possible construction upon the fly-by-night business, pointed out that the girl had deliberately and successfully vamped you and made you an accomplice in her attempt to evade the law."

"He believes that, does he?"

"Naturally, as I say. Put yourself in his place for a minute."

I nodded. Here was one avenue, the only apparent one, impassably closed, barred and locked. "In that case, I suppose it is no use for me to go to him to ask for a rehearing?"

"Candidly, Larry, I'm afraid not. You see, this time you can't come into court with—er—exactly clean hands. You've flouted the law; and the law

doesn't turn the other cheek after you've slapped it once."

"How about going to our minister plenipotentiary?" I asked.

"Nothing doing in that quarter, either. Apart from the fact that the legation would refuse to cut in over the consul's head, the truth would have to come out."

"You are a Job's comforter, all right!" I complained. "If I can't go to the consul or the minister, what can I do?"

"Have you thought anything about my first suggestion? Tampico and the Mexican border?"

"No, and I'm not going to," I retorted. "I've put the little girl through a course of horrors and in a bad light—a criminal light, if you like—once, and that is enough. There isn't going to be any more dodging."

He lifted a shoulder in a shrug and said: "Honestly, Larry, I don't know what else to suggest. By the way, has she told you anything more about this Colorado friend of hers, who put up the money for her passage overseas?"

"She has told me all she knows," I replied, and passed the scanty telling on to him.

"Something a bit queer about that," he commented musingly. "Do you—don't get mad and hit me, now—do you really believe she has told you all she knows?"

"I do. I'm sure of it, Bob, as sure as I am of anything in this world. She is perplexed about it and admits it; and it was only the promise that she would be able to help her foster parents in Roumania that made her decide to venture."

"She doesn't know what that promise is based upon?"

"She does not. I have thought maybe there might be some relative of hers, or of her American parents, who was at the bottom of it, and who, for some reason, didn't want to make him-

self, or herself, known. But she knows next to nothing about any American relatives. There was one, her mother's uncle, who lived in Lima, Ohio, a good many years ago, and who wrote to her mother after the Clemences went to Roumania. But she knows of him only through a couple of his old letters, which she still has and has shown me. You see, she was such a little thing when her father and mother died——"

"Of course," he returned, "she wouldn't remember much, that far back. But that's off the mark. Since she can't remember her Colorado correspondent's name, there is nothing to be hoped for in that quarter. I've only one thing to offer. I know the consul pretty well, and I'll appoint myself a committee of one to go to him and plead your cause. Will you wait here? Or will you go back to your hotel?"

"I'll wait here," I decided; and at that he put on his hat and went to bell the cat—or to try to.

INASMUCH as he had expressed a lack of hope in an appeal to the powers, I spent a rather trying half hour or more awaiting his return. When at last he made his appearance, I knew before he said anything what the result, or no result, of his friendly effort had been.

"No go, Larry, I couldn't convince him," he announced, dropping into his chair at the desk. "It was just about as I was afraid it would be. He took the ground that the very fact that she consented to take passage on a smuggler was evidence that she knew she wasn't entitled to enter in the regular way."

"But, Bob!" I protested. "Didn't you tell him that I ran the show entirely on my own? That Marcia only played the little led-dog part in it?"

"I tried to, but he merely smiled genially and said that, from his single talk with you, he judged you'd be the

kind of man to try to shoulder the blame. It was no use. I could see he had made up his mind that the young woman had vamped you—and probably me—and that was the end of it."

"Well, it isn't the end of it!" I broke out hotly, as I rose to go. "Are you going to be here in the office the rest of the morning?"

"I wasn't, but I'll stay if you think you are going to need me."

"If the thing I have in mind goes through, I'll need you and need you like the very devil," I gritted. But when he wanted to know what crazy notion I'd got into my head now, I put him off and bolted.

The hatchet-faced inspector, or whatever he was, was still hanging around in the lobby when I got back to the hotel. I thought at first he was going to speak to me, and wished he would so that I might tell him what I thought of him. But he turned away and let me go to the elevator, with only a side-long glance to let me know that he was still on his job.

SO there might be no question of the proprieties, I had taken a suite of two rooms for Marcia, and when I tapped at the door of her sitting room and entered I found her thoughtfully stajding at a window and looking out upon the Parque Central. She began, before I could open my mouth and broach my news:

"I am thinking I shall have make all too ver-y much trouble for you, my Larry, and now that we have come to the place where you have found me first, it is time that I should not let you make for yourself any more. It is too much that you leave all your own business for poor me."

"I thought we'd fought that side of it out long ago," I replied. "My business, the only business I have at present, is to get you into the United States. So that's that."

"But you have not found any other way!" she interposed.

"How do you know I haven't?"

Her smile was childlike, but it also had in it the age-old wisdom of all womankind. "I am seeing it in your face, my Larry. Do you not know you cannot make to hide things from me?"

"You are right," I agreed. "What I meant to do when I left you after breakfast was to go to our consul and fight it out with him until he should listen to reason. But first I went to my friend Peterson, and he told me it was no use. Peterson, however, did what he could; he went to the consul himself to plead for you. It was no good. So that door is shut tight and locked.

"I shall think you know beforehand that it would be," she said quietly; but I thought it was the quietness of despair. Then she added: "But now you shall see that I am right, yes? There is nothing more you can do for me."

"Yes, there is," I put in quickly, "but it must have your consent. You know what I mean."

I could see the color mounting slowly in her face, but she would not let me see her eyes. "I—I must not let you do that, my Larry. It—it would be to sin before God. And you would be sorry afterward that you let your good heart make you to do such a thing, yes."

"Think a moment," I interposed. "Unless you will let me pay your passage back to Roumania, there is nothing else to do. You say you cannot go back to be a burden upon your foster parents, and you have reason to believe that good fortune of some sort awaits you in Colorado. After what we have been through together, I believe you can trust me to do what I promise to do; to see you through to your journey's end, and then to go

about my business and leave you free. There is nothing wicked about it. You will merely be giving me the legal right to help you to obtain your rights. I ——" I couldn't go on much farther without betraying myself, without telling her that any sacrifice on my part wouldn't be in marrying her—it would be in letting her go out of my life afterward.

"But—but, my Larry! To make marriage is a thing ver-y holy, is it not? And to make mock of it——"

I felt a good bit like a devil tempting a saint, but I had to go on as I had begun. "If it were a real marriage, you might call it a sin. But since it would be only a form to satisfy the law —— Don't be afraid of me, Marcia, dear. My promise to you shall be sacred. And there is no other way, at all."

For the first time she lifted her eyes to mine and there were tears in them. "I shall be thinking your dear heart is all made of pity, my Larry," she said softly. "If I shall let you do this great, great thing for me, you will not think afterward that I am a bad woman with no heart at all?"

"I shall always think of you as I have been thinking ever since that evening in the dining room of the other hotel when I first saw you. I thought then, and I am thinking now, that you are a dear girl in deep trouble; one whom any decent man ought to be proud and happy to help."

"Then—then it shall be as you say," she murmured; "and afterward I shall pray the good God that He forgives me for being so selfish in these so sacred things."

Though I had been begging for it, her assent nearly made me lose my head. More than ever a starved dog wanted a bone, I wanted to tell her that to be even her nominal husband for a little while would give me a precious memory that I'd carry to my grave.

BUT, of course, I didn't do any such thing. I became very businesslike, telling her I would have our trunks brought over from the other hotel, where they were still in storage, that I'd make all the necessary arrangements at once, and that after we were duly married we would have luncheon in the hotel, and then go immediately to the New Orleans ship, the afternoon sailing of which I had seen posted in the lobby.

She was very sweet about it, raising no more objections, now that she had consented to go through with it. I hurried off to set things in train, incidentally, I may say, in a state of mind that may be much more easily imagined than described. First giving the hotel clerk an order for the transfer of the trunks, with directions to send them up to our respective rooms as soon as they came, I went once more in search of Peterson. According to promise, he was waiting for me in his office, and he nearly fell out of his chair when I told him bluntly what we were going to do.

"Good heavens, Larry!" he shouted. "Do you realize what this is that you're proposing? Or is it just another of your mad impulses?"

"Call it anything you like, it is going to be done, and you are going to help. You know the ropes here, and I don't; so get ready to jump in."

He didn't—not immediately. On the contrary, he argued forcibly and almost profanely against what he was pleased to call my utter and absolute lunacy. I let him talk himself out because it was the only thing to do with Peterson when he got started.

"Is that all you have to say? Are you sure you've got it all off your chest?" I asked, when he stopped to take breath. "Because, if you have, we'll go on with the program—which you are needlessly holding up."

"You still mean to say you are going

through with it? With a woman you have known less than a week?"

"You've said it. The only thing about it that I regret is that it is going to be temporary. I'd give ten years off the end of my life if I could make it permanent."

He shook his head in despair. "I suppose it's no use talking to you. You were always as bull-headed as the devil when you'd let a bug of some sort bite you. What's the girl's religion?"

I had to admit that I didn't know, though I supposed it would be that of the state church of Roumania, if there were any such thing.

"There is"—he informed me—"Oriental Orthodox. If she's Greek Orthodox, she'll refuse to be married by a Catholic priest; and if she happens to be a Catholic——"

"I hadn't thought of a church wedding of any kind," I interposed. "What is the matter with a magistrate?"

"A Cuban *magistrado*? More of your ignorance, my son. If she has any religion at all, she'll be dead set against that."

I grew impatient. "Fix it up any way you please and I'll answer for her. Only don't waste any more time. We're leaving for New Orleans by the afternoon boat."

"All right," he yielded. "Since you don't know whether she is Catholic or Greek, we'll compromise. There is a mission of the American Episcopal Church here." He gave me the address, Neptuna and Aguila Streets. "How long will it take you to get ready?"

"Just a few minutes after the trunks are sent over from the other hotel."

"Well, it will take me more time than that." He pulled a scratch pad out of the desk and found a pencil. "Give me the data: birthplace, name and age of both victims, and all that."

I gave him all the facts I had and drew upon my imagination for the rest.

I didn't remember Marcia's age, though I had seen her birth date recorded in her mother's Bible, and I wasn't going back to the hotel to ask her; so we put her down as of legal age. Also, I didn't know her birthplace; but two of the old letters written by her mother's uncle, and which she had shown me, were dated from Lima, Ohio, so we called Lima the place of her nativity.

"Good!" said Peterson, tearing the sheet from the pad and folding it to pocket size. "Now go ahead and doll yourself up, and be at that address I've given you at twelve o'clock sharp. I'll be there with the minister, the witnesses and the proper legal documents, whatever they may be."

"Just one other thing," I put in as I rose to go. "Down in the harbor, somewhere about the foot of San Isidro Street, you'll find the *Mary J.*, our rescue schooner, and her skipper, Jackson Huddiwell. If you have time, I wish you'd get Huddiwell for one of the witnesses. He'll come, I'm sure."

CHAPTER XII.

"TO LOVE AND TO CHERISH."

FINDING upon my return to the hotel that the trunks had already been delivered, I went up to tap once more at Marcia's door. "Just to ask if there is anything you want, or anything I can do," I said, as she opened to me.

"Oh, yes, I shall have been wishing for you to come to tell me what I shall wear!" she said naively.

Heavens! The idea of her asking *me!* But I went with her to the bedroom where she had three gowns spread out on the bed, and because I had it to do, chose a modest thing of some soft-colored stuff, chiefly for the reason that when she held it up in front of her it went well with her dark hair and eyes and creamy skin.

"But this? If we are to travel so soon?" she queried.

"You will have plenty of time to change. Our ship doesn't sail until four o'clock or later."

"And the—the marrying," she breathed. "When will that be?"

"At twelve precisely. My friend Peterson is arranging for us. And that reminds me. I—er—didn't think to ask you to what church you belong."

"There will be no American church in the village where we are living in Roumania, so I am confirmed in the Roumanian Church—what you will call the Greek Orthodox, yes?"

"Then it is all right; we are to be married in an American church here. You'd want to be married by an American clergyman, wouldn't you?"

"I shall like it to be that way, yes."

While we were talking, I was looking at her hands and trying to fix in my mind the size of the finger upon which I should shortly be placing the ring. Of course it couldn't be done, so I brushed the embarrassments aside and got a bit of string and took the measure. This brought a surge of color into her cheeks, but she submitted patiently to my clumsy measuring, making no reply when I said:

"It may not fit, probably won't. But you won't have to wear it very long."

Having her assurance that there was nothing else I could do for her, I went to my own room and broke into my trunk. Luckily, since I had frequently been a guest in the hacienda at Valdamia Plantations, I had a respectable suit. After I had changed, I slipped downstairs and out to the nearest jewelry shop to buy the ring—that, and some flowers for the little one, being determined to make it seem as much like a real wedding as I could.

AFTER killing all the time possible in making these purchases I still had a weary wait. But the clock hands finally dragged themselves into the zero-hour position and, after securing a

cab. I went up to tell Marcia that we were due to go.

The vision that confronted me when she opened the door was enough to make me gasp. She was wearing the dress I had selected, and she fashioned herself a veil out of some old yellow lace that she said was an heirloom in the Brancovan family and very precious. She had my flowers and was trying to thank me for them.

"I wonder if you know how very beautiful you are, Marcia?" I said, holding her for a moment at arm's length.

She gave me a queer little smile, saying, a bit breathlessly, I thought: "It will make me to be ver-y glad that you will be thinking so, my Larry. Shall we make to go, now?"

I was a little appalled at the thought of marching her through the hotel lobby in her bridal finery and veil, but I needn't have been. While I held the door, she wrapped herself in a long, foreign-looking cloak of some thin stuff and covered her head with a mantilla thing such as the Cuban women wear, and if we created any furore in our progress to the waiting cab I wasn't aware of it.

Arriving at the American "mission," as Peterson had called it, I was surprised to find that it was a cathedral church, a very noble structure of white concrete, with an entrance and façade harmonizing perfectly with its Spanish-American surroundings. Peterson met us at the door, and I saw that there were two other cabs drawn up in the street. If I had had the heart to be amused at anything, Peterson's expression when he was introduced to Marcia would have furnished the clicking impulse. He hadn't properly met her before. On the night of our elopement in the smuggling schooner he had hardly had a glimpse of her. But now I could see that he was tumultuously retracting everything he had ever said or

thought about her in the doubting category.

"Everything is all set," he said, in an aside to me. "The dominie is ready and your witnesses are here." Then in his best manner, which was exceedingly good when he chose to make it so: "Miss Clemence, may I have the pleasure and honor of giving the bride away?"

"You will be my Larry's friend; I shall make to be ver-y glad," she said quite unaffectedly.

Again I saw that queer expression come into Peterson's face, as if he were saying to himself: "Lord, what a blind fool I've been!"

We all went in together, and as we walked up the broad aisle I saw the witnesses; Captain Huddiwell, two young men whom I afterward learned were clerks from Peterson's office, and—handsomely enough on his part, I thought—my little German bank manager, come to see his sly suggestion welded into sober fact.

The clergyman was waiting for us at the chancel steps—a tall, thin, elderly man looking almost ethereal in his vestments. His face, as I looked up into it, was the face of one of God's gentlemen, calm, benign, a trifle ascetic, perhaps, and yet entirely human and sympathetic. He smiled and signed to us to take our places before him.

"'Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God——'"

I couldn't have told, ten minutes after it was over, how much or how little I heard of the time-honored rite. I was holding Marcia's hand and could feel that she was trembling. At that my heart swelled and a lump came in my throat; and what came after—the solemn questions and answers, and the still more solemn promises "'to have and to hold—for better for worse—in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish,'" were gone through automatically, mechanically, as if the outward

man were obeying some hypnotic influence while the inner was struggling in overwhelming throes of pity and love and something very nearly akin to adoration.

When I came to, if I may put it that way, the minister had pronounced the blessing, and the witnesses had come forward to offer their congratulations; Huddiwell with a sailor's bluff heartiness, Peterson's young clerks with half-shy embarrassment, the little German bank manager with a twinkle in his eye and the politeness of a Chesterfield on his tongue. In the midst of it Peterson said, "How about it, Larry? Aren't you going to kiss the bride?" and when I took her in my arms, as I had to, then, she gave me her lips as an affectionate child might have done, and thus the compact which was to mean nothing to either of us was sealed.

In the sacristy where the church books were kept, we signed the register, and the witnesses signed with us, Peterson directing things in a businesslike way and providing us with the documents which were to be the little one's charter of liberty.

AFTER the witnesses had shaken hands and departed, Peterson said:

"I've phoned your hotel and ordered a wedding breakfast; I knew you'd be too excited to think of any such commonplace thing as eating, Larry. And the good doctor here will honor us with his presence. I want him to know you both better. Shall we go now?"

We went; Marcia and I in one of the flivver cabs, and Peterson and the minister in another. At the hotel we three men waited in the lobby while Marcia went up to change her clothes. While we lingered, Peterson did most of the talking, and I tried to gather from his talk how much or how little he had told the clergyman about the circumstances which had led up to the hastily

arranged wedding. But it was not until the good doctor had excused himself, to go and speak to an acquaintance who had just come in, that I had a chance to question Peterson.

"Tell me quick, Bob! How much have you told him?" I queried anxiously.

"Nothing at all more than he was entitled to know; nothing whatever about your smuggling escapade. I explained that you two had just met here in Havana a short time ago, but he doesn't know that you haven't been sweethearts from away back. He is a dear old saint, as you can see for yourself, and if he'd had any idea that you didn't mean the thing to be permanent, you would have had to hunt another minister. So you mustn't give me away—or let the little girl do it, either."

"No fear of that, from either of us," I hastened to say.

"Good! I've arranged for your passage in the afternoon ship to New Orleans—Mr. Lawrence Kendall and wife, with a good, strong emphasis on the 'wife.' More than that, I squeezed out time to run down to the wharf and tell the captain and purser that two young friends of mine, just married, were to be among the passengers, asking them to see to it that your accommodations were all they ought to be. You get the bridal suite."

"The—what?" I gasped.

"The bridal suite. Costs you something more, of course, but you don't get married every day in the year."

"But, Bob! For Heaven's sake, see here! Haven't I made you understand that this is only a—a matter of form? Good Lord! We're not married in any bridal-suite sense!"

"Ho—are you not?" He grinned, then, with the grin broadening: "That's up to you to figure out, if you can. I take back all I've ever said about your—extremely nominal—wife, Larry. That little girl is an angel, all wool and

a yard wide. If you let her get away from you, you are a bigger chump than I've ever taken you to be—and that's going some. Why, heavens and earth, man, she adores you! A blind person could see that."

"You are blind!" I broke out. "Can't you tell common, everyday gratitude when you see it? It's just that and nothing else. You've put me in a devil of a fix with this bridal-suite business. We can't room together. I'm under promise not to— Well, not to be a husband in anything but the name, and now—"

He met my angry protest with another grin. "As I say, that's up to you, you poor goof. I suppose there'll be no ship's rule against your sleeping in a deck chair for a couple of nights, if you feel the need of so much fresh air. You'll reach New Orleans Saturday afternoon, you know—only two nights out."

I don't know what further opprobrium I should have heaped upon my grinning and all-too-willing accomplice if the clergyman had not just then come up to shut me off. But Peterson had given me something to think about most anxiously; something that kept me tongue-tied and distraught all through the wedding breakfast to which we four presently sat down.

AFTER the meal the dominie asked me when we intended going to our ship, and I told him we had planned to go at once, or as soon as we could do a bit of packing and send our luggage off. Thereupon he offered to wait and go with us; which I thought was exceedingly kind and fatherly of him; so we left him in the lobby with Peterson while we went upstairs to get the trunks and bags ready.

As we were passing through the upper corridor to her rooms, Marcia said: "You shall think there will be no trouble at the ship, this time, my Larry?"

"None at all. I have the papers to show that we are properly married, and I have my own citizenship papers. Besides, Peterson and the minister will be there to vouch for us."

I locked and strapped her trunk for her, and when I straightened up, she put her arms around my neck and kissed me, first on one cheek and then on the other.

"You are ver-y, ver-y good to me, dear Larry, and I shall never, never forget! But you will not think me to be a bad girl for this, will you? That should be to make me *ver-y* unhappy."

"I shall never think anything that I oughtn't to think of you, my dear," I said—then, because I couldn't trust myself to go on: "We mustn't keep our good friends waiting. I'll join you in a minute or so, after I've thrown things into my trunk."

We had a two-seated car for the transfer to the wharf, and when we were about to embark, I was not greatly surprised to see our friend the immigration watchdog apparently waiting for us. While the clergyman was shaking hands with Marcia and me and bidding us good-by and Godspeed, Peterson took my papers and had a word with the ship's officer on duty at the gangplank.

As he rejoined us, I saw the hatchet-faced person go up to the officer and say something; and after he'd got his answer, whatever it was, I saw him turn away with a sour grin. It wasn't my part to halt him and rub it in on him, but I wanted to.

Aboard ship, whither Peterson went with us, a steward showed us to the bridal suite, and I, very pointedly and in Peterson's presence, told Marcia that these were her quarters for the voyage, dragging Peterson away immediately afterward on the plea of going to look after the trunks. We had to wait some little time before the baggage came down from the hotel, and Peterson had

his fun with me to the limit, joshing me unmercifully over what he was pleased to call my new asininity.

"It's all right, though, old man," he concluded, with another of his ribald grins—this after we had seen the trunks put aboard and he was bidding me good-by. "If the little girl doesn't bring you to your senses before you've been twenty-four hours out, I'll miss my guess. And now that I've seen what I've seen, I'll be switched if I don't envy you—and that goes as it lies. You've blundered into Paradise without knowing it. Write me when you get somewhere and tell me if I'm not a true prophet."

"I wish to the Lord you were, Bob; that's all I can say," I replied, returning his hearty hand grip. "But this is one time when you don't know what you're talking about."

And so we parted, and I was left alone with my new and all-important responsibilities.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT SEA.

BARGAINING with the steward for a couple of deck chairs on the promenade, I sat down to have a quiet smoke, thinking it high time to try to get some sort of perspective upon the happenings which had crowded themselves into the past week. Also, I thought about the present situation and of the future.

A wire to my company from New Orleans would sufficiently account for my apparently impulsive decision to take my vacation before returning to the home plant. Now that I had become a husband, even if only in a nominal sense, it went without saying that my responsibilities could scarcely end with a formal farewell and a hasty leave-taking, after I had seen Marcia through to her destination in Colorado. Her arrival in Brewster wouldn't be the

end of things for her; it might very well be only the beginning.

I had been mulling over the perplexing questions which hung answerless in the immediate future for some little time when, momentarily shifting my unseeing gaze from the cargo-loading stir going on at the ship's side, I glanced up to find the little one standing beside me.

"I shall have look everywhere, and I have think you should be lost," she said, smiling down at me. "I am come to scold you most terribly. Those beautiful rooms you get for me—they are so much too fine. I shall think they will cost a whole fortune, is it not?"

"Sit down and be comfortable," I invited. "This chair, next to mine, is yours for the voyage. And about the rooms—I didn't engage them; Peterson did that. But they are none too good for you."

"But those carpets and those mirrors, and the bath with the hot and cold water—they are luxuries!" she protested.

"Um—well—yes, maybe they are. It is the bridal suite, you know. Peterson tried to do things up right when he was engaging our passage. He told the ship's people that the accommodations were for newly married folks."

"Yes? But that will be all true, is it not?"

"Listen," I blurted out, in sheer desperation, "we both know it is only partly true, but we mustn't let anybody on board this ship find out that we are only playing at being married! You'll do your part, won't you?"

"But yes, if I shall know what to do?" she replied. "You will tell me?"

I smiled. "The play is as new to me as it is to you, my dear. I can't prompt you. But if you can make yourself believe, for the time, that our marriage is the real thing, instead of a—er—a mere matter of form—" Again I was forgetting all the brotherly things Peterson had done for us and was re-

membering only the awkward situation he had precipitated in announcing us as a newly wedded pair, when all we asked was to be altogether negligible.

She was silent for a little while, then she said: "It is all most like a wonderful dream to me, my Larry. We have live the ver-y simple life in Roumania, my good Father Michael and Mother Maria and I, and nothing ever happens. And now, one little week ago, when I am not knowing what I shall do, you come, and then everything happens."

"Yes," I agreed, with a smile that was probably a bit twisted, "and the funny part of it is that things are going to keep on happening. Have you thought anything about what you shall do when you reach Colorado?"

"I am thinking all the time that I shall by and by remember the name of this friend who writes to me."

"But if you shouldn't remember it at all, and if you can't find him—what then?" I asked.

I heard her quick little gasp and was remorseful. Things had been crowding so thickly upon her during the past few days that I suppose she hadn't had much chance to think ahead and make plans for the future.

"But—but, my Larry!—I must make to find him!" she stammered. "I——"

"Hold on," I broke in, "I shouldn't have said that. Of course you will find him. Brewster isn't a very large place, and I'll help you. You'd know his name if you should see it or hear it spoken, wouldn't you?"

"But, my Larry—you must not to go 'all the way with me. That is too much!"

"Huh! Not see you through? Could your—er—husband do less? Didn't I promise to love and cherish you, and all that?"

"Please!" she pleaded. "I am all the time thinking about this marrying. We must pray that the good God will for-

give us. I am all trembling when I remember the things we say in that holy church."

"I meant all the things I said," I put in quickly; then I dragged the talk back to the Colorado person. "I asked if you would know your friend's name if you should see or hear it. Would you?"

"Oh, but yes! I am ver-y sure I should. He writes not so plain; but he have his name printed at the top of his letters."

I put that item down in the mental memorandum. The man had written on a business or professional letterhead, and a man who used such stationery would doubtless have his name and address in the telephone directory. I should have been glad to have make this deduction. But, instead, I was hoping very heartily that something had occurred to blot this mysterious person off the face of the earth—had occurred, or would occur, before we should reach our destination.

"Let's not worry any more about this nameless man," I counseled. "He is a future, but the present is ours." At which I began pointedly to talk, and to make her talk, of other things—of the way in which chance had thrown us together; of our adventures on the island and in the open boat; of the wedding, and the kind and fatherly clergyman, and the way Peterson had thrown himself to help us, and the final putting to confusion of the hatchet-faced immigration agent.

IN due time the bustle of departure began, and from the broad promenade deck we saw our stately ship cast off her moorings and turn her sharp prow toward the harbor entrance. When the shores of Cuba were fading into dim outlines astern, I said:

"Don't you want to go and lie down for a while before dinner? You have a right to be pretty tired, I should

think. I'll come for you when dinner is called."

She went as obediently as if my suggestion had been a command. For the next hour and a half I sat by myself smoking and thinking soberly of many things.

At dinner time I went after Marcia, as I had promised, and when we were seated—our places were at the captain's table—I couldn't see that we were marked down for any especially embarrassing attentions as a newly married pair. That, I am sure, was partly due to Marcia's disarming and captivatingly ingenious naïveté.

After dinner we went on deck and sat out the evening in our chairs. It was a perfect summer night, with soft airs and the stars burning like flaming cressets in the inverted bowl of the sky. For a while we were content to remain silent, thinking our own thoughts and listening to the murmur of the engines and the swish of the waves. After a time the little one broke the spell of silence with:

"I am feeling so almost wicked when they are calling me by your name, my Larry."

"'Guilty,' I suppose you mean," I said, smiling; "not 'wicked.' But why should you?"

"I think you are knowing ver-y well."

"I don't know," I returned bluntly. "Though it is only to serve a purpose—the purpose of securing your rights—we are really and truly married, you know. Your name is now Marcia Kendall, and it will continue to be until you get a court decree to change it. Does that scare you?"

"I have so many names," she sighed. "First I am Marcia Clemence, then I am Mircea Brancovan, and now I am Marcia Ken-dall."

"Yes, and by and by, when you marry some other man, it will be Marcia something else."

"Why will you be saying that—When I marry some other man?"

"Because you will, some day—when the right man comes along."

"You think I shall ver-y soon forget you, my Larry?"

"There is no reason why you shouldn't; after you have learned to distinguish between gratitude and love—the marrying kind of love."

She fell silent again at this; and when she spoke again it was to say softly: "I shall think I am liking your great-hearted pity, my Larry, more than I should like another man's love—yes!"

"That is gratitude, too, and you mustn't let it make a martyr of you, Marcia, dear. You must promise me this." Then I forced myself to go on, though the Lord knows I didn't want to. "You will be quite free, you know, after I have seen you safely established in Colorado. I have a few acquaintances in Brewster. You may remember I told you I had been there, off and on, while I was installing the machinery in a cement plant near there. One of these acquaintances is a lawyer named Stillings; a fine chap, and a member of my own college fraternity. I shall see him before I leave you and explain the circumstances of our marriage. When the proper time comes, he will take your case, I'm sure, and help you to your freedom."

She looked away over the broad wake the steamer was leaving in the phosphorescent waters of the Gulf. "And it will be your freedom, too, my Larry," she said quietly. "I shall not be forgetting that."

"My freedom?" I began—and stopped short because of a mad impulse to smash all the barriers; to take her in my arms as my wife, telling her that freedom from her was going to be a thing that would leave me a widower indeed. But reason and a sense of justice broke in quickly to point out that

such a breach of confidence would be a deliberate wrecking of both our lives. So I went on, rather lamely: "We can leave those things to the future, to be straightened out when we come to them. This night is too beautiful to be wasted in anticipating the perplexities of the to-morrows."

As the evening waned, I began to wonder how I should contrive to leave Marcia in undisturbed possession of that cursed bridal suite, to do this without exciting the curiosity of some prying steward or stewardess. If Peterson had only taken me at my word and secured for me a separate stateroom into which I could have slipped quietly after I had taken Marcia to her own place—but he hadn't. Now it was too late for me to go to the purser and ask for a separate room. There would be no end of gossip—and with reason.

WHEN bedtime came I had been able to think of nothing better than the clumsy expedient of bidding the little one good-night at the door of her suite and retreating to the open deck to pass the night in my chair—where I would be pretty sure to be discovered by some early-morning prowler among the passengers or crew.

"It's time you were turning in to get your beauty sleep, my dear," I said. "Let's go inside."

There was one of the stewards fussing over something in the passageway when I took her key and opened the door of the bridal suite, and it was for his benefit that I said, as I reached in and pressed the light button:

"Here you are, my dear, all shipshape and comfy. I think I'll go on deck again and smoke another cigar."

"But, my Larry—you have not yet seen these beau-ti-ful rooms you buy for me!" she protested. "And, besides, I think you shall have make to smoke enough for to-day, yes? It is not good that you smoke too much."

At that, of course, there was nothing for me to do but to step inside with her, if only to get out of earshot of the lingering steward. The suite consisted of a tiny sitting room in ivory-white, furnished in miniature, but quite luxuriously, with a writing table, upholstered chairs and a couch, and with a door opening into a bath, beyond which was the bedroom.

"Yes, everything seems all right and comfortable," I said, talking against time until I should hear the departing footsteps of the man outside, which would be the signal for my escape. "You must try to get a good night's rest and sleep as late as you please in the morning. I shan't go to breakfast without you."

"But you, my Larry! Where is it you are sleeping?" she asked, with the innocent eyes widening.

"Oh, I'll not be far away," I evaded. "If the ship blows up or takes fire, I'll be right on hand to take care of you, never fear."

She laid a detaining hand on my arm. "Is it that you have another room, then?"

The ready lie leaped to my lips, but I couldn't say it with those dear, child-like eyes looking into mine.

"No, I haven't another room, my dear. But the night is warm, and I can sleep quite comfortably in the deck chair."

At this she gave me another glimpse of that side of her she had shown me more than once while we were castaways on the island and in the open boat—the pure womanly.

"You must not to be so foolish, my Larry. I am not a child. You say we have not make to marry as other people marry, and that is so; but here are two rooms and there is a couch. I shall not let you go away to sleep in a chair!"

What could I do? I had no weapons with which to withstand such clean-

hearted purity, such innocence of soul. I took her hands in mine. "You say you are not a child, Marcia, but you are—a dear, innocent child. But I shall be as you wish; I'll sleep here on the couch. And may God do so to me, and more, if I should do anything to shake your heavenly trust in me. You can lock your door."

She smiled at that, the sweetest smile I have ever seen on the face of a woman. "And if I should lock the door it would be saying that I do not make to trust you. I shall think I would not give you that great insult, my Larry, after what you shall do for me this day, and all the other days. I shall be loving you too well for that."

Heavens! There it was again, that word of which she did not know the meaning. In sheer self-defense I caught up her hand bag and carried it into her bedroom; and when she followed, I snapped the light on and left her with a brief "Good night," closing her door behind me as I came out.

WITH a couple of blankets which I found in a locker in the outer room, I made a passable bed out of the couch. After a half hour or so of wakefulness, I fell asleep. How long I slept before I was awakened by the subdued click of a door latch and the sound of light footfalls I do not know; but I shall always be glad that I did not obey the natural impulse to start up at the warning.

In the darkness I saw dimly a slender, white-robed little figure emerge from the bathroom passage to stand for a moment within arm's reach as if listening, and then to sink silently upon its knees at my bedside.

As one finding himself suddenly and unintentionally in a holy of holies, I shut my eyes and tried to close my ears to the whispered words of prayer and thanksgiving that were spoken, the outpouring of a pure heart lifted in child-

like simplicity and faith in gratitude to its Maker for raising up a friend for her in her extremity. And then the halting, half-breathless petition for me—that I might be blessed through all my life and rewarded as I deserved with—

Not for a king's ransom would I have let her discover that I was awake and listening when she believed I was asleep. After she had gone, however, and the sound of her closing door told me I was free to open my eyes and to breathe again, I could hardly persuade myself that her sweet presence had not left a softened glow, as of the aura of a pure-hearted saint, in the cramped confines of the little bridal-suite sitting room.

CHAPTER XIV.

"OUR AMERICA."

THOUGH I meant to get up and get out early in the morning, before the little one was stirring, old Morpheus tricked me. When I opened my eyes, the sun was shining through the lattice of the cabin de luxe, and Marcia was standing beside me, laughing softly and tickling my nose with a feather she had pulled out of one of her pillows.

"Oho!" she said. "You will sleep so ver-y sound, my Larry. I shall think you will have the good night's rest, yes?"

I smothered a sneeze and said: "How could it be otherwise, my dear, with you in the next room? What time is it?"

"I cannot to know, but I shall think it will be breakfast time."

I stretched my arms over my head, letting her see that I was in my pajamas. "All right; if you'll go away and give me leave, I'll get up and dress."

She nodded brightly. "I am to go on deck and see if I can find our America."

"You will not find it yet, by several

hundred miles. To-morrow morning, perhaps, but not this morning. I'll not keep you waiting long for breakfast, Marcia."

After she had gone, I sat up and tried to stand the sober realities on their feet for another day. That, I told myself, was my wedded wife who had just left me; my child-wife who knew neither shame nor embarrassment because she was too simple-hearted and innocent to know them. Heavens! what a change the events of a single day had wrought in my life! And in hers? The query groped for an answer. Yet there was a partial answer. She was cheerfully happy now; there were no more trouble shadows in the dark eyes, and she had been laughing like a playful kiddie as she tickled my nose.

A little later, shaved, bathed and dressed, I went in search of her. She was on the deck forward, straining her eyes for a glimpse of the America I had told her wouldn't be visible short of another twenty-four hours.

"Wouldn't take my word for it, eh?" I jested, slipping an arm through hers.

"Oh, yes, I am believing what you tell me. But I like to look the way it is coming to be."

"You are a very patriotic little girl!" I laughed; and then we went to breakfast.

That day was one to be marked with a red letter in my calendar. I had told the little one that she must "play up" the part of the newly made bride for the benefit of our fellow passengers. She did it well. As a newly married pair on their honeymoon would be expected to, we spent the whole day together, doing our constitutionals around the promenade, roaming the ship from stem to stern, or sitting together in our deck chairs.

After the evening dinner, at which we were joked a little for being so devoted to each other, we went back to

our chairs and I asked Marcia if the joking embarrassed her.

"I am not care at all," she returned promptly. "I am not know before how ver-y nize it is to have a husband."

"Even if he is a husband only in name?"

"Even that way, yes. But you could not be any kinder to me if we should make to be really married, my Larry."

"I couldn't help being good to you if I should try. You are just a dear, lovable child."

"Please!" she begged. "You say always this—that I am a child. I shall think maybe I am always a child while I stay in Roumania; but now I am a woman."

"Very well, then; you are a dear, lovable woman. A man would have to be a lot worse than I have ever dared to be, not to be good to you. And as to the joking—after we land, there will be no more of that. Nobody need know that we are married."

"You will be glad that they shall not know?"

"For your sake I shall be."

"Then you will stop being nize to me after we shall come to our America, yes?"

"Heavens, no!" I protested. "Nothing like that. But I don't want you to be embarrassed."

"I am telling you that I shall not care how people talk. They are all most kind. But you—you do not like to have them talk?"

I laughed. "You don't know much about a man's vanity, do you? There wasn't a man at our table to-night who wasn't envying me no end—and I was chortling over it. You may not know it, but you are a terrible little heart-breaker, my dear."

She shook her head. "I am not knowing that word, 'heartbreaker.'"

"You will know what it means, fast enough, after you have mixed and mingled with men a little more. Am I the

only one who has told you that you are very beautiful, Marcia?"

"Who else should make to tell me anything like that?"

"Given half a chance, anybody would. If you weren't a newly made bride, you'd have half the men in this ship falling over one another to tell you about it."

"I think now you make your joke at me, but I am not care. I think I shall be too happy to care."

"You blessed angel! Sometimes I think you don't lack anything but a pair of wings."

She laughed joyously. "Is that husband talk you make now? You should not to make fun of me, my Larry."

"God forbid!" I said; and then, because I'd had about all I could stand: "We'll take a little walk and then turn in. We must be up early in the morning to get the first sight of our America."

We circled the deck half a dozen times or so and then went to our place. She seemed to take it for granted that I would sleep on the couch, as before, and when we were in the cabin de luxe sitting room, she fished out the blankets and made up my bed for me as handily as any little housewife of them all. The small act of caretaking somehow got nearer to me than anything she had hitherto done.

BUT more was to come. When she had finished tucking the blankets in and patting the pillows, she came to me and said:

"You have kiss me only that one little time—in the holy church. Will you not make to kiss me good night, my Larry?"

With a wordless prayer for the strength of the pure-hearted I clasped her to me. For a moment she lay in my arms with her eyes closed, and I kissed the fallen lids, first one and then the other.

When she had gone into her bedroom and closed the door, I sat back upon the couch and a strange trembling seized me. And then I did a thing I hadn't done since I was a little lad at my mother's knee—got down upon my knees at the bedside and prayed.

We were up and out early the next morning and, shortly after breakfast, while we were standing on the boat deck forward, the low-lying shores of the Louisiana coast came in sight, and the ship was in the discolored waters at the mouth of the great river. A little later we were at the jetties and were halting at the quarantine station.

Lining up with the other passengers and the crew, we were put through the machinelike temperature test. That ordeal successfully passed, we sat out the forenoon in our deck chairs while the steamer made its winding way up the Mississippi, Marcia bubbling over with questions such as a child might have asked: Was America all flat and water-laden like this? Were the rivers all so large that great ships could sail in them? What did it mean that the river was so much higher than the land back of the banks; and what would happen if the banks should give way some time?

If I had to smile at some of her eager questions, it was entirely without prejudice to the deep and abiding love for her which had been growing hour by hour throughout the blessed comradeship of the two-day voyage.

Our arrival in New Orleans was in the early afternoon. When our steamer docked, I was more than half expecting that some overzealous immigration official had cabled ahead to make trouble for us—or to try to. But the fear proved to be groundless. The inspector merely glanced at my papers, which included the certificate of our marriage, returning them with a nod of approval; and the customs people were equally casual with our baggage.

Up to this time I had had no means of informing myself as to the movement of westbound trains; but after we reached our hotel I found that our best connection for the West left at seven thirty in the evening. After taking passage tickets through to Brewster and securing a section in the sleeper, I hired an auto and showed Marcia as much of New Orleans and its environs as we could cover in an afternoon's drive.

On board the train we found that our sleeper was scantily filled, so we had all the isolation we could have desired. When it came time to go to bed, I explained the mysteries of a Pullman berth to Marcia and showed her where I meant to sleep on the shelf above. It was all new to her, and vastly interesting; whereby I gathered that, probably for economy's sake, she had foregone the comforts of a sleeping car on her journey across Europe to the port of embarkation.

THE next morning found us eating breakfast in Shreveport; and after this there was a rather weary day-long ride over the Texas plains to Fort Worth. Another night and a second still wearier day took us to Trinidad, Colorado; and early the next morning we were changing trains in Denver, with time enough between to get breakfast.

"I am sure you must be getting pretty tired of all this racing over railroad tracks," I said, after we were settled in a Pullman for the last leg of the long course.

"I am not make to be ver-y tired; no, my Larry. But this America of ours—it is so *big!*"

"It is all of that; but it isn't all uninteresting. We'll be in the mountains presently, and then you will see something worth seeing."

"And when do we come to this Brewster?"

"Early to-morrow morning, if we have good luck."

"And then—then you will go away and leave me?"

"Not until after you have found your friend; you may be sure of that."

All that day, notwithstanding the inspiring scenery through which our mountain-climbing train was passing, she was preternaturally silent; this, though now that we were in country with which I was fairly familiar, I did my best to make the daytime trip a travelogue.

After we had eaten a late and rather silent dinner in the dining car and were back in our Pullman section, I took the bull by the horns.

"You haven't been yourself at all to-day, Marcia," I began. "Won't you tell me what is troubling you?"

It all came out then in broken fashion, and it was precisely as I had been imagining. She was just beginning to realize that she had come a quarter of the way around the globe on an errand which might easily turn out to be not merely ill-advised and disappointing, but possibly even perilous. At the very best, she would be alone among strangers; even the man whose letters she had received would be a stranger.

"I am thinking all the day that I am ver-y foolish to do this—to come all this way when I am not knowing—not knowing——"

"Not knowing exactly what you are coming to," I supplied. "That may be. I won't say it wasn't a bit impulsive, perhaps. But, my dear, as things have come about, you are as safe as you could possibly be. You are not alone, and you are not going to be until you can come to me and tell me that I am no longer needed. Can't you rest contented with that?"

"Oh, but, my Larry! You have done so much for poor me already! I am make to be ver-y much ashamed."

"Ashamed? My dear girl! You

have given me two weeks of happiness. Yes, even the days on the island and those in the open boat were happy because I was with you; or they fell short of it only because you were suffering hardships that I couldn't lessen for you. Besides, in the church in Havana I made a most solemn promise before God and His minister, and made it willingly. I meant every word of that promise, Marcia. Don't you know I did?"

"I am knowing there is not another man like you in all this world, my Larry."

"Oh, yes, there are—plenty of them!" I laughed. "You just haven't had any occasion to meet them, or need them."

Our train had entered the Red Desert shortly after dark and the wan light of a new moon was vaguely illuminating wide stretches of barren sagebrush plain with a distant and shadowy background of high mountains which seemed like giant sentinels.

Now that the end of the long journey was approaching, as I lighted a good-night cigar in the smoking room, I found that I had something to think about. In a short fortnight I had passed through all the stages of a lover's dream, and now, within the next twenty-four hours, I must be prepared to turn my back upon the Paradise into which I had broken my way like any robber. It was inconceivable, but it had to be. I had gone into the thing open-eyed, and I had only myself to blame for the consequences. There was only one thing to do, and that was to play the game until the last card was on the table, and then to take my leave like a man.

Going back into the body of the car after an hour or so of these depressive reflections, I found that the porter had made down our section and Marcia had gone to bed. Whereupon I climbed into the upper berth, and had another

gloomy hour or more before the drumming of the wheels lulled me asleep.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GRAND TURK.

I FOUND Marcia up and dressed and waiting for me when I turned out the following morning, and I had barely time to shave and get into my clothes before the train pulled into the well-remembered Brewster station. On the short taxi drive to the Intermountain Hotel, we were both silent, having now come against that future the thoughts of which had colored the days and hours for both of us in increasing ratio as the long westward flight drew toward its end.

At the hotel, I left Marcia in the little ground-floor reception room while I went to the desk and registered, writing our names, "Lawrence Kendall" and "Marcia Kendall" separately, with Havana as the address for both, surrendering our baggage checks, engaging a suite of two bedrooms, a common sitting room and bath, and leaving the clerk to guess at our relationship as he chose. Then I got Marcia and we went in to breakfast.

At the serving of the meal, I broke the silence which seemed to be settling like a pall over both of us. "Well, this is Brewster, at last," I said, trying to make the saying sound like a mere conversational stepping-stone. "How does it impress you, as far as you've gone?"

The beautiful eyes were suspiciously bright when she lifted them to mine and said: "I am thinking all the time that it will be ver-y strange to me when you are gone, my Larry."

"I'm not gone yet," I returned, with a mighty poor imitation of carefree cheerfulness, adding: "You may find it harder than you think to get rid of me and my caretaking. And that reminds me—you haven't eaten enough in the last three meals to keep a bird alive. I

want to see you eat a good breakfast. I suppose you haven't yet remembered the name of the man you want to find?"

"No, I cannot yet make to remember it."

"All right; suppose we make a beginning. Can you remember the first letter of it?"

"Oh, yes, I am always remembering that: it is 'T.'"

"Good! That corners it a bit closer. After we've eaten, we'll borrow a directory and go through the 'T's.' Meanwhile, don't let that, or anything else, spoil your appetite. As I've said, I want to see you eat."

"I do not make to be so ver-y hungry," she said; but after she had had a cup of the breakfast coffee for which the Intermountain was justly famous—and is yet, for that matter—I was glad to note that she ate with a better appetite.

THE Intermountain dining room is off the lobby on the main floor, and our table chanced to be near one of the windows giving upon the street. In the seating I had taken the place with my back to the window, with the little one opposite and facing it. It was when I was sugaring my second cup of the excellent coffee that I glanced up and saw her change countenance as suddenly as if she had seen a ghost. She was pointing to a window on the second floor of the office building across the street and whispering:

"See, my Larry! *The name!*"

I twisted myself in my chair and looked in the direction of her pointing finger. What I saw in bold gold lettering on the windowpane was the name, "R. Throckmorton," and underlining it the words, "Attorney at Law."

"Um!" I commented rather morosely. "It has proved a lot easier than we thought it would be, hasn't it? Easier and simpler. You are sure that is the name of your friend?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, I am remembering it now ver-y well! It is so foolish that I am forgetting it. But I cannot yet know how to say it."

I pronounced it for her, adding: "You didn't tell me that this friend of yours is a lawyer. Did you know this when he was writing to you?"

"Oh, yes, and before he is writing, his friend that comes to see me in Roumania tells me that."

"All right," I said. "After breakfast we'll learn all about this mystery which has brought you all the way from the other side of the earth to meet this Mr. Throckmorton."

"When I go to see him, you will go with me, my Larry?"

My first impulse prompted me to say that I should certainly do that very thing; but for once in a way I took time for the second thought, and that led me to say: "Perhaps it will be better if you should see him alone, first. When you've finished your waffles, I'll take you over and then come back here and keep watch for you. If you find that you need me, all you'll have to do will be to step to his window and show yourself, and in about half a jiffy I'll be with you."

"If you shall think it is best to be that way," she yielded, with the ready obedience which made me realize most pointedly the weight of my responsibilities. "But now that we are here, and the time has come, I am feeling all shuddery inside of me, yes."

Again I sought to reassure her, telling her that our marriage had given me the right to stand as her natural protector, and that there was nothing on earth of which she need be afraid. At this, she seemed to take a fresh hold upon her courage; and a little later the program I had outlined was set on foot. After I had seen her safely through the street traffic and had put her into the elevator of the office building, I returned to the hotel and moved a chair

to one of the lobby windows, where I could sit and smoke and keep an eye on the second-floor office window opposite.

Since waiting in suspense is something I had never learned to do with any degree of equanimity, I had a bad half hour keeping watch and ward on the lettered window that gave no sign. More than a dozen times I was on the point of jumping up and going across to butt in and find out what was happening in the lawyer's office, and my patience was fast approaching the exploding crisis when at last Marcia appeared in the doorway of the office building opposite. In a trice I was with her to pilot her over the crossing and into the hotel, where I took her up to the mezzanine lounge and led her to a seat in a corner where we could have the needed privacy.

"Now," I said, seating myself beside her, "begin at the beginning and tell me all about it. I'm perishing to know."

She was passing a hand across her brow as if she had just gone through an experience which had been either trying or bewildering, or both.

"I am—how is it you will say it?—I am all much confuse', my Larry. I am finding this Mistare Throck-morten by himself in his office, and when I am come in, he jumps up quick and shakes me by both hands and tells me in many, many words how ver-y glad and happy he is I am come. Also, he is telling me how much more beautiful I am than my picture."

"Humph! I like his damned impudence!" I growled. "And what next?"

"Next, he is asking me why I am not telegraphing him I am coming, so that he meets me at the train; and I am not liking to tell him that I am not remembering his name, and that I am losing the letters he sends me. So I make the excuse and tell him there was no need for that.

"Then he makes me sit down and tells me a long story: How he hears of me first through his friend in Roumania who sends him my picture; how he writes to me and I write to him; and how then he is knowing that he has found what he calls 'his pearl of the great price'—and so he sends me the money to come."

"Well, what then?" I demanded.

"Then—then he draws his chair up closer and takes my hand, and—and asks me to—to marry with him."

"The devil he did!" I burst out wrathfully. "What did you tell him?"

"I am saying, quick: 'But I cannot to do that, Mistare Throck-morten; I am married already.'"

"Good!" I gloated. "What did he say to that?"

"He is drop my hand and sit back and swear most terribly when I tell him I am married. Then, after he is getting his breath again, he says, 'Tell me about it.' And then I do tell him; how good you are to me, and if you would not have helped me, I could never have come to this America at all. And after I am all through, he says: 'Well, it is not so bad as I thought. We'll fix all that. You go over to the hotel and say to your temporary husband that he may go about his business now; tell him you have found your friend and don't need him any longer. I shall wait here until you come back.'"

It was the concluding sentence that set fire to me. "He'll wait until you come back, will he? Then he'll wait a damn long time! You stay right here until I go over and have a shot at him. By the Lord Harry! Does he think he's the Grand Turk, to reach out halfway across the world and take any woman he has a fancy for? We'll see about that!"

"Oh, but, my Larry—you must not make to yourself any more trouble for me. I am making you nothing but trouble from first to last!"

"Trouble be hanged! Just answer me one question: If you were free of me, would you marry this man?"

"Oh, my Larry! I could not do that—never! He is make me to go all cold and shivery when he is take my hand and say I am to make marriage with him!"

"That's enough; that's all I want to know. Just you stay here and take things perfectly easy. Nobody on top of this earth will make you do anything you don't want to—not while I'm your lawful husband! I thank God you gave me the right to stand by you before we left Havana. How much money did this lawyer person send you?"

She named the sum, which was only a little more than enough to cover her traveling expenses.

"Huh! Thought he was going to buy you for that amount, did he? Well, we'll see about that, too!"

TO say that I was damn mad when I crossed the street and had myself lifted to the second floor of the building opposite is putting it very mildly. A lettered door in the corridor told me where to head in. In an inner office I found my man; a well-groomed, clean-shaven person of forty or more, and handsome in a sort of Mephistophelian way; a resemblance that was heightened by recurved nostrils, a sensuous mouth, and eyebrows a bit uptilted at the outer ends. He got out of his chair at my entrance and began on me before I could say a word.

"You are Kendall, the temporary husband, I suppose. Sit down"—waving me to a chair—"and we'll thrash this thing out. We may as well do that first as last."

I didn't sit down. What I did was to count out a sum of money equal to the amount he had sent Marcia and toss it upon his desk.

"There is your blood money," I said;

adding: "And now that you've got it back, you can go straight to hell."

"Oh, see here," he interposed suavely, "there is no occasion for hard feelings. As a matter of fact, I am the aggrieved party, if you will look the thing fairly in the face, but I am willing to waive that if you will listen to reason. Miss Clemence—or Mrs. Kendall, if you prefer to have it that way—was promised to me before you ever saw or heard of her. She has told me what you did, and why you did it, and I suppose I am your debtor to that extent. But now the thing is done, we can settle things as man to man. I——"

"Things are settled right now!" I broke in hotly. "When you say she was promised to you, you lie! You were bringing her to America under false pretenses, and if she and her foster parents hadn't been simply God's innocents, she would never have left Roumania or touched a nickel of your money!"

"Fortunately, Mr. Kendall, hard words break no bones," he retorted dryly. "As I have said, I am willing to make allowances, even to admit that your motive, which may have been merely a youthful, chivalric impulse at first, has now become a real infatuation. I can understand that, and can condone it; and the fact that this young woman has been your wife for a week does not in the least change my attitude toward her.

"But you must see now that the play is over and it is time to ring the curtain down," he went on. "Naturally, she was grateful to you—and she has paid the price of her gratitude. It is up to you now to carry your chivalry one step farther and set her free. Notwithstanding your attitude toward me, I am willing to believe you are man enough to do the right thing."

"You are wasting your breath!" I snapped. "I don't know what *your* motive was, or is, but that is neither here

nor there. True, I did promise to go away and leave her free to annul the marriage after I had seen her safely through to Brewster, and I am still ready and willing to do this—when she asks me to. But not one minute before!”

“Ah! there spoke the hot blood of youth,” he remarked, quite mildly. “You have impugned my motive, but think a moment! Have I done anything at all dishonorable? Surely the fact that I wanted to make her my wife—that I still wish to—ought to free me from any such charge as that you imply. And another thing. She has left her foster parents in straitened circumstances in the old country and she is exceedingly anxious to help them.

“From what she tells me, I infer that you are a young man still with your way to make in your profession. On the other hand, I am amply able, and very willing, to gratify her desires for the old people to whom she owes so much, and, of course, I shall do so after she has given me a husband’s right to act for her in the matter.”

I MUST confess that his smooth talk, his logic, and his refusal to match anger with anger, were cooling me down just a trifle. It is hard to fight a man who declines to strike back. While I was trying to pull myself together, he went on persuasively:

“You have said that you promised to leave her after you had seen her safely through to her destination—why do you refuse now to keep that promise? I think you know you have won nothing but her gratitude, and that is no basis for a happy married life. As I have said, she has paid the price of that gratitude, and she will doubtless continue to pay it if you insist upon it. But is it right and just that you should insist?”

I had no answer for this, save the

one I had already made; and I had a feeling that this smooth-talking, suave special pleader would end by getting the better of me, if I should not break away and think things out for myself.

“I’m not going to insist,” I replied, “but, as I have said before, the decision for me to go or stay lies entirely with my wife. If she wants me to go, I shall go.”

At this he smiled as if his cause were already won. “After you have had a little time to consider, I am sure you will see that such an attitude on your part is just a trifle ungenerous—to make her decide, I mean. You are the one to make the gracious gesture, Mr. Kendall. There is a through train for the east at half past twelve o’clock. Be magnanimous and give me your word that you will take passage on that train. And about this money you have so fiercely returned: I don’t want it; so far from it, I ask you to let me make you a check to cover your own outlay and loss of time. It is only fair that I should do this.”

It was on the tip of my tongue to make a hot reply to this offer, but something restrained me and I said nothing. Suiting the action to the word, he squared himself at his desk and filled out a check, the quid pro quo for which, of course, was to be my promise—which I had not yet given—to vanish on the noon train.

When he handed me the slip of yellow money paper, I saw that he had done what even the most accomplished plotter may sometimes do—he had overreached himself; spilled the beans. The check, which was supposed to cover my outlay in money and time, was for an even five thousand dollars! In other words, he was coolly and contemptuously buying me off.

Being red-headed, and with a temper I was not always able to control, I suppose it was my part to fly into a rage at this barefaced attempt to purchase

me. Luckily, however, I had just sense enough to see that craft, rather than anger, was called for.

"You have entirely mistaken your man, Mr. Throckmorton," I forced myself to say, as I returned the check. "I do not wish to be paid for doing the one possible and obvious thing. Miss Clemence, as Miss Clemence, could not enter the United States; she could only come in as the wife of an American citizen. Our marriage, as she has possibly told you, was strictly formal, agreed to purely for the purpose of getting her admitted. At the same time, your guess is true—that what was at first, perhaps, only a desire to help a young and very attractive woman out of a difficult involvement, afterward became what you are pleased to call an infatuation. For that reason, you will have to allow me a little time in which to consider what will be best for all concerned. Will you do this?"

He made a gesture, as one quite helpless. "You leave me without another word to say, Mr. Kendall. I can only urge you not to stand in the way of your wife's future, and beg you to be generous—not to me, but to her. A little inquiry on your part, if you choose to make it, will convince you that I am—er—a reputable citizen of Brewster and that, while I am not a rich man, I am quite well able to give my wife everything in reason that she could wish for. As I have said, there is no reason for any hard feelings between us. Perhaps, after you have taken a little time to think the matter over, we can come to a better understanding. I hope so, anyway."

This was my chance to break away, and I took it. It was a new rôle for me, to attempt to match guile with guile, and I was desperately afraid I'd overplay my hand if I should stay any longer. So, with a rather vague intimation that we might meet again, later, I left him.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SECRETED AFRICAN.

RETURNING to the hotel, I found Marcia just where I had left her, sitting in a corner of the mezzanine lounge, with a damp little cobweb of a handkerchief balled in her hands. It hurt me immeasurably to see that she had been crying.

"See here, little one, this won't do at all!" I protested, sitting beside her and taking her hands in mine. "Nothing bad is going to happen to you. Haven't I told you over and over again that you have a husband to stand by you?"

"Oh, but I am not thinking of myself! I am thinking maybe you will be fighting with this—this man, and he is hurting you!"

I could laugh at this. "So that was what you were crying about? You needn't have. I'm not so easily hurt as that comes to. We didn't come to blows, but if we had, I think I might have been able to take care of myself. I always have been, heretofore."

"What does he do when you go to him, my Larry?"

"He offered to buy you," I returned bluntly—too bluntly, perhaps. "He tried to give me five thousand dollars for you."

"For me?"

"It amounted to that. I was to take the five thousand and leave you."

"But—but you will not go?"

"Not while you are needing me, rest easy as to that! Taking it altogether, it seems to me I'm rather more necessary here in Brewster than I was in Havana or on the island. But the next thing is something else. I want to go out and chase around a bit in town. If this lawyer person sees me leaving the hotel, he'll probably come over to have another talk with you."

"But I am not wanting to talk with him any more!"

"That's right, and you don't need to; you don't owe him anything. I have paid him back his investment in you—for your passage from Europe. You can go up to your room and lock yourself in, if you like. I'll leave an order at the desk to make sure you are not to be disturbed. I'll be back before luncheon time and call you on your room telephone. You'll know my voice, won't you?"

"But—but surely I shall make to know your voice," she said half reproachfully. "You will not be going ver-y far, my Larry?"

It was pitiful to see the way she clung to me as if I were the only hope she had left in this land of strangers.

"No; not far at all, only a few blocks. You mustn't worry."

"I will not be any more afraid," she said courageously, and then she let me take her to the elevator and send her up to her room.

Upon leaving Throckmorton's office, I had decided immediately upon one step that should be taken. Since Throckmorton was a lawyer, and—accepting his boast at its face value—in good standing, my friend Stillings would doubtless know all about him. So to Stillings I determined to go, as soon as I should have reassured the little one.

But now, as I left the hotel and turned my steps toward the railroad-headquarters building where Stillings, as general counsel for the company, had his office, it came to me all at once that, however matters should turn out, I simply couldn't leave Marcia without telling her the whole truth; that it wasn't just good nature or chivalry, or anything of the sort that had made me her willing helper; that it was love—love of the marrying kind—and nothing less.

I caught my breath as I hurried along. What if such a declaration should awaken in her something deeper

and more precious than her gratitude? What if the flame of my love should kindle in her an answering flame? Didn't her clinging dependence upon me in this her hour of disappointment and disillusion warrant the hope? As I entered the railroad building and ascended to Stillings' floor, my determination was taken. Marcia should know that I had married her because I loved her, and that it must be her hand, and not mine, that should sever the tie that bound us together.

A half minute after I had sent my card in to the private office of the Nevada Short Line's general counsel, I was shaking hands with the round-faced, shrewd-eyed little man who had opened his home to me while I was installing the machinery in the Raglan Company's cement plant two years earlier.

"Well, well—Larry, old man, it's sure good to see you again! Where on earth did you drop from? Going to build another cement plant for us?"

I smiled and shook my head. "I came in on No. 3 a few hours ago, and I'm not going to build another cement plant—not that I know of. Just at this present moment I am trying to get a line on a bit of information. Do you know a lawyer here whose office is across from the Intermountain Hotel, and whose name is Throckmorton?"

"Sit down and put your feet up; you're at home here. Know Rufus Throckmorton? I surely do. Everybody knows him, or knows about him. What's he got against you?"

"Maybe much, maybe nothing. Or, to put it the other way around, maybe the shoe is on the other foot. Who is he and what is he?"

"Well, if you ask me, I'll say he is about as smooth an article as the law schools of the East ever put out; able as the dickens; not too overly scrupulous—or he hasn't been in the past; and a rather avid money-maker. When he

came here, ten years or so ago, he went in for criminal practice and was pretty hideously successful at it. But after he had made a comfortable stake keeping thugs and gunmen out of the pen, he cut all that out and went in for office practice; the legal handling of industries and estates, and suchlike. That is chiefly what he is doing now. But why all this curiosity about Rufus?"

I DIDN'T see any reason why I shouldn't make a full confidant of Stillings, so I did it; told him Marcia's and my Odyssey from the beginning, and winding up with an account of my late interview with Mr. Rufus Throckmorton. When the story was finished, Stillings was chuckling quietly.

"Alicia," he said—Alicia being Mrs. Robert Stillings—"Alicia always said you were precisely the sort of young *Don Quixote* to do something rash and unheard of, and I guess she was right. Are you sorry, or glad?"

"Robert," I began impressively, "after you have seen the little one, you'll say——"

"Oh, of course!" he laughed. "You commenced it as a sort of chivalric romance, and now it's deadly earnest. How about the girl—what is her attitude?"

"Up to the present she is pathetically and affectionately grateful, but that is all—grateful, and just now pretty badly upset by the revelation of Throckmorton's object in sending for her."

"Would she accept Throckmorton's offer of marriage if she were free?"

"I don't know what might have happened if she had come out here alone. Perhaps Throckmorton could have scared or bullied her into it. But as it is, she is thankfully glad that such a thing is impossible. Though our marriage is only in law—not in fact—it bars Throckmorton."

"What do you mean by 'only in law?'"

"Just what I say. We went through the ceremony together in the church, but that is all."

"So?" he said, with a lift of his eyebrows. "You hadn't told me that. Let me think a minute."

FOR a good deal more than a minute he sat with his hands deep in his pockets and a little horseshoe-shaped frown coming and going between his eyes. I helped myself to a cigar from the humidior on his desk and lighted it. After a time he said:

"There is a good bit of mystery about this thing, Larry. We are asked to believe that Throckmorton's friend in Roumania stumbled upon this girl, wrote Throckmorton about her and sent him her photograph, and that thereupon Friend Rufus became smitten with her charms to such an extent that he put up good, hard money to bring her to America as his 'picture bride.' All of which rather stretches credulity, don't you think?"

"I have been thinking so all along."

"Right. Then we'll go a step farther. Throckmorton is past forty, and is not in any sense a marrying man, one would say. If the tales they tell about him are true, he's no woman hater, to be sure; but that's another matter. I think we may assume that a belated—and honorable—passion was not his sole motive in sending for this girl."

"Granted. But what other motive could he have?"

"That is what we must try to discover. Has the young woman told you anything about her parentage and family connections?"

"Everything she knows, yes; but it isn't much. As I have told you, her American parents died when she was a little child. If she has any family connections in America, as I suppose she must have, she knows little or nothing

about them. She has no memories of any of the Clemences—her father's people—and the only member of her mother's family of whom she has any record is her grandfather's brother—her granduncle—who, it appears, kept in touch with her mother after the Clemences went to Roumania. She has a couple of old letters written by this granduncle to her mother."

"You say she has those letters now? Where were they written from?"

"Lima, Ohio. That seems to have been the family home."

"And this granduncle's name—has she told you that?"

"I have read his letters. His name is, or was, James Pendleton Guyon."

Stillings sat back in his swing chair and laughed—whooped, you might say. "Ah!" he chuckled, when he could get his breath. "You've tumbled down the little girl's woodpile—or rather Friend Rufus'—down in just three words, Larry, and the African is uncovered. James Pendleton Guyon was one of Brewster's pioneers. He was the early bird that caught the unsuspecting financial worm. He died a little over a year ago, leaving an estate of a couple of millions; among other assets, a good, safe voting majority of the stock of the Raglan Cement Company, whose plant you installed two summers back. Are you getting a glimpse of your African's woolly head?"

"No, not yet."

"Well, you will when I tell you that James Pendleton Guyon, of wealthy memory, was a bachelor, that he died without making a will, and that his legal affairs were, and still are, administered by Rufus Throckmorton."

"Great heavens!" I choked. "Then Marcia is James Guyon's heir-at-law?"

"Without doubt. And Friend Rufus, always with a sharp eye to the main chance, has carefully concealed that fact, meant to go on concealing it until he had safely married the pretty heir-

at-law. Now you can understand why he exploded when she told him she was already married; also, why he is so anxious to have you disappear over the horizon. With you out of the way, he'll get her a divorce and once more have plain sailing."

"Good God!" I exclaimed, and stopped, fairly struck dumb. Marcia an heiress to a couple of millions; my little one rich enough to— It was ghastly. Could I go to her now and tell her that I loved her and wanted to stay married to her? Even her angelic innocence wouldn't keep her from seeing that I had cannily withheld any such protestation until after I had learned of her good fortune. I groaned.

"What's biting you?" Stillings asked, with a grin that was not unlike Bob Peterson's.

"Good Lord! Don't you see?" I lamented. "If I ever had any chance to make good with the little one on a real-marriage basis, it's gone now."

"You mean that you've been in love with her for a matter of two weeks, and have been married to her for half of that time, and yet you haven't made love to her?"

"You've said it. I've fought off like a man—or a fool; you can take your choice. I've been telling myself it wouldn't be fair to take advantage of the circumstances and her gratitude. I promised her over and over again that I'd go away and leave her free after we reached Brewster, and up to a little while ago, I meant to do this without telling her how matters stood with me."

"What made you change your mind?"

"This Throckmorton, business, and the way she clings to me as her only hope in a strange land. I thought I might at least venture to tell her the truth; that I'm not only her husband, but that I'm in love with her; and that it will break me in two to go away and leave her."

"And you think you can't do that now?"

"You know blessed well I can't! Am I to go to her and tell her in one breath that she's heiress to a couple of millions, and in the next that I want to stay married to her?"

He grinned again. "I guess I can't help you there. You've wound the tangled string around yourself, and you are the one that will have to unwind it, if you want to get loose."

I jumped up and began to walk the floor. After a turn or two I said: "You think there are no other heirs? Surely there must be."

He shook his head. "Your tangled string isn't going to be unwound in any such way as that. Throckmorton is an able lawyer, as I've intimated, and you may be sure he has run down every trail long before this. He knew precisely what he was doing when he proposed to marry this girl; that if he could pull it off, he would have undisputed control of a comfortable fortune. He is too shrewd not to have established fully her right to inherit before he made this last move in the game."

"But if he holds all the evidence, Marcia can't prove anything."

"Don't worry about that. The court will require the evidence, and Rufus will have to produce it. I'll take the case for your wife very willingly. There won't be any contest. Throckmorton will come across when he knows the game is up. The worst he can do is to charge a good, fat fee for his services in discovering the rightful heir; and, of course, the court will allow that."

Once again I had all I could stand, and a little more, and the dumb fit returned. When I had finally wrestled out of it, I said: "Robert, I'm only a figurehead in all this, as you can see. I'm going to keep my promise to Marcia and clear out; it's the only thing there is to do. And I can't tell her

now what I meant to tell her before I knew of this inheritance of hers; it would be too raw—you know it would."

"Perhaps," was his only comment.

"About the business part of it," I went on. "I not only want you to take her case and put her in possession of her fortune; I'm going to ask you to find her a home with some good people who will see to it that Throckmorton doesn't have a chance to worry her or persecute her. Then, when the time comes, you can arrange things so she will get her freedom."

While I was getting this all off my chest, Stillings sat back, regarding me through half-closed eyes—a habit of his which was most disconcerting to recalcitrant witnesses in court.

When I finished, he said musingly: "I'm wondering." Then: "Where is Mrs. Kendall now?"

"She is in her room in the Inter-mountain."

"Waiting for you to come back?"

"Yes."

"Of course you will tell her what we have discovered?"

"Naturally."

"Hum! You have fully made up your mind to turn your back, not only upon your wife, but also upon her fortune, and the—er—responsibilities it will carry?"

"I haven't anything to give up in a material way, Robert. As I've said, I'm only a figurehead and, as a figurehead, I've been fool enough to fall in love. But that doesn't alter anything."

"No, I suppose not—from your point of view. But not many men would take your stand—at least, not willingly."

"I'm not taking it willingly; don't make any mistake about that! If it wasn't for this cursed fortune—— But you'll understand."

As I turned to go, he stopped me with a friendly question.

"I'll see you again before you leave?"

I looked up at the clock on the wall.

"It's doubtful. There is a train East at half past twelve, and— Well, I guess there is no need to prolong the agony. The longer I stay, the harder it will be to break away."

"Perhaps you are right," he acquiesced. "About your wife; you'd better squeeze out time enough to bring her here. If you'll do that, I'll take her home to Alicia. That will be the best way to take care of her until the dust settles."

"Thanks! I know you and Alicia will be good to her," I muttered; and then I wrung his hand and took my leave.

CHAPTER XVII.

EBB TIDE, AND FLOOD.

ON the short walk back to the hotel I had some small chance to flog myself around to the new point of view, to realize that, in the half-hour's talk with Stillings, I had become the most useless of supernumeraries in the drama in which my little one had suddenly leaped into the star part, and was henceforth to have the entire stage to herself.

With an ample fortune hers, and with Stillings for her backer and adviser, she wouldn't need a husband, temporary or permanent. It may say itself that I was still tossing about on the storm waves of many and mingled emotions when, first announcing my coming over the house phone, I entered the elevator and had myself lifted to suite 306.

At the door of our partnership sitting room I paused for a moment to nerve myself for the ordeal of parting, and to put on the mask of cheerfulness which, in common decency, I must wear as the bearer of good news. At my tap the door was opened and she stood before me. I don't know what she saw in my face, but she must instantly have seen something, for she

quickly drew my head down and kissed me as she had once before, first on one cheek and then on the other very gently and almost maternally.

"You shall have come to tell me good-by, my Larry?" she asked softly, adding: "I will be knowing that as soon as I shall see you, yes."

I led her over to the davenport thing between the windows and made her sit beside me.

"You are right, Marcia; I have come to tell you good-by," I replied. "But there is something more important than that to tell you. How should you like to be a rich woman; not just moderately rich, but to have a great deal of money; enough to make Father Michael and Mother Maria well off for the remainder of their lives and still have left more than you could ever spend?"

"I am not knowing what it is you are talking about now," she returned. "Is it that you joke me to make me laugh so that I may forget you are going away?"

"No, Marcia, it is no joke at all. It is just the sober truth. You will remember that you let me read those old letters from your mother's uncle, James Guyon?"

"Oh, yes, I am remembering that!"

"Well, it appears that this granduncle of yours came out here when this country was new. He grew to be wealthy. When he died, something over a year ago, he left a fortune of about two million dollars; not a great fortune, as American fortunes go, but quite enough for one little girl. Yes, it's yours, my dear—all yours. James Guyon didn't make a will, but you are his nearest of kin and it all comes to you."

"But—but, my Larry!" she gasped, with the pretty eyes widening into perfect circles. "I cannot to believe this! How are you knowing all these things?"

I HAD to admit it sounded a good bit like a hastily invented fiction in my telling of it, so I tried to bring it down into the field of sober and believable fact.

"There is nothing incredible about it save, perhaps, the ease with which the facts came to light when they were searched for, and your granduncle's name had been mentioned. You remember I spoke to you of a lawyer friend of mine here, Robert Stillings? When I left you a while ago, I went to him, knowing he could tell me something about the man Throckmorton, and might be able to help us account for Throckmorton's dealings with you. The mention of your granduncle's name unlocked the mystery. Throckmorton was James Guyon's lawyer, and naturally the search for heirs fell into his hands. Now you see why he sent for you, and why he was so anxious to marry you. By the way, did he try to see you after I left?"

"Yes, he sends up his card, and I am telling the—what is it you call him?—the garçon, that I am not wishing to see anybody."

"Well," I went on, "you know now why he sought you out in Roumania and sent you money to come to America. I don't say that he didn't fall in love with your photograph when it was sent to him—any man might have done that—but he had fallen in love with your fortune long before he saw your picture."

For the first time in my knowing of her, I saw a bright flash of anger come into the dark eyes. "And he is think to marry with me before I am knowing anything at all about this money?"

"Just that. Otherwise he would have told you about your fortune when he was writing you—as any really honest lawyer would have done. But you are safe now. Mr. Stillings has taken the matter up and he will see that you get your rights—all of them. More than

that, he is going to take you home with him to Mrs. Stillings, who is a very dear lady and a good friend of mine, and you are to stay there until your property is turned over to you and you decide what you want to do. That is all, my dear—all but one little detail. I am to take you to Mr. Stillings' office to meet him, and there isn't much time to spare. I am leaving Brewster in little more than half an hour on the half past twelve East."

"Oh, but—but, my Larry!—you are leaving me now—so soon? Will you not see that I am needing you now more than ever before? What can I make to do with all this so much money if you are not here to tell me—to help me?"

"Mr. Stillings will advise you much better than I could; so much better that you won't need me at all."

"You say 'Mistare Stillings, Mistare Stillings,' and pretty soon I shall make to hate that name!" she flamed out, in a mood that was quite new to me. "Am I not telling you it is you that I need? Can you not stay, if only for one little while? *Please!*"

"No, Marcia, I can't," I made myself say. "I wish I could make you understand— Every hour that I should spend with you would make it harder for me to leave you. I can almost find it in my heart to curse this good fortune that has come to you. If it hadn't come; if you were as poor as we both thought you were a few hours ago, and were going to be left a stranger among strangers, I might still be leaving Brewster, but I'd be taking you with me in the hope that, by and by, after you came to know me better, you might learn to love me as I have loved you, my dear, ever since that moment in the Havana hotel when I first saw you."

She looked up at me starry-eyed. "And it is this money that will not let you take me with you now?"

"The money makes it all the more necessary that I should keep my promise to you and set you free."

WITH a bound she was up and off, running into her bedroom. When I followed, I found her on her knees before her trunk, jamming things into it just any way to get them in.

"My dear girl!" I protested. "What are you doing?"

She looked up, with her eyes flashing and her cheeks aflame. "I am not caring anything at all about that money! If you are going away from this place, I am going with you. And the money, I do not care what becomes of it!"

"But, my dear, do you mean that you would give up this good fortune to go away with me?"

"Why should I not, if it will be making you to—~~to~~ hate me?"

"It doesn't, dear girl, nothing could do that. But I can't believe you know what you are saying—what it implies. Could you—would you try to learn to love me if I should stay?"

She held up her arms as a little child might have done, and I lifted her to her feet. And her dear face was hidden against me when she stammered: "But—b-but, my Larry—I would not have to learn to love you. Have I not told you I am loving you all the time? And—and I am thinking always that you have for me only the pity of your great heart. In that holy church, when I am saying those beau-ti-ful words, I am writing them in my heart for you to read, my Larry. Are you not knowing this?"

"Marcia! Do you mean that?"

"Of course I am meaning it. I——"

"And you want me to stay, as your real, forever-and-forever husband?"

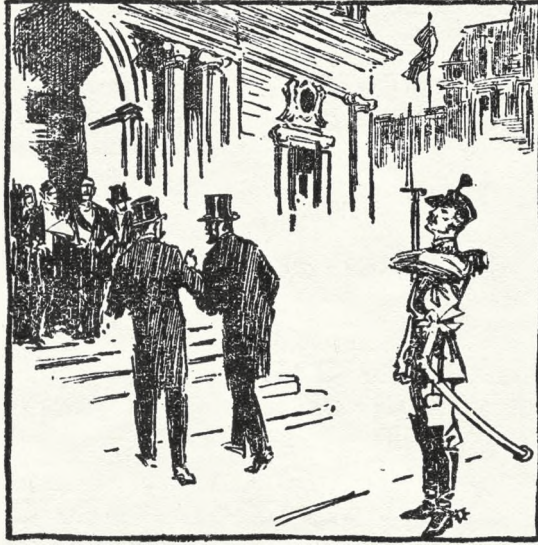
Her soft, round arms went quickly about my neck and she gave me her lips. "I am trying *so* hard, all the way from that Havana, not to make you ashamed' for me that I am loving you so much," she whispered. Then: "I am not caring anything at all for all the money in this world, my Larry—only for you—my husband."

You'll enjoy "The Lost Galleon," by Ellery H. Clark, the book-length story in the next issue of THE POPULAR. It is an adventure story of a search for a treasure-filled craft that eluded Morgan and his pirates, a yarn that will delight every lover of good fiction.



TAKE YOUR CHOICE

GET acquainted with that busy little unit of electrical energy, the KWH that adorns your electric-light bill. The French government—by the expenditure of considerable energy of its own—has figured that one kilowatt hour of electricity can do any one of these things: Drive a sewing machine for twenty hours; clip five horses or twenty-five sheep; heat a curling iron for twenty mornings; incubate two hundred and fifty eggs; churn four hundred and forty pounds of butter; or light three cigars a day for five years. Take your choice.



The Congressional Guard

By Captain Ralph R. Guthrie

Author of "Talking Savage to Langa," "'Coomin' Oop!'" Etc.

Rome gave Horatius a bridge to defend and made him a hero. Peru gave Juan Rios a constituent assembly to protect and his name is one with freedom.

THE United States," observed the garrulous and sometimes inaccurate Don Pancho, "is a wonderful nation. Wonderful in muscle, mind and heart. Although never have I been within her boundaries, I can conceive of her being the most potent country, in many ways, on the face of the planet. And yet she has no great heroes."

We were hovering around our wine glasses on the veranda of the Hacienda de la Santa Mercedes, which for many generations had been the property of the Ortega family, and which now was exclusively owned, in all its broad and barren acreage, by Don Pancho Francisco Pedro Ortega y Zelaya, who held as well a meanly paid governmental position as aid and instructor to foreign

visitors and immigrants at the port of Lima.

Our conversation on that sultry afternoon had been first about prohibition, and then of international politics—about which Don Pancho had some very naïve ideas. At last, naturally enough, it drifted into a discussion of the relative virtues of our respective homelands—for we were friends and could say what we pleased without fear of giving offense.

However, my host was a most tactful man and well known as a stanch admirer of gringo culture; so his remark pertaining to "American heroes," softly spoken as it had been, surprised me.

"The United States has had many heroes," I retorted bluntly. "There were Washington, Paul Revere, Farra

gut, Hobson, Sergeant York—many, many others. All transcended the usual requirements of patriots and soldiers in battle. Their names mean much to us, although you, no doubt, hear little of them here. They were heroes, nevertheless.”

“Yes, I suppose you would call them heroes,” acquiesced Ortega gently, making a slight bow of acknowledgment after each great name. “They were real, red-blooded men, at least. I am surprised you did not mention Paul Jones and many another one who certainly deserve a place in history. General Pickett was a greater hero, to my mind, than any of those you have mentioned. But I am speaking now of men, such as have cropped out here and there in Peruvian history, whose achievements and sacrifices were so great that tears rush to the eyes of the most humble peasant when he hears them named. Such heroes have we had—here in Peru, señor. And we are proud of them. Yes, prouder than were the ancient Greeks of their Leonidas. Shall I tell you of a few?”

I WAS a trifle hurt, but, knowing the true Latin character, I felt that it might be best to humor him. Afterward, perhaps, if it fitted in just right, I could, of course, match tale for tale and lose no dignity in the telling.

“Proceed,” I invited. “Let me help myself meanwhile to another cigar. You will find me an attentive listener and a very fair judge.”

“I shall only take up the claims of two candidates, although there are fully a dozen of them,” promised Don Pancho. “One of them, it is well to skim lightly over, for the sake of brevity. You shall hear the details some other time, or read them in any of the histories at the library in Lima. I refer to Admiral Grau.”

“His name and record are very familiar to me,” I declared.

He spoke softly then of Admiral Grau. I had heard the story many times before. How he commanded the single Peruvian ironclad *Huascar* in the first naval battle ever fought between modern battleships. How, with his poorly armored and gunned ship, he stood off, outwitted and outfought the entire Chilean navy for many months, until his name was a terror to every enemy along the coast.

Finally, how, when fairly trapped in a circle of mighty ships of war, the *Huascar*, a dismantled hulk and unmanageable, his guns blown skyward, his decks a shambles, he went down gallantly trying to ram the Chilean ironclad *Cochrane*. Even then, his spirit ruled the sinking ship, and one commander after another retrieved the fallen sword, only to die. It was when the Subaltern Lieutenant Don Pedro Gareson found himself virtually alone and in charge of a battered derelict that the colors were struck.

“The other is a humble character, without rank, or wealth, or even recorded ancestry,” Don Pancho went on. “An Indian, señor, a plodding peon from the Sierras, whose mother was a half-wild creature of hideous animal countenance and low mentality, for all I have heard to the contrary; his father might have been anybody at all in the tribe. Casually considered, the man himself—as you may see if you observe his painted face in the Sessions Room of Congress—was without color, a dirty, disreputable, prattling llama tender, whose main ambition it seemed was to fill his belly with food and spirituous drink and to wear the ragged uniform which was his when he was a soldier in the Army of Liberation. His name was Juan Rios.

“We have, in these two, the antipodes of social status—opposite poles of culture. Yet they had a common principle in the spirit of self-sacrifice and love of country. You shall judge

between them, señor; but the common people of this little nation are at a loss to point to either and say: 'Here was the greater hero.'

"Perhaps, after all, you who come from a great and distant nation, where the people number the same as the sands of the sea, may be able to tell us; but I doubt it."

Don Pancho paused to replenish his glass. For several minutes, he was intent on stirring his drink with a long-handled, horn spoon. Obviously he was marshaling his facts for the grand entrance. Doing more than that, perhaps; dressing them in the choicest fabrics of a tractable and facile imagination, so that the fanfare would find each glowing personage in his most effective niche, the same as they arrange their religious images here in Peru when they have a fiesta.

NOW," said Don Pancho, at last, "I shall introduce my real hero!

"At the base of this picture I spoke of, you will see the date 1834. That was the time of his death, this man Rios. When he was born, nobody knows, and least of all I, though I am very much of an observer and set many reputedly wiser ones right in details which have become obscured by time. History says little, but I am democratic and have my own ways of finding out what I want to know. I get my facts firsthand from llama tenders of the Calle Pepita, who have handed them down generation on top of generation, until by repeated additions and subtractions, the naked truth is arrived at, and sustained by the testimony of many witnesses.

"Little is known of Rios until he drifted into the Province of Tacna, which at that time was a hotbed of revolt, and enlisted in the Army of Liberation.

"I know not, and it is unimportant, just what this man Rios did in the

revolution. Perhaps he distinguished himself and, again, perhaps he was only an ordinary soldier of the ranks. In those days, the patriots were uniformly brave and chivalrous, so that it was a hard matter indeed to give credit to one more than to another. He served under General Bermudez on the red field of Ayacucho, and some time after the surrender of the Spanish commander, Rodil, they mustered him out with what was left of the revolutionarios, and he came with his family to Lima.

"For many years after these terrific events in the history of mankind, Juan Rios tended llamas in the market place of the capital, selling their owners bundles of forage, and otherwise administering to their wants; but when the condition of the country became more settled, Presidente Gamarra gave him a pension and put him to doing small jobs around his palace. Little more than a messenger he was, at most, but the military authorities allowed him to wear the uniform which had been his at Ayacucho, and gave him a few pesos monthly. This was all his simple heart desired, and it was true then, as now, that the poor peon gets no more than the least he will accept.

"Moreover, this peon, in his ragged uniform of many colors, like a chola's mantle, was a joke in the estimation of everybody, high and low, in the city of Lima. It became the custom of the children to shout to each other:

"'And what did Juan Rios at the Battle of Ayacucho?' The answer being: 'He won the independence for his fatherland.' For you must know, señor, that Juan Rios was inordinately proud of his career in the revolution, and told countless impossible tales of his exploits under Bermudez and the rest, until it came that few folks would listen to him. His name was bandied about as that of a braggart and a ne'er-do-well; a 'has-been,' as you Americanos say in your quaint speech.

"This Presidente Gamarra was a tyrant and a dictator, but he was a strong man and ruled with varying degrees of justice and wisdom for many years. However, at each session of the congress, he managed, by cunning statecraft, to cut down the powers of the representatives of the people, gathering them to himself as a magpie accumulates the bright things he sees in your back yard. The time came when it was necessary to curb him, and then other strong men arose in different parts of the republic to call him to account, and possibly to dispossess him of the dictatorship.

"Among these latter were Francisco de Paula Vigil and Don Luis José Orbegosa. I know their names by heart, señor, because they are printed many times in the guidebooks of the capitol, and my duty, as instructor to visiting gringos who land here from the big boats, obliges me to repeat them very often in the course of a day's work.

THESSE patriots conspired to hold a constituent assembly on January 4, 1834, therein to discuss the matter of banishing Gamarra. Of course, nothing was said openly of this, only it was rumored far and wide that something of extreme importance was to take place, and, as the date of meeting drew near, Don Luis, the ringleader, applied to the presidente for a military detail to protect the assembly from public disturbances. Thereby, you see, he attempted to deceive the dictator into the belief that perhaps the assembly intended to make him king.

"But this Gamarra was a crafty one. Some say he was in league with the devil and practiced all kinds of witchcraft to learn of the machinations of his enemies. All I know is that he divined the real use to which the guard was to be put.

"He replied politely to the request,

however, and promised to give the congress ample protection.

"When the time arrived, he rigged Juan Rios out in a bright new uniform with epaulets, cross straps and scarlet sash, put a rifle in his hands, equipped him with an enormous saber and had him report to Orbegosa. This gesture of contempt set the whole capitol in a roar of mirth, which was repeated every time Juan appeared on the steps of the great building. The people of Lima said:

"'Don Augustin Gamarra is laughing at the assembly. He has made laughingstocks of Vigil and Orbegosa. They should resign.'

"But he laughs loudest who laughs along about the finish of the story, as they say.

"Don Luis made most of the occasion and installed Rios with considerable ceremony. He waited until the snickering crowd was densest. Then he appeared on the steps of the capitol in full uniform, placed his left hand on the shoulder of the old veteran and, holding a long official paper in his right, read him his instructions.

"'Private Rios,' he exclaimed, 'you are a hero of the revolution! Long and faithful years have you given in the service of the republic your valor helped to set up beneath the peaks of the Andes. You are now engaged in the most important duty it has ever been the honor of a soldier to perform—that of being the only armed bulwark of the people of Peru against the aggressions of the tyrant who sits and coldly sneers at your glorious uniform in the palace yonder. See, my comrade, that you discharge your duty well!'

"Be sure, señor, that there were plenty of spies of Gamarra present in that throng outside the capitol and that there was no lack of messengers to hurry to the tyrant with the portent of this rebellious speech. He acted

promptly by ordering a part of his army to proceed at once to the House of the Assembly and place all of the conspirators under arrest.

"The first to arrive were two companies of infantry, led by a young fire eater of a colonel. He advanced his men up the steps of the capitol in two great columns, but was halted by this old soldier, Rios.

"*'Alta! Quien vive?'* called Juan, from among the pillars of the entrance.

"*'Gamarra lives,'* retorted this young colonel. *'Stand aside or consider yourself a traitor and a prisoner.'*

"Thereupon he leaped up the steps and immediately received a fearful wound from Juan's rifle. The bullet had entered the calf of his leg and was very painful; so, with his eyes rolling, and almost beside himself with agony, the commandant was borne from the field still shouting the advance with his utmost breath.

"His place was taken, of course, by a subaltern, a very devil of a chap who did not know fear, and it looked very much as though his courage and impetuosity would end the matter then and there. But the poor old soldier had taken time to reload, and the second discharge of his piece carried away the right forefinger of this subaltern, as neat as you please.

"Ah! He was brave, that Juan Rios, braver even than the young subaltern whom he caused to become a casualty. Can you not see him, señor? This derelict, in a gaudy uniform, a great saber at his belt, a long-barreled, muzzle-loading rifle in his hands, erect and defiant, standing among the pillars of the House of the Assembly?

"Below him are the companies of infantry in confusion as they see two of their most gallant officers forced to the rear, practically in a dying condition, knowing well the portentous events happening inside the chamber, eager for the fray, but rendered temporarily

impotent because their leaders had been shot down.

"They were all heroes in those days, señor. And not a man of them but would have rushed madly to the attack, to certain death perhaps, had there been any one left to give the command to charge.

"Some say it was Captain Zarosa. Others, that it was Teniente Mora who conceived this solution to the situation. It is unimportant. They sent for reinforcements, and when messengers were asked for, nearly the entire force volunteered. The lust for blood had seized rank and file alike.

"Still Juan held out. At last came the cavalry, the artillery and even the sappers.

IT seemed, señor, that there were not enough men in Peru to overcome that old patriot. From behind a couple of forward pillars, he wielded his huge saber like a *campesino's* flail. He was no novice at the art of fighting. He had a trick of striking quickly in a sort of half circle, and then jabbing forward, like this! A swing and then a jab, a jab and then a swing. The soldiers were hurled back from the top steps by the valor of this single soldier. They got in one another's way; the rear ranks jabbed their bayonets into the backs of those in front. Bullets were flying everywhere, killing many of the bystanders.

"The new commander attempted a parley and lost considerable time. It fell through and fighting recommenced. Meanwhile, the assembly met, spoke and deposed the dictator. Rios was there defending the doors of the congress, swinging and jabbing like a madman. The assembly adjourned, and the members to the last man left by a back door and locked themselves up behind the impregnable walls of Callao Castle. Still Juan Rios held out, but his strength was failing. One cannot

cut and jab against the bodies of hundreds of men forever.

"With a mighty rush, they were upon him at last, the cavalry riding their horses up the stone steps as if it were nothing. A dozen bayonets found their way inside the tunic of Juan Rios, and he went down fighting with the cry 'Viva la Republica!' on his lips.

"That is the end of the story, señor. Don Luis Orbegosa rode into Lima behind the legions of the republic on January 28th of the same year, and Gamarra was driven from the land like a criminal. May such tyrants all come to the same fate sooner or later, in the Lord's own time!"

Don Pancho paused, evidently overcome by his emotions, and to cool his throat from an overflowing glass. I thought that it was a signal for me to enter the lists with some of my own heroes.

"Sergeant York——" I began.

He cut me short.

"Let us not speak of him," he begged, gently waving the redoubtable

deacon out of the picture. "Sergeant York had behind him three millions of your brave American soldiers. I do not remember clearly what it was he did. At any rate——"

"I'll tell you what he did," I interrupted, with spirit. "He captured a machine-gun nest and killed forty Germans who were defending it."

"I see I was wrong," deplored my friend, with faint irony. "I thought he might have been the man who smashed the Hindenburg line. At any rate, I cannot see how by his own stupendous act of valor he did anything that might completely change the history of his country. No, señor! Let us not speak of him in the same breath with such characters as we find everywhere in the glorious history of Peru.

"And when it comes to saints, and other celebrities—you shall judge of them yourself, señor, at some other time.

"*Caramba!* How fortunate you were to have induced me to discourse so intelligently this afternoon!"

Other stories by Captain Guthrie will be published in THE POPULAR.



RECRUITS FOR THE ROCK PILE

THE warden of a certain prison, who was noted for his sympathy for his enforced visitors and who was always anxious to place them at tasks for which they were suited, or with which they were familiar, was glancing over the papers of a batch of new arrivals.

The first man's occupation was given as "aviator." The second man formerly had been a deep-sea diver. The third had been a carriage starter at a big hotel. The fourth, a sneak thief, had been employed as an elevator operator in an apartment house.

As the warden noted each new occupation, he grew more and more depressed. It was not until he had glanced at the fifth man's papers, however, that he really despaired.

For this man, with whom burglary was merely a side line, in the outside world had been a professional tight-rope walker.



Leander Plays a Part

By Roy W. Hinds

Author of "The Peacock's Egg," "One Gentleman to Another," Etc.

The Broadway of New York has many strange stories to offer. And none more so than the unusual part Leander Stokes, the venerable tragedian, played when hunger was his sole remaining prompter. But though the lines were new and hard to master, though the cues followed one another with bewildering rapidity, all the while the scenes were changing kaleidoscopically, Leander kept his front and made a graceful exit.

THEY met on Broadway, clasped hands and moved into the sheltered doorway of a gaudy theater. Morning crowds streamed past, warm and zestful in the spring sunlight. A porter caressed the floor of the theater lobby with a mop.

"How goes it, Leander?"

Leander Stokes, tall, straight and lean, to whose Romanesque countenance age and disappointment had imparted a benign melancholy, uttered his rejoinder in a hollow, dramatic voice:

"'Tis a sad world, Bob—a sad world."

"It sure is!" the younger Bob agreed, with enthusiasm.

"An ungrateful world," Leander added.

"I gotta admit it."

"And," Mr. Stokes asserted, as one affixing a clincher to his brief of complaint, "a mercenary world."

"You said it!"

Leander nodded gravely, and continued in a cavernous tone: "My play has been accepted, Bob."

"What—again?"

"Again. I was bowed into David Belasco's office this morning. He was waiting for me. He shook my hand—shook both my hands. Presently he said ten thousand dollars—a paltry ten thousand! I looked him straight in the

eyes. 'David,' I said, 'tis no time for jesting.' But he wasn't jesting. 'Tis sad to relate, he meant it."

Bob fumbled nervously in his pockets and averted his eyes. "And wha'd you do, Leander?"

"I took my play and marched out."

"Uh-huh! Well, they don't know a good play these days when they see it, Leander. Say, you got a cigarette?"

"No—no, I haven't, Bob. I was in hopes that you might be supplied with cigarettes."

THEY moved on a few steps, and found themselves gazing through the pane of a large window into an establishment as white as a dissecting room. There were long white tables therein, and a white-habited man stood in a supervisory attitude over scurrying girls, also garbed in white, who bore succulent burdens on their arms.

Just inside the window was a long steel plate. A young man, dressed in white and wearing snowy headgear, presided over this plate. From a silver pitcher he occasionally poured a creamy concoction onto the plate, and these formed attractive disks in batches of three. The disks presently began to bubble, and when they'd bubbled sufficiently, the young man flipped them over. This operation exposed surfaces of golden brown.

Leander licked his lips. So did Bob.

"That cert'nly's a beautiful window display, Leander!"

"Yes, so it is," Leander conceded. "But don't let your imagination—Bob, the human imagination is a sore affliction. Did you ever pause to reflect that our troubles always take the form of unrequited desire for things just out of reach. Now even death is not a sad outcome of life. The grief lies in the minds of those who crave a continuation of broken companionship. It is unrequited desire that weeps, the desire for things that can't

be had. Objects within reach inspire ambition—just beyond reach, they inspire grief.

"The widow cries for the man who's been snatched from her side," he went on, "the ragged child for toys in the window of a shop, youth for the sweetheart that's flown to another's arms, the millionaire for a block of stocks out of which he's been jockeyed, the humble toiler for luxuries beyond his purse—you and I for pancakes. And this ridiculous yearning! Why, it's for the joys which imagination assures us we can get.

"Now the pancake, Bob, is not a beautiful thing to look upon. Its form is not artistic, nor are its colors exquisitely blended. There is nothing about it to stir an æsthetic nature. In fact, it's merely a round flat blob on a griddle, an ugly brown splash, like a can of paint kicked over—especially that second one from the end, a trifle puffed in the center and fluffy like a powder puff around the edge.

"No, the pancake isn't beautiful, yet — Now my imagination induces associations. I am stricken with visions. For instance, I see those pancakes three deep on a plate, squares of yellow butter, a rivulet of maple sirup that runs slow and thick as I tilt the pitcher, a mug of coffee that steams fragrantly when I pour the cream—"

"Shut up!" Bob howled.

They moved on.

"Now I can't accept ten thousand dollars for the play," Leander persisted. "It's the work of a lifetime, and am I to offer the degradation of accepting such a paltry valuation on what I've been vain enough to regard as a useful life, touched, if I may say it myself, with genius? Am I to confess to a mercenary world that my life's endeavors, my observations of mankind which I have painstakingly incorporated into this play, the philosophy I have evolved amid trial and

tears—am I to say to the world all this is worth merely ten thousand dollars?

"Think, Bob!" he requested. "This play is my life. Has my life been so cheap and unavailing as that? Shall I put my life's work on the auction block like a bit of old furniture, and say: 'Here is something that can be had for a song?' Now David had the check all made out. I might have had it in my pocket at this moment, but——"

"Wish I had a cigarette," Bob cut in uneasily.

"Yes, yes—that would help, 'tis true. I put a new third act into the play. I'll tell you about it——"

"I gotta make the rounds, Leander."

"And so have I. Yes, yes—the rounds. But keep an eye out, Bob, for a friend who may have cigarettes. Of course we couldn't ask a stranger, but you and I should have friends on Broadway. And Bob, I implore you, if I should falter during the day, and show a disposition to sacrifice myself by rushing to the Belasco offices for that check—I beg you to lay hold of me, and haul me back; beat me, if necessary. David had that check all made out, Bob—ten thousand dollars. He let me see it. Oh, he's clever, David is! But I resisted, Bob, I resisted! The new third act hit him between the eyes——"

And so they made the weary rounds.

Office after office, and nothing doing. Long waits, insolent attendants, baffled desires. Nothing doing that day for Leander Stokes and his friend Bob, in the casting offices of the movies and the speaking stage. Not even a promise. Late in the afternoon they separated, each going his own way.

Leander approached his home warily. It was a humble rooming house, and Mrs. Cleary was often posted in the window of the first-floor parlor. Leander thought it prudent to escape Mrs. Cleary's observation.

He did so. He got inside and up

the three dingy flights of stairs. He sat down to rest in his tiny room.

LEANDER had a fine old face. After the disappointments and the physical exactions of the day, his countenance appeared as a graven image of sorrow and despair. He sat perfectly still on a rickety chair and stared into emptiness. Long white hands lay motionless on his knees.

What was he to do?

Presently one hand crept upward, and the fingers strayed among the locks of his thick, white hair. The hand wandered down to his face, and passed thoughtfully over his lean cheeks and square, cleft chin—once, twice, thrice.

"Don't exactly need a shave now," he ruminated; "but I'd better go over this face—for the last time perhaps. Yes, yes—I shall have to pawn the razor. Unnourished flesh cannot struggle forever. I've clung to the razor as to a child. The end is in sight. When a man planks his razor down on the counter of a pawnshop, he invites the finish. Whiskers cometh before the crash. Park benches next, Bowery lodging houses, soup kitchens, bread lines, clothes downright ragged, begging in the streets—— No, no, not that—never!"

He got to his feet, and from sheer weakness of hunger tottered dizzily a moment. He took from an inside coat pocket a worn and folded manuscript. Accompanying this was the customary printed rejection slip, nothing more.

It was the play upon which for many months the harmless dreams of Leander Stokes had been erected. Grandiloquent fancies, poured into the ears of a friend, offered surcease from bodily and mental miseries. Who would deny him the right to salvage that shred of pleasure from a dreary world?

He had reached the Belasco offices just before the manuscript was to be dropped into the mails. It had been

handed to him in a far outer office with no comment beyond the cold and baffling and uninformative announcement on the rejection slip.

He tossed the manuscript onto the dresser and tore the slip to bits. Then he prepared to shave.

A knock sounded at the door.

Leander was thrown into a dreadful fright. Of course it could be none else but Mrs. Cleary, who would restate her demands for a certain fund commonly denominated as back rent. Leander shivered. Yet he managed to infuse his tone with a steady confident ring:

"Just a moment, please!"

HAVING removed his shirt, he made himself presentable by putting on a frayed robe. He muttered a fervent prayer, and opened the door.

Yes, it was the landlady.

"Good evening, Mrs. Cleary!" Leander said grandly. His voice was deep and resonant, somewhat stagy. His assurance strengthened when he detected what he thought to be a softened smile on the usually stern countenance of Mrs. Cleary. "Time flies, does it not, Mrs. Cleary? Here it is Tuesday, and I think I said to you that on Monday I——"

"There's been a gent'man here to see you, Mr. Stokes."

"A gentleman—here? To see me?"

"Yes, Mr. Stokes. Twice he was here—an' he seemed very anxious."

"Now I wonder——" Leander's hand found his chin. "And what was his name, Mrs. Cleary?"

"He didn't speak his name—but he was anxious."

"Ah, yes, no doubt!" The circumstance was not without possibilities. No doubt the caller had been some impecunious friend; yet Leander, already formulating a convincing argument further to forestall his inevitable eviction, seized the straw which thus came floating by. "I think I know," he

added. "A nicely dressed gentleman, no doubt?"

"He was a fine gent'man. He——"

"Yes, yes—I understand. Ah—Mrs. Cleary, you have often been the recipient of my confidences. In this mercenary world it is pleasant for an old man to find a heart without guile into which he can occasionally pour his secrets. You have been kind enough to lend an attentive ear to matters which, if revealed elsewhere, would make me an object of disturbing chicanery and connivance.

"Yet I have often found it pleasant and helpful to talk to some one—and you have been a sympathetic listener. You are not uninformed in respect to my play. In fact, I have read it to you in its entirety—twice, I think. And now, my dear Mrs. Cleary, I have no hesitation in intrusting you with another secret. The caller to-day was from the office of David Belasco. I purposely dodged him."

"Is that so, Mr. Stokes?"

"Yes—'tis true, Mrs. Cleary. You see, I did a very bold thing this morning—a daring exploit. It has had its effect, I perceive. David has reconsidered, but it will do him no harm to worry—to understand that he cannot buy genius with a string of glass beads. David has unleashed his hounds. They are on the scent, endeavoring to run me to earth. Ah—I knew it!"

"I'm sure I don't see what you're talkin' about, Mr. Stokes."

"This. I took my play out of David Belasco's hands this morning. He offered me only ten thousand dollars for it. I did not bicker. I took my play and walked out. Ten thousand dollars! Impossible! Ridiculous! And now David has sent men out to find me, to scour the city for me. He's trembling lest the play has already been lodged elsewhere."

"D'you think so, Mr. Stokes?"

"Why, I—I——"

Leander was considerably flustered. His yarns hitherto had kindled on the face of Mrs. Cleary nothing more than tolerant disbelief, and in his heart Leander knew that the landlady listened with interest chiefly because she felt flattered by his flowery talk and not because of any great trust reposed in his assertions. But now she seemed to believe. It is one thing for a man to tell a falsehood when he knows he isn't believed and quite another to fabricate to a poor woman when she seems to put profound faith in his every word.

Leander felt guilty. "Yes," he finished gravely, but somewhat spiritlessly, "no doubt the gentleman was an emissary of David Belasco."

"Well," Mrs. Cleary informed him, "he was a nice gent'man, an' anxious about you. Says I: 'Who shall I tell him called, if you please, sir?' An' he said to never mind, but he'd come back at eight this evening. So—so I thought you'd like to know, Mr. Stokes."

"Thank you, Mrs. Cleary—thank you. He's to return at eight, you say? Thank you. I shall be here."

Mrs. Cleary appeared worried. Probably she was thinking of the back rent.

"Now, Mrs. Cleary—my indebtedness. The financial aspect of that matter will be easy to meet within a very few days, and I should like to express again my appreciation of your many kindnesses—"

"Mr. Stokes," she said, somewhat abashed, "maybe I shouldn't 'a' said nothing to the gent'man, but he seemed such a good friend o' yourn an' I'm so pressed for money that— Well, Mr. Stokes, I just happened to mention that you was owin' me— Not that I wasn't sure o' gettin' my rent as quick's ever you sell your play, but— Mr. Stokes, I didn't no more'n just mention it when he up an' says as how he'd be glad to pay your rent!"

Leander's mouth flew open. He backed up a step or two and sat down

on the rickety chair. "Ah—do you mean to say, Mrs. Cleary, that this gentleman offered to pay my rent?"

"He *did* pay it, sir!"

"He paid it?"

"Yes, sir, an' I give him a receipt, made out to you."

Mrs Cleary was gone when Leander recovered from this shock. He got up and closed the door. He wandered dreamily about the room. Presently he shaved.

AT eight o'clock Leander Stokes was dressed in the best he had, and that best brushed spotless and speckless. His long white hair lay in that artistic fashion, half of disorder and half of careful arrangement, as is sometimes achieved by musicians. A pair of horn-rimmed spectacles were perched on his high, finely chiseled nose, and enhanced the natural dignity of his countenance. He looked very tall and straight and austere in that shabby little room. Leander knew only too well how to put on a front.

There were voices in the hall below—the voice of Mrs. Cleary and another, a suave, overpolite, soft voice; then the steps of a man on the staircase, and a bulky shadow thrown on the landing in the dim gaslight.

Leander was waiting at his opened door.

"Good evening, Leander!"

"Why, why—Mr. Reed! Good evening, Mr. Reed!" Leander was nettled by the visitor's casual employment of his first name. He knew him more by reputation than personal contact. He addressed him formally, in the hope that the other would take the hint and be formal, too. "Ah—won't you come in, please?"

"Thank you, Leander."

Such effrontery! It was hard for Leander Stokes to hide his disappointment. He'd awaited the mysterious caller with the keenest anticipation,

thinking of and rejecting a score of possibilities. And now it disappointed him, and troubled him, that his visitor should turn out to be "Shenandoah" Reed.

"I'll take your hat and stick," said Leander. He did so, and disposed them carefully on the bed. "Won't you sit down, please?"

Mr. Reed sat down on the one chair, gingerly when first contact warned him that there might be a catastrophe. By degrees he relaxed his weight. Nothing happened, so he was presently comfortable. He produced cigarettes. Leander swallowed his pride and accepted one.

All the while Reed smiled, and gazed on Leander with a curious mixture of insolence and assurance and a reflected desire to be friendly and sociable.

Leander sat on the bed.

REED was called "Shenandoah," and sometimes more intimately "Shen," among his fellow confidence men and sharpers, because of the fact that his early aspirations for a career on the stage had led him into a small part in that play when it was "standing 'em up" in a Broadway theater. He had never recovered from the pomposity induced by that brief appearance behind the footlights. It was his last. He was now about forty-five, and had a smooth, flabby face and a smoother head where the hair had departed. His hands were pudgy and dimpled at the knuckles, and he had a mannerism of crinkling his fingers greedily.

For years he'd been taking his profits by plying the arts and wiles of a Broadway swindler, yet when he found it advisable to plead an honest occupation, he'd called himself an actor. He seemed always flush with money, and always togged out in the height of style.

Shenandoah Reed read the theatrical papers religiously, and, while perform-

ing his swindles, thought of himself as a member of an honorable profession. He was an actor out of work, he'd say, and didn't he have to eat? It soothed his conscience, although it is nowhere on record that Shenandoah Reed's conscience ever became so stirred that extraordinary subterfuges were necessary to placate it.

Shenandoah Reed crinkled the fingers of one hand while the other was busy with a cigarette. He smiled ingratiatingly.

"I understand," said Leander, "that you interested yourself in my behalf to-day—discharged an obligation which for the time I was unable to meet."

Reed waved his hand as though the matter were of no consequence. He did not, however, offer Leander the receipt for the room rent, and of course this was only additional evidence that his generosity had been inspired by cupidity.

Perhaps he held the receipt as a club, and had an understanding with Mrs. Cleary that the money was to be returned to him on demand.

"Please don't speak about it," Shenandoah rejoined. "It was brought to my attention, and there was nothing else a friend could do."

"It was very kind of you."

"I was sorry to hear things aren't going well."

"I have hopes."

"That's good." Reed added bluntly: "I have a proposition."

"A proposition?"

"Yes. Money—big money. I have a deal on. I need the assistance of a man like you."

"I'm afraid," Leander began, "that other matters would make it impossible for——"

"Don't say no until you've heard my proposal."

"State it, please."

"I'm doing a piece of detective work," Reed asserted. "I sometimes

perform such tasks, as you probably know."

"I hadn't heard that you did."

"No? Well, I do. Life on Broadway puts curious things in the way of a man, and we fellows who have to squeeze a living out of the world find ourselves performing various tasks. I have sometimes worked as a private detective in matters where the parties concerned didn't wish to call in the police."

Leander Stokes understood. That is one of the subterfuges of the black-mailer—that he is a private detective who can be induced to accept a fee to hush up scandals which he has uncovered.

Mr. Reed cleared his throat in a genteel manner, crinkled his fingers, and pursued:

"A few weeks ago I formed the acquaintance of an extremely interesting young woman—rich, very rich. Our meeting was a trifle informal, one of those chance encounters in a hotel lobby; a casual word, a trifling service, more words—and finally friendship and confidences. All proper, perfectly proper, you understand. A very fine young lady—a little lonely. She did me the favor of trusting me. Be that as it may, she told me what's on her mind. I informed her that I was a private detective. She thought that extremely fortunate. She engaged me to conduct her search."

"Search?"

"Yes. This young lady is trying to locate her father. It's an interesting story. It seems that she doesn't remember her father, as he disappeared when she was very small. Went down into Mexico, and never rejoined the family. The mother died. This girl is the only child. They were poor. The girl grew up without knowledge of her father beyond what her mother told her. They accounted for his silence by imagining that he'd got into difficulties

and didn't wish to disgrace his family. This girl never saw a picture of him. She never heard him described except in general terms as he looked some twenty years ago."

Reed inhaled cigarette smoke deeply, looked aloft as he blew it toward the ceiling; then fetched his sharp, tiny eyes down to the level gaze of Leander Stokes. He had brass, Reed did, and he never batted an eye nor twitched a muscle when he said:

"If the father were living, Leander, he'd be about your age."

THE meaning of this dawned in Leander's brain. He was amazed. He sat up straighter on the bed, indignantly, picked the spectacles off his nose, fumbled with them, then put them on again in some confusion.

Shenandoah Reed hadn't taken his eyes off the old man's face. "And you're a splendid actor," he added meaningly.

Leander restrained himself. He wished first to hear every possible word of this story. Vague ideas simmered. "Yes, yes—I see what you mean," he said. "As I understand it, this young lady has become rich. She's looking for her father. Being unable to find the real father, not wishing to, in fact, you ask me to act the part."

Shenandoah grinned. "I don't want to disappoint the young lady," he said.

"Just so. And neither do you wish to miss your fee, which, if you provide a father, will no doubt be of substantial proportions."

"To say nothing," Reed supplemented, "of what the father might be able to collect from time to time—depending on how long he can act the part."

"I dare say. It's very interesting—a most extraordinary proposal!"

"Nothing extraordinary about it. Quite simple, in fact. As the young lady's confidential adviser, I have of

course full information about the father—that is to say, I know as much about him as she knows. Now it will be necessary to rehearse, and very carefully, too. You'd be made aware of the man's story, if you give me your word you'll come in. I have confidence in you.

"I'd tell you details which would make it possible for you to talk convincingly of the girl's mother and their home as the father knew them. Various questions perhaps occur to you. I shall answer them. You think no doubt that you'd have to run a gantlet of relatives and old friends of the father. Not so. There are no relatives. There never was a young woman in the world so much alone as the girl I mention. And," he added as a clincher, "she's a stranger in this country, which makes things much better."

"I see," Leander nodded. "The stage seems to have set itself for this—ah—this swindle sketch."

"True." Reed did not wince. "A close investigation would have to be conducted in England, where the family lived when the father departed for Mexico. Before that could be made—before you'd be confronted with old friends and neighbors of the father—our work would be finished, if you got off to a good start, as no doubt you will."

"You mean if I succeed at once in convincing her, I'd find it easy to acquire a considerable lump of her wealth before the fraud could be exposed?"

"Exactly!"

They looked at one another. Leander, like the proficient actor he was, concealed his scorn.

"Now this young lady," Shenandoah Reed went on, "doesn't need all her wealth. She's bewildered by it, in fact—having been poor until recently. It seems that an uncle left her a bunch of land in Mexico. He resisted all efforts of the family to learn the where-

abouts of his brother—this girl's father—thus strengthening the suspicion that the father was in disgrace, in prison maybe. The uncle died. This girl got the land, and she was all alone in the world. Oil was discovered on it. A British oil concern took it off her hands and paid her a fabulous sum. She hasn't yet recovered from the shock."

"I should imagine not."

"She's dazed, and very trustful and innocent. She set out on this quest alone, and wants to find the father and establish a home somewhere, with the father in it. She thinks he's in America. Lucky I got acquainted with her before the story leaked out. The reporters haven't learned of her yet. She does exactly as I say—and of course I've been reporting progress from time to time, keeping her hope up, and strengthening my own position."

"Naturally!"

"Now I don't propose to beggar her. It's a very small slice of her fortune that we'd take. She'd never miss it. In fact, most of the money is tied up in securities and investments, managed by her lawyers in England, and we wouldn't be able to get more than—well, say twenty or thirty thousand dollars. I think that's about the limit on a deal of this kind. We'd have to work fast, and keep her from letting the lawyers know about it—just as long as we could. Lawyers are practical. They'd probably resort to the cables, and suggest that she demand conclusive proof—perhaps send some one over here."

"To be sure."

"And it all depends on the acting, Leander. You're a man, if I do say it myself, who'd establish confidence instantly—and as an actor— Well, it's a shame that a man of your talent should have to hole up in a dingy little cavern like this, and walk the streets hungry. I don't suppose you've eaten to-day?"

Leander did not affirm this deduction. He was thinking.

There was food in prospect, food and relief from his distressful emergencies. Shenandoah Reed's money! Well, it was stolen money, to be sure. Was it wrong for him to take it? It wasn't wrong to take something away from Shenandoah Reed by any device that came to hand. What he had wasn't rightfully his, anyhow.

Leander had heard it said that Reed stooped to small amounts, that he swindled actors. Why not get some of this money away from him?

His opinion of Shenandoah Reed, if expressed in words, could be compared only with a sizzling burst of fireworks. He wisely withheld expression.

"I am in difficult straits, 'tis true," he said.

"Hungry?"

"Ah—in a sort of way——"

Reed bent forward and patted the old man's arm. Leander recoiled slightly at the man's touch.

"Don't worry," Shenandoah urged. "Get your hat. I feel like eating, too. We can discuss details over a juicy steak, eh, Leander?"

Leander Stokes felt himself drifting hopelessly, powerless to resist. Shenandoah Reed, cunning, perceived his mood, tightened his clutch with all the skill at his command, plucking deftly upon the old man's necessities. Leander was old and hungry and almost homeless.

He went along with his tempter, and wondered all the while what he'd do finally. He'd have to do something, one way or another——

THREE days later the stage was set for the first act.

Miss Pansy Bigbee waited expectantly in her elaborate hotel suite. It was three minutes of three in the afternoon. She had raised a parlor window, and she stood in the center of the room,

breathing deeply of the warm spring air, eyes glued to the door.

She smiled happily.

Miss Bigbee was a demure young woman who seemed always to stare at the world with big brown eyes a trifle frightened. Sudden wealth caused this frightened look, perhaps. She had bought gowns and jewels hungrily. When one has long been starved of necessities, an orgy of luxuries is likely to follow when riches come to hand. Miss Bigbee's manner of adorning her person seemed to indicate a lack of fine taste.

In his description of Miss Pansy Bigbee, Shenandoah had said to Leander Stokes:

"She's absolutely knocked cold by all this dough. She hasn't even got up nerve enough to have her hair bobbed. Fine hair she's got, too, nice and brown. Pretty, in a childish way. She's a cute little thing, and probably made a fetching picture behind the shop counters in London. She doesn't know exactly how to dress—just lays it on, thinking to cover up that it's all new to her."

And so this victim of riches stood there waiting. She was to be surprised at three o'clock, a telephone message had said. There could be only one surprise in store for her.

Shenandoah Reed, whom she knew under the name of "William Doyle," came in with an old man, a very fine-looking old man, very tall and straight, very dignified, very neatly brushed and dressed. She stared at this old gentleman. One bejeweled hand flew to her throat. She hardly dared to hope, yet——

The old man looked at her with a smile, and with vast longing in his mild eyes.

"Miss Bigbee," said Reed, "perhaps you'd better sit down. We don't wish to shock——"

The girl ignored this suggestion. She

interrupted with a tense, low-voiced demand: "Is this—is this my—my father?"

Her eyes never left the face of Leander Stokes.

"This is your father," said Shenandoah Reed gravely.

It was Leander's cue. "And this is my little Pansy," he said, the deep, pleasant melody of his voice broken a trifle by emotion.

It seemed proper that Shenandoah Reed should say nothing. He merely backed up a few paces and looked on.

"You look just as I hoped you'd look," the girl said slowly.

"And you, my dear child—so radiant, so beautiful——"

Leander's voice broke altogether. His head dropped. His arms opened.

She took a step forward, then paused. A father who'd walked out of the family circle twenty years previously couldn't expect his lost child to exhibit that spontaneous affection which he'd receive if he were merely returning to the fireside from the day's toil. He had to consider the shock of his appearance under such circumstances, and vouchsafe her time for recovery.

At the end of a short interval, he lifted his white-maned head. Bewilderment passed out of Pansy's eyes, and something beautiful took its place. She came into his arms shyly. He kissed her hair.

"My child—my little Pansy! It's too much joy for my old heart——"

He tottered weakly. She helped him over to a settee, and sat down beside him, smiling through her tears.

Shenandoah Reed looked on with satisfaction. For his purposes it was a perfect picture. He was some pumpkins as a director in this swindling drama—and wasn't Leander Stokes some pumpkins as an actor? He sure was!

As seemed proper, Mr. Reed withdrew.

TALK came haltingly, then in torrents. Out of the maze of words explanations crept. Oh, Leander Stokes knew his lines! And he spoke with a restraint that stamped them with authenticity. The girl believed. She believed from the very outset, so taken had she been by Leander's benign appearance—gentle, good, fatherly. She told Leander as much. So there were no doubts for him to overcome.

He had merely to recount what the girl already knew of her father, and then plausibly to explain his silence. He hinted at something tragic, and seemed on the verge of tears. She pressed his hand and begged him to desist, not to mention the awful thing, to forget it for all time. And of course there were innumerable questions for him to ask, and he asked them. He lent eager ears, as a father should, to Pansy's account of all that had happened at home since he departed. He shed quiet tears at her story of her mother's death.

On and on they talked—of a home, of their life in the future, together. In America? Yes, that suited both. For the time being Leander would remain at his little hotel, until arrangements could be made to buy a home somewhere. Oh, there was so much to talk about! It might be days and days before they decided definitely. But what mattered that? They had riches, leisure.

They had tea.

Did father think it might be well to intrust Mr. Doyle with the details of buying a home? He was such an upright and sincere man! Did father approve of that? Father did. In fact, Leander had very adroitly maneuvered Miss Pansy Bigbee into this suggestion. It was part of the game, to seek access to ever larger slices of the Bigbee fortune.

Shenandoah Reed returned at six o'clock. He found a happy pair. He

listened solemnly to Pansy Bigbee's praises of himself as an astute and clever detective. At her behest, Reed spoke modestly of the difficult job he was supposed to have had in tracing the elder Bigbee from the place in Mexico where he was last heard of to the little hotel in New York.

It had been a job of writing letters to the right parties in a form which brought enlightening responses. Bit by bit the old man had been traced to New York—and now here he was, reunited with the daughter he'd seen as a baby!

The whole thing had been cleverly concocted. Leave that to the cunning swindler! There wasn't left the tiniest crevice through which suspicion might sift into the consciousness of Pansy Bigbee.

They went to dinner together, the three of them.

NEXT evening, after a day spent with Pansy Bigbee, Shenandoah being present at intervals, Leander Stokes sneaked away from Reed. He made his way to Miss Bigbee's suite. She admitted him.

Leander was troubled, grave, determined. The girl looked very much surprised at Leander's form of address.

"Miss Bigbee," he said, "'conscience does make cowards of us all.' It is a lash that stings the flesh and bites the heart, and drives us to right the wrongs we have inflicted."

"I—I don't know what you mean, fa—father."

"Say not that word to me!" He felt the sacrificial mood of one who is about to perform a noble act at some cost to himself. He enjoyed it, and he was dramatic. "Nor keep motioning for me to sit down. When I have finished, my child, you probably will ring for the police. 'Father!' 'Tis a glorious word, and to him who's entitled to the appellation, a sweet word. I am sorry that nowhere in this world is there one who

can rightfully call me father. I am old, and alone. 'Father!' 'Tis a sham and a fraud and a swindle! Do you understand, my child?"

"Y—you mean you are not my father?"

"Precisely! I can't carry on. The man you know as 'Doyle' is a swindler. I am a swindler—that is, I joined him in this damnable plot to rob you. It's a put-up job. There, it's out—and I'm relieved!"

"I—I'm so sorry!"

"I have done you a grievous injury. The warning that I'm giving does not repair it. To lead you to believe that you had found your father, to carry your joy to ineffable heights and then to dash it rudely to earth— The rescue of your money does not compensate for the blow thus dealt. I can only hang my head in shame, and invite you to seek surcease in vengeance. Go, my child—call the police!"

"I shall do no such a thing!" Pansy Bigbee retorted, with spirit. "You're too nice an old man——"

"But I am a swindler, I tell you! Doyle is a swindler—a particularly obnoxious swindler, for he is merciless. How I ever started this nefarious deceit is more than I can explain. Hunger, long, sapping hunger—the hunger of weeks and weeks of insufficient food, feeling myself well-nigh homeless — That's the only excuse I can offer, and that is but a poor one in the face of this shameless conspiracy. Doyle—I know him. Why, he has a reputation for swindling his friends, and he stoops to petty amounts and preys on those who can hardly spare it, too. I've heard that he's swindled actors, friends of mine, men of my profession—a proud profession that I've disgraced. And still I let myself be led——"

He flung up his hands in despair. "I can't stand it!" he cried. "Summon the police! I wish to hide my guilty

face from the world forever!" His lowered head came up, and he was stricken with amazement at the look he saw on Pansy Bigbee's face. "W-why——"

She threw her head back and laughed, a clear ringing laugh. A dimple appeared in one cheek, and between her lips, even rows of pearly teeth. Leander thought her beautiful at that moment.

"I knew all the time you weren't my father," she said.

Leander Stokes sank down weakly on the settee.

ABOUT twenty-four hours later Shenandoah Reed knocked confidently on Miss Bigbee's door. Once inside, he stared in amazement. His jaw dropped. He had a feeling that the worst had happened—that bugbear of the swindler that the genuine article will appear in flesh to confound his impostures.

An old man stood across the room surveying him with malicious eyes. Where he'd expected to find Leander Stokes playing his rôle of father, he found this other old man, a total stranger.

The stranger was lean and stooped and supported himself on a heavy cane. His white hair was closely cropped, so close in fact that Reed took him to be totally bald. Near-sighted eyes lurked behind a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles with thick lenses, and these threw his orbs out of proportion. His jaw sagged, like the jaw of an aged man tortured by illness. This gave a drooping expression to his entire face. His clothing evidently had seen long service. It fitted him clumsily. He was a twisted and pathetic figure, except for the vindictive gleam in his squinting eyes.

Pansy Bigbee looked as though she were having a hard time to suppress a furious outburst.

"This is my father," she said, in an icy voice.

Shenandoah Reed backed up a step, and took a sidelong glance at the door. He was a crumpled man. His habitual expression of greedy and insolent assurance gave way to a paroxysm of fright.

The old man took a step or two toward him. He uttered his excoriation in a sharp piping voice: "You crook—you contemptible crook! Begone! Go and join that old white-haired reprobate we just chased out of here! Just got here in time, I did. Lucky I got that letter from my daughter's lawyers in London—— But why should I explain to you—you low, conniving scoundrel!" He lifted the cane. "Out—begone!" he shrilled.

It was apparent that they didn't mean to call the police. This gave Shenandoah Reed a moment of blustering courage.

"Miss Bigbee," he said, "that three thousand dollars I advanced you this afternoon, when you got that cablegram from your London bankers, saying they were transferring a large sum——"

She made an impatient gesture, and cried: "Telephone the police, father! We'll see if he isn't made to pay more than three thousand dollars for his brutal conspiracy! Call the police, father! Call——"

Reed backed toward the door. The police were anxious to interview him about numerous affairs. The old man limped to the telephone eagerly.

Shenandoah Reed fled.

Whereupon a curious scene was enacted inside the suite. The old man backed away from the telephone and tossed the cane aside. He threw his shoulders back, and his tall body jerked up to its accustomed straightness. He plucked the thick-lensed spectacles off his nose. He smiled.

Except for his usual garb and the sacrifice he'd made that day in a bar-

ber shop, Leander Stokes was himself again.

And the Bigbee person was no longer demure. She was a spirited young woman who smiled with the satisfaction of a job well done and exhibited a manner of speech altogether unlike the innocent miss Shenandoah Reed had meant to fleece.

"Well, old-timer," she said gayly, "three thousand berries was what we clipped that jaybo for! 'Broadway Bessie' always plays square, get me? If you'd 'a' been in with me from the go-off, we'd split fifty-fifty, but way I, got it figured— Well, a thousand shells— What d'you say, old-timer?"

"You're very liberal."

"You got it coming. He'd 'a' never fell for the rub if he hadn't 'a' felt so sure. And what made him sure? Why, 'cause you done the father stuff so good. It made him think he had a fortune in his mitt. You sure played some pay-ternal rôle, old-timer! You're clever! Course I laid the game so's he'd ring in a lost dad—but I didn't think he'd find a darb like you.

"Your acting sewed him up in a nice little bag for me; it cheered him all up," she went on. "That's why he coughed this three thousand so easy on the little racket I sprung with the sour cablegram, and kinda letting him know I wished he'd handle all my financial affairs. Money's such a nuisance, ain't it? Well, you got the thousand coming to you. You earned it. There it is—and it's a nice little string of wampum, eh, old-timer?"

There was an unhappy frown on Leander's face. "It doesn't seem right," he began. "It isn't the sort of money that I—"

"Now listen, old-timer," Broadway Bessie interrupted. "Don't let your conscience work itself limp, get me? We folks—people that play the game like me—we've had a lot of talk about that bimbo, and we all say it's right to

shake him down. He ain't got no ethics, you might say—guess that's what you call it. Anyhow, he trims his friends. That's enough. He's a crooked crook, get me? And he ain't never backed up on the widows and orphans, if he could pinch their dough. Any piece of money you get off a can of glue like him, you're entitled to, and you'll get the handclaps of the whole crowd.

"It just happened that he hadn't never met Broadway Bessie. But I knew him by sight. Oh, I wasn't laying for him. I'm in this hotel for a bigger game than that—and that don't make no never-mind to you. But when I seen him poking around the lobby, I took him on—on the side. Just a little velvet dough while I'm working the bigger racket. I figured I could warp him some way. So I spread the lost-father game. You got in it, and the way you acted the part—it helped. It's all right. This money I took off him — Why, he stole it from somebody!"

"I suppose you're right."

"Well then, don't look so glum. Take it!"

Leander Stokes took the money. He held it in one hand, while with the other he rubbed his stubby head.

Broadway Bessie grinned. "So that's it, eh?" she queried sympathetically. "Mourning for the silken locks? That sure was some nice basket of hair you had, old-timer. But say, it'll grow out again. Only thing is, do like I told you to. Keep under cover. He'll think you're scared to show your face on account of being run off by Miss Pansy Bigbee and her long-lost papa. Just don't let him see you till your hair grows out. Cheer up! It'll grow!"

Leander grinned.

"My child," he said, "you're a very bright young woman—intelligent, and no doubt appreciative of the finer things of life. It's too bad," he added

thoughtfully, "that I haven't my play with me. I should like to read it to you."

She smiled broadly. "Say, old-timer," she informed him, "I didn't mean to say nothing about it, but I seen you on the stage once. I got you the minute you walked in the door there with Reed. Didn't you play in 'The Grasshopper?' Sure, I knew it! Well, now, there ain't nothing like candor between friends. Your acting wasn't much then, but listen here. You've improved wonderful. I don't

know nothing about your play, if it's good or rotten, but I do know you're an actor. I never seen a father act done so good as you played this. One thing I was anxious to tuck that thousand in your mitt is to finance you till you can get cast in some play. I'm an enthusiastic supporter of the drama, and what I say is that you ought to have a lift. The stage needs an artist like you. So long, old-timer! Good luck!"

Leander Stokes departed, his shorn head in the air.

You will find, in subsequent issues of THE POPULAR, more stories by Mr. Hinds.



A DIFFERENCE IN METHOD OR IN ANIMALS?

QUITE recently a bear escaped from the zoo in Central Park, New York. The long-captive bruin's realization of the liberty that is so dear to the hearts of all true patriots caused the greatest consternation among the women and children who had come to the shaded walks of the park, seeking sunshine and fresh air. Little did they know that there was scant cause for excitement for along came the keeper, trundling a cage on rollers, in the center of which was a pail of delicious honey. As soon as Friend Bear smelled the tempting honey, into the cage he went, forsaking the much-prized liberty, the longed-for green woods and blue skies.

But see what fun Paris has when one of her captive animals escapes! Last summer, a leopard broke out of his cage, and escaped to the near-by Bois de Boulogne, the largest and most popular of the Paris parks. Immediately the alarm was sounded and the gendarmerie and citizenry, armed to the teeth with pistols, shotguns and rifles, went in pursuit of the spotted beast, in flivvers and automobiles of every description. For five days the most fashionable and most sophisticated capital in the world was agog over its "wild-animal hunt." The leopard was finally captured "alive," and led back to his peaceful quarters in the zoo.

Perhaps the American's love of peace accounts for the method of capture in New York; perhaps the militant spirit of the French nation explains the "armed resistance" of the Parisians. Who knows?

By
B. M. Bower

Author of
"The Adam Chaser,"
"The White Wolf Pack," Etc.



Where Stillwater

CHAPTER I.

READY FOR BUSINESS.

AT the moment, Ed Murray, supervisor of the Absarokee Division of the Yellowstone National Forest, was peeved. "Read that!" he snorted, shoving a letter from his particular higher-ups in Washington into the hands of his stolid secretary who, by the way, comprised the entire office force of the Absarokee Division.

The secretary obediently began reading in a slightly singsong tone:

"Under separate cover we are mailing you blank township maps. As a measure of economy you are instructed to have some member of your office force sketch in the necessary data, using the inclosed legends which have been made official for all forest-service maps. We—"

"That's all—never mind the official trimmings," Murray curtly interrupted. "Point is this: You're the office force. What're you going to do about it? Think you can fill in the maps?"

While the secretary calmly ruminated upon the subject of map making, Murray watched her with a twinkle of amusement, though that did not in the least degree soften his resentment against Washington.

"I could do anything on the typewriter if it would fit in the machine," Christine at length decided. "If they are big maps, I could fold them lengthwise without carbon, but they might slip on the roller, which is too slick. If it is figures, I do not mind so much, but if it is those funny signs for surveying I must copy them with a pen, and that is no joke if I am in a hurry. I think if it is much work, Mr. Murray, I should get more wages."

"Huh! Well, as you say, making maps on a typewriter is no joke, and I guess you'd earn your money all right!" Her employer noted the clearing of Christine's placid blue eyes, gave another inarticulate snort and returned to his own problem, knowing that Christine was unlikely to repeat his words.



He was an Irishman and a West Pointer and he liked to fight. But he was also Patrick R. O'Neill, ranger of the Yellowstone National Forest, and his mission in Bad Cañon was one of peace. And peace it was, but two-fisted!

Runs Deep

"Seems like I've got troubles enough in this district, fighting every cowman, sheepman, timberman and nester in the State. I'm always short-handed, always got a row on my hands with some one who thinks I ought to turn the reserve over to him just because we used to punch cows together! When I don't, they think I'm trying to ride them on account of some little argument over brands that might have come up when I was stock inspector.

"Some member of the office force!" he growled, remembering the letter. "Huh! They must think I'm runnin' two wagons and a regular round-up crew in this office! Far as that goes, I could take my rangers and work the reserve quicker than these darned cow outfits—picked 'em off the range myself, most of them. But when it comes to making maps—— They're like you, Christine. You could do it on the typewriter, you think; they might tackle it with a branding iron! Some member of my office force! My gosh! Take this letter, Christine. I'll tell them

poker-faced politicians in Washington what——"

"Do you want that in the letter?" Christine lifted her plump white hand to pluck the pencil from her silky blond hair.

"Lord, no! Dog-gone that June 11th Act and its maps and pamphlets and systems and all that bunk! What I'm going to need is a crew of civil engineers and an addition on this office. Washington must think all forest rangers are merely desk men! Why——"

"Should that be incorporated in the body of the letter, Mr. Murray?" Christine was patiently waiting with pencil point on her pad. "I could make a note and beg to inform them in a polite way that you have no office force and your secretary works until six o'clock sometimes——"

"No!" shouted Murray. "What does Washington care how long my secretary works? Take this—verbatim. None of your business-college trimmings—I want it typed the way I say it! I'll tell them——"

The office door opened, admitting six feet of husky young manhood who saluted Murray and snapped into attention while he took in the entire office force with flicking glances of blue eyes that twinkled habitually. It may go on record that the entire office force instinctively patted its blond hair and modestly cast down its eyes of blue—with sundry furtive inspections when it thought the military visitor was not looking.

"Are you the forest supervisor, sir?" Somehow the habitual twinkle in the stranger's eyes seemed to match a certain rollicky Irish tone of his voice, as if he had a joke on the tip of his tongue and needed scant encouragement to tell it.

"I am. What can I do for you?"

"You might read these letters of recommendation, sir, and if they suit you, then you might give me a job." He grinned as he handed Murray two letters and stepped back.

THE first letter came from the national forest service and was signed by the chief. It stated that the bearer, Patrick R. O'Neill, had at his own request been transferred from Arizona to Montana, and was competent to perform all duties pertaining to the forest service. The other was from the supervisor of the Black Mesa National Forest, Arizona, and spoke in highest terms of the qualifications of this same Patrick O'Neill. Murray read both with care before he so much as glanced again at the man. When he did, he saw Patrick O'Neill still standing at attention, still with the twinkle in his eyes.

"Huh! Seen army service, too, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir. Two years and a half at West Point."

"Holy mackerel! Two years and a half—you learned how to make maps, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Lock the door, Christine! Quick, before he gets away! Damn it, man, you're needed in this office! Sit down and let's talk. Christine, can't you tell a joke unless it's labeled? Unlock that door!"

"I was taught obedience to my employer by the business college. You say I am to lock the door and I lock it. I should not read your mind or some day I lose my job." Christine unlocked the door which she had obediently locked, sat down at her desk and began wiping the speckless old typewriter before her, while she still patiently waited for the letter her boss was going to write.

"Tell me first why you quit West Point," Murray was saying. "I'd have given my left arm for such a chance when I was a young man."

"Technically speaking, I quit, Mr. Murray, but it was merely a strategic move on my part. I'd rather walk out than be kicked out."

"Huh?"

"Insubordination, sir. We had a major—an old woman he was, Mr. Murray. Always putting us through our paces in civil engineering. One day he called on me in class to explain just how I would go about raising a hundred-and-fifty-foot flagpole. I said, 'I would call a sergeant, sir, and I would say to the sergeant, "Sergeant, take a detail of men and raise that hundred-and-fifty-foot flagpole which you see lying there."'"

"The major lost his temper, sir. He accused me of being facetious. I replied that no one ever heard of an officer of the United States army so violating the traditions of his rank as to perform the menial task of raising flagpoles, and that I had clearly stated the method by which I would go about it, just as he had requested me to do. The major further forgot himself, sir. He called me an impudent young

puppy. I thereupon saluted and walked out of the classroom. My sojourn at West Point ended shortly thereafter, sir." Grin and twinkle combined to give Patrick O'Neill a look of personified good humor.

Murray roared with laughter; a circumstance unusual in that office where worry perched like a raven on his file case.

"How about making forest-service maps? Would you call upon the office force and tell them to fill in the blank township maps with the proper data—using a typewriter?"

Patrick O'Neill laughed. "No, I think I'd prefer to make the maps myself. It would be child's play after the map making at West Point, and help me to familiarize myself with forest boundaries before you assign me to a district. If I can get hold of a couple of surfaced boards and a two-by-four, Mr. Murray, I'll just knock together a table and set it beside that north window and go to work, sir."

"Huh! Christine, phone the lumber yard and tell them to let Pat O'Neill have whatever material he wants to pick out, and send it up here immediately. Say it's for the forest service."

So this is how Patrick O'Neill, some time of West Point and lately of Black Mesa, Arizona, came into the service of the Yellowstone National Forest.

CHAPTER II.

TOO MUCH MISERY.

ED, I'm through!" Ranger Cushman tossed his hat onto the pine table where Pat O'Neill had whistled softly over the making of his maps, and where he whistled no more now that the job was beautifully finished. O'Neill was now waiting around the office with an expectant, eager look in his eyes which Murray had studiously ignored while he pondered the problem of keeping the happy Irishman busy.

"Huh! What's the trouble now? Cushman, I want you to meet Pat O'Neill; been making maps; part of the office force now. Well, what's wrong with the Stillwater District this time?"

"Ain't this time, Ed. It's *all* the time, and I'm darned good and tired of it. Man was not born to stand the grief I've stood with them wild cats. I'm goin' back to the peaceful life of roughin' broncs for a livin'. Why, them coyotes over on the Stillwater are so poison mean they won't even speak to each other, except when they call a convention to devise ways and means of dealin' me misery, and old Boyce is chairman of the committee.

"They've cut the wires on my pasture fence every night for a month, so every time I want a horse I got to wrangle him afoot. They steal my grub. I ride day an' night, hazin' cattle off the reserve, and they drive 'em on faster than I can drive 'em off. Why, even the sheepmen are gettin' gay! Found two bands of sheep on the reserve, last week, over Trout Creek way. Killed a few sheep and took a shot at the herder, but that won't stop 'em. They'll keep a-comin', now they've started.

"Another thing: Them darn timber pirates on Blind Bridger Creek are cuttin' everything they come to, regardless. Ed, it'd take a hull regiment of rangers with a Gatlin' gun apiece to keep that country straight! Why, damn it, some of the cowmen even went so far as to hint I was in on the rustlin' that's goin' on over there. If there's any brand of cussedness they ain't been up to, they'll think it up while I'm gone. You can save your breath, Ed. This time you can't talk me into goin' back. I'm through! Ab-so-lutely, eternally through!"

"Huh! Guess I'll have to take your word for it, Cushman. This makes the third time you've come in here bellerin' that you've quit the Stillwater." He

whirled his chair around and glared hard at Pat O'Neill, who was making a map case of his own invention. "Now, what're you lickin' your chops for, like a dog watchin' a Christmas dinner? Think there's a turkey leg comin' to you outa this?"

"Oh, doctor, but it listens sweet to my fightin' Irish ears, Mr. Murray!" Pat O'Neill retorted, with the faintest hint of a brogue in his voice.

"Huh! Think I'd give you the best ranger station in the Northwest? Good, three-room log house, good barn, plenty of corrals, thirty acres of alfalfa under ditch and over two hundred acres of good pasture land fenced with a four-wire fence——"

"Cut in two or three places every night," Ranger Cushman dourly interjected.

"Well, yes, cut occasionally, but a fine pasture for all that. Most important district in the Absarokee Division; settled clear up to the base of the mountains with nesters, cow outfits, sheep ranches, all dead set against the forest service——"

"Puttin' it mild!" again from Ranger Cushman.

"Well, I admit they're prejudiced some. Think I'd give that district to a devil-may-care Irishman just because he happened to know how to make up a batch of maps? Huh! What d'you expect me to do, O'Neill? Give you the best and biggest—also the meanest and fightin'est—district I've got in my division?"

FOR answer, Patrick O'Neill with the West Point figure and mien facetiously pantomimed his emotions in a manner that sent the blond secretary into shoulder-heaving convulsions of mirth. That is, he tilted his head to one side, licked his tongue out over one corner of his mouth and waggled a hand behind him like a tail.

Ranger Cushman gave a great snort

of laughter. Ed Murray roared and lifted a boot toward the impudent mimic.

"Sick 'em!" he chuckled. "Dog-gone yuh! I was going to send you over to Stillwater to help Cushman whip that district into shape, but now you'll have to tackle it alone." He eyed O'Neill thoughtfully, his face gradually settling to a sober look. "I dunno about it, though. Can you ride?"

"Yes, sir." O'Neill smelled serious business in the air and quit his foolery.

"Huh! That's what you said when I asked you if you could make maps, but—this is out West, remember. By riding, I mean—well, *riding*."

"They ride down in the Black Mesa country, sir." O'Neill paused, with the twinkle in his eyes. "I mean—they *ride*."

"Black Mesa—yeah, that's right, you're from that country. Wel-l—you'll be on your own, so to speak, once you get up there. You heard what Ranger Cushman said about it. On the square, do you think you can handle it?"

"I'd like to try it, Mr. Murray."

Murray cocked a suspicious eye at him, probably wondering just what lay back of that sudden modesty—coupled with the Irish tone and the twinkle. He glanced at Cushman, caught the pitying smile on his saturnine face and swung back to the desk, perhaps to hide a grin.

"All right, O'Neill, you'll take over the Stillwater District. You will have charge of the grazing permits and the timber sales, of course. You will find that the stockmen are inclined to resent the grazing fee of thirty-five cents a head for their stock, and if it is possible I should like to see a better feeling between the ranchers and the forest service. The service is really a protection to the stockmen, but as yet they look upon us as oppressors who delight in interfering with their inalienable

rights. Boyce, of the Bar B Ranch—which is nearest the Stillwater station—is apparently the bitterest enemy we have.”

“He’s a devil!” growled Cushman.

“He came from Boston, but that don’t make him any the less a cowman. Do the best you can with him all the rest, and I’ll back you up as far as Washington will let me.”

“That won’t mean a thing to yuh,” Ranger Cushman told O’Neill, with the emphasis born of his late tribulations. “This absent treatment for protection don’t go; not when you’ve got to fight them wild cats over on the Stillwater. I had Washington and Ed Murray to back me up, too—but my fences was cut just the same, I noticed!”

“All in the day’s work!” O’Neill laughed, happy over the prospect. “I learned to mend reserve fences, down on the Black Mesa. They cut them there, too—for a while.”

“Meanin’, I reckon, that you tamed ’em down. But I notice you changed your range just the same—and I’m changin’ mine. I ain’t goin’ to Black Mesa, either.”

CHAPTER III.

A BATTLE OF WORDS.

ON a still, sunny day in July, Patrick O’Neill rode whistling down the steep trail that led into Lodgepole Basin. From little openings in the pines he could look down over a vast stretch of hills and valleys which formed a part of his district—a peaceful scene which held him silent for a space. The ranger station which would be his home lay farther down in the basin, a tip of its flagpole showing white above a grove of young pines.

“Looks like heaven, after the jack pines and mesquite of Black Mesa,” he observed to his horse that stood switching flies with philosophic calm. “I’ll stand a lot of grief before I’ll quit.

We’ll sure make a home of this place, no foolin’. Cushman wasn’t Irish. Takes the Irish to get a real human slant on folks. He’s a sour cuss—probably tried to lord it over the natives, and they wouldn’t stand for it.

“Don’t blame ’em. I wouldn’t let any iron-visaged ranger dictate much to me, if I were a rancher. The human note—no up-stage attitude—just be one of them, friendlylike and peaceful. That’s the ticket. Like gentling a bronc, this thing is going to be. Treat ’em right and they’ll treat you right.”

Whereupon he resumed his whistling and jogged down to the comfortable log house in the grove of lodgepole pines, opened all the windows and went happily to work at what he called policing camp. After that he got out the files and studied the grazing permits, the brands, owners thereof and the territory assigned to each. It took the rest of the day and most of the evening to memorize the stuff he felt he should have ready behind the tip of his tongue, but he enjoyed it all and repeated his cheerful prophecies concerning the work of gentling Stillwater District.

“That Bar B man, Boyce, seems to be the king-pin of this district,” he mused, as he rode abroad over his domain to familiarize himself with the topography of the country, just as he had made himself acquainted with the records. “Next on the program comes the human contact. Think I’ll just ride down and make friends with our Bostonian neighbor at the Bar B. Must be educated and intelligent—we ought to have a good deal in common. I’m educated, far above the average in intelligence—oh, you Pat O’Neill! When you tell him that, he’ll love you for your modesty if for nothing else!”

So he turned his horse’s head toward the Bar B Ranch.

The Honorable Standish Boyce of Boston was leaning over the front gate as O’Neill rode up, whistling under his

breath, as was the carefree habit he had. A pair of field glasses dangled from the old man's right hand, as if he had been making certain of the horseman's identity, had recognized him as the new forest ranger and was now waiting to welcome him according to precedent and his general opinion of all forest-service men.

Patrick O'Neill flung a limber leg over the cantle of his stock saddle and stepped down with agile grace, smiling his Irish smile as he strode forward with outstretched hand.

"Mr. Boyce? I'm the new ranger in this district. O'Neill is my name—Pat O'Neill."

"Well, what of it?" Boyce still stood with his arms folded upon the gate, the field glasses swinging gently from their narrow strap. Cold gray eyes had the Honorable Standish Boyce, set deep and close to a high, thin nose. Beneath the nose, a thin, straight mouth, half hidden beneath a growth of thin, white beard, pointed to match his nose. His eyes had the impersonal glare of the bird he so closely resembled—an Uncle Sam on the warpath, O'Neill thought swiftly.

"Oh, nothing much, Mr. Boyce!" he grinned, firm in his purpose. "Nothing, except that I understand you are one of the leading citizens of our little community, as well as the largest user of the National Forest, and I wanted to meet you."

"Well, you've met me. If you're satisfied, I am. Now get off my ranch and stay off."

The spirit of a thousand generations of fighting O'Neills rose and looked out through the eyes of young Pat, but he hushed their battle cry and somehow managed to keep his Irish grin.

"You're a bit hasty, Mr. Boyce. You and I will have a good deal of business to transact together as time goes on. It will be much pleasanter if we are friends, you know."

"Young man, I transact my business directly with Washington. I have relatives who stand high in official circles, and by virtue of their influence I enjoy privileges quite beyond your petty power to accord me. Now will you do me the favor to leave this place?"

"When the favor becomes mutual, yes. First, I want to tell you that it's my business to administer the affairs of this district on behalf of the government. Whether you approve or disapprove of that fact is of no concern to the government or to me. You may be twin brother to the President of these United States for all I care, Mr. Boyce, but the fact remains the same. Any business you have to transact with the forest service, you will transact with me, its accredited representative."

THEN the fighting O'Neills in him took a hand. They propelled him forward so that his blazing Irish eyes were within a foot of the cold gray ones.

"Get this straight, old-timer! I'm running this neck of the woods—not your relatives in Washington—and you may as well learn the fact right here as farther down the creek! Your special privileges end right here, you bean-brained old pie eater! From this minute on, you haven't got one damn privilege beyond what your neighbors enjoy, and if I catch you trying to assume that you have, I'll arrest you same as I would any one else! Let that sink away down deep in your cosmic consciousness, Mr. Boyce. The sooner you realize that this forest service is not run for the special benefit of any individual, the less grief you are going to have!"

Boyce's white-bearded jaw sagged in amazement. He swallowed twice, shook a tremulous fist at the man who had the temerity to defy him, and spluttered an epithet.

"Calm yourself, Mr. Boyce," O'Neill

admonished, as he picked up the reins to remount. "I expect that's pretty hard to swallow, but you needn't choke over it."

"I—— You—I'll have you dismissed—kicked out in disgrace, you—you——"

"Oh, go off and lie down! You make me tired," O'Neill snarled disgustedly from the saddle and loped back up the trail, thinking not of Boyce, but of the girl he had seen walk her horse to the side porch of the house and sit watching them, evidently listening.

How much she had heard, he did not know—nor did he care at the moment. But now he wished that he had thought of something wittily biting to say at the last, instead of that hackneyed retort which any roughneck puncher on the range might have made.

The rasping voice of the Bar B Bostonian followed him, shouting threats and imprecations which the increasing distance blurred to a vague mouthing of rage. Bluster, O'Neill reminded himself, was always a mark of weakness, or so folks said. If the rule held, then the Honorable Standish Boyce was all bark and no bite, and could safely be ignored.

HE had ridden a mile along the side of a ridge, taking it easy on the way home, when a horse lunged out through a clump of bushes into the trail ahead of him and wheeled so that the rider faced him. It was the girl he had seen at Boyce's house, and she had evidently cut across country with the deliberate intention of intercepting him. At any rate, she was waiting for him to ride up. Which Patrick O'Neill did right willingly.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Ranger," she greeted him coolly, when he drew near. "I'm Isabelle Boyce, and I'm supposed to be a chip off the old block. At least, the neighbors say I am."

O'Neill laughed as he took off his hat and ran his fingers through his thick, brown hair. "I'd have to prove that for myself, Miss Boyce. Is this a continuation——"

"Oh, no, indeed! It's an explanation. I heard how father talked to you, and I heard how you talked back to father. So I just thought——"

"If you heard your father, you must admit I had the patience of Job and used it."

"And left father boiling!" she laughed, flicking the bushes with her quirt. "I was really in hopes, Mr. er—er——"

"Patrick O'Neill, at your service." Pat reined in alongside her and the horses started on up the trail at a walk.

"Oh, you're Irish! I was in hopes the new ranger would understand and sympathize with the people of the Stillwater District, but if you're Irish, I suppose you'll want to fight over nothing, like all the rest."

"Not necessarily, Miss Boyce. Your father ordered me off the ranch, when all I wanted to do was give him a cordial shake of the hand and say I hoped we might be friends. I merely expostulated a bit against the discourtesy. I could not fail to understand him, but as for sympathizing—— Well, I'd first like to know what's wrong with him."

"The same thing that's wrong with all the rest of the Stillwater people, Mr. O'Neill. All you rangers seem to have overlooked the fact that this is an isolated country, where it's very difficult to keep a fine sense of values. This world in here is bounded by cows, horses, crops and kids. The men are only servants to their live stock, and the women are slaves to the men. No one seems able to take a day off, to get out of the rut. They live in shacks, for the most part, and life is a monotonous grind of the very things that have made them so narrow and sordid."

"Even my father," she continued, "though he is intelligent and educated and can look back upon worth-while things, has grown as narrow as the rest. They are bored to death, and don't even know it, so they hate themselves and each other, and squabble over trifles that——"

"Well, they needn't take out their spite on the forest service," Pat grumbled, just to keep her going.

"Oh, but they do!" she came back at him eagerly, her eyes alight with interest in her subject. "You're—meaning the forest service—the only thing they can all band together to fight, don't you see? Once you take that community spirit away from them, I don't know what would happen. It's the primitive impulse of self-preservation, working out in a normal, primitive way. It requires a common enemy—hunger, the menace of some terrible creature of the wild, protection against some element that would destroy, and which no one man is strong enough to conquer alone; just as the cave men gathered on the cliffs and rolled rocks down upon the saber-toothed tiger. We call it community spirit, in our psychology classes—that's where I learned it.

"Here, they have plenty to sustain life according to their standards, and there aren't any saber-toothed tigers, so—they pretend to themselves that the forest service is a menace, and they band together for the fight. He's an outlet for their emotions, Mr. O'Neill. A psychological safety valve. Also," she added, forestalling an Irish rebellion which she may have seen rising in his eyes, "it's misdirected energy, of course. But it explains my father's awful conduct, doesn't it?"

Patrick O'Neill gave her a keen look. "It explains your father," he admitted, "but sure, and it don't change the temper of him, divil a bit!" Then he laughed. "So the answer seems to be, Miss Boyce, that since they are bored

with the monotony of their existence and must have some excitement, I'm to wallop the livin' daylights out of the lot of them! And it's not so sorry a prospect as you might suppose," he added dryly.

"I don't mean that at all, and you know it!" she flashed, showing a hint of her father's temper—though she showed it very prettily, O'Neill thought. "You seem intelligent. Why don't you use your personality——"

"I will, Miss Boyce, and my fists along with it!"

"Your personality," she went on, ignoring him, "to give them a pride in the forest service? Make them see that it is really their best friend, that it protects their range and gives each one a fair share of the grazing. If you can win them over to yourself as a man, you can win them over to the forest service as an institution which has their welfare at heart."

"And force them back to whippin' pups for excitement, and fightin' each other. I don't see——"

"That's because you won't see," she told him impatiently. "I have it all analyzed, but I can't do anything myself to help Stillwater—they call me 'Queen Isabelle,' and say I'm stuck up, and like my father. But you—if you can make them like you, the work is half done. Won't you try, Mr. O'Neill? I heard how you talked to father, and while I admit he is terribly exasperating, still, that attitude of yours won't make him love the service any better. If you'd seize every opportunity to make each individual like you personally——"

"I will that!" cried Patrick O'Neill, beaming upon her with the Irish twinkle which she had perhaps noticed. "I grasp the idea, and I find it wonderful! But I shall need encouragement and advice—and might I begin with yourself, Miss Boyce?"

"Get along with you!" cried Queen

Isabelle. "I *told* you the Irish——" She struck her horse with the quirt and galloped away from him, flushed and biting her lip to keep back the laughter. Then she halted and wheeled, a short distance away. "I'll advise you about the best way to approach father," she called to him sweetly. "I can get his real opinion of you as a man——"

"Sure, and I had that same by word of mouth, Miss Boyce!"

"And if you really need help or advice at any time, I'll be glad to have you call on me."

"It's a great deal of trouble you are taking, Miss Boyce, just for a lone ranger, but I'll be delighted to avail myself of the privilege you so kindly ex——"

Queen Isabelle laughed and rode toward him again. "Remember, Mr. O'Neill, that I have lived in this isolated place for more than a year—ever since I finished school. I'm like the rest of the natives—bored to death. Only, I know it and am seizing a small opportunity to direct my energy in some useful channel. You may laugh, but I really mean it. Just living is not enough. I must be doing something. So if I can help you win the Stillwater over to the forest service and make friends of the two, I shall be much more contented with my lot in life; which is staying at home with father and making him as happy as possible.

"That," she added with dignity, "is my sole reason for waylaying you in this bold manner. I could see that you were getting an entirely erroneous view of the situation in your district, and that you were in a fair way to widen the breach between the settlers and the government. We'd be having regular feuds over the forest reserve in another year, just as some of the mountaineers of Kentucky fight the revenue officers. Oh, I have given the matter careful thought, I assure you! You are not like the other rangers, and if you

really have the interests of the service at heart, you will do all in your power to promote a better feeling here."

"I will that, Miss Boyce! It's a sweet little task you've set me, but with your constant guidance and encouragement I'll do it."

She gave him a quick, suspicious glance, refusing to laugh at his slightly exaggerated Irish optimism. "Just meet the people with kindness and courtesy, Mr. O'Neill. When you match temper with temper, as you did just now with father, you merely drop from a superior mental height to the level of—of Gus Peterson, owner of the Box S, who lives to fight and to boast of his brutal victories. Father knows better, and so do you, but he has permitted himself to drop into the ways of the country. There isn't even that excuse for you at all, don't you see?"

"Miss Boyce, you have the pitiless logic of a *Portia*," Patrick O'Neill sighed. "For the first time in my life, I humbly apologize for my fightin' Irish temper, and I promise to be a saint from this moment, so that Stillwater mothers shall beg the little ones at their knees to be sweet, loving little gentlemen and ladies, like the kind, forgiving young man at the ranger station, who would not hurt a fly. And for the encouragement to be that same, I shall choose Thursday as the day which I am allowed by a thoughtful government each week for policing camp, and I shall call if I may, and smile if I am kicked out."

"I ride nearly every day," returned Isabelle Boyce, with a smile. "Always on Thursday I ride toward Castle Creek. Good-by, and remember that a soft answer turneth away wrath. I shall expect a good report of the week."

"A sweet little handicap she's put upon me!" mused Patrick O'Neill, as he jogged homeward across the hills. "I'm to swallow my temper—that's

turned me out of my home and my school and every job I've ever held in my life! Pat, me lad, the girl is more dangerous than the old man, and it's well for you if you face that fact at once!"

CHAPTER IV.

ODDS AGAINST HIM.

COTTONWOODS and quaking aspens along the creeks flaunted leaves of golden yellow to prove that fall had come, and Ranger O'Neill whistled a love tune under his breath as he rode down to Bad Cañon post office for his mail. Strange as it may seem, he was at peace with his neighbors—or so he would have told you, with a twinkle in his eye which might mean more than he would care to explain.

No mother of the Stillwater has yet been overheard in lauding the saintliness of Patrick O'Neill, it is true. But neither had he skinned his knuckles to enforce the rules and regulations of the forest service, and Isabelle Boyce thought well of his efforts and was still quite willing to ride out on a Thursday afternoon and give him encouragement and advice.

"But I'll have a matter or two to tell her next Thursday, I'm thinking," he broke off his whistling to mutter, speaking to his horse for want of other companionship, as is the way of men who live much alone. "I've the small triumph of being asked to sit down with the boss of the Seven L to dinner when I rode up last Saturday to his house. The first ranger who ever did that, I'm sure. It's something I can boast of to Queen Isabelle.

"Also I held my temper in the matter of the sheep I found trespassing on the Trout Creek Range, and if I told the owner I'd hold the band for damages next time he drove them on, and charge him a full season's grazing fee to boot, I did it politely and only once

called him spawn of the devil and let it go at that.

"Then there's the timber sale on Blind Bridger Creek—I handled that thief of a Blanding like a diplomat, which same I shall point out to Queen Isabelle. He'd broken his contract with deliberate intent, piling the logs this way and that in the yard, instead of all tops in one direction, according to agreement. I could have quarreled with the man and made a great talk and stir, but I did not. I calmly—and I shall describe how calmly it was done!—I very calmly scaled butts and tops as they came, and let Blanding splutter at the loss and be damned to him. He'll yard his logs according to contract next time, I'm thinking!

"Pat, me lad, you've much to be proud of, and I shall tell her so. I shall likewise point out the fact that I'm aware her respected father, and others as well, are running far more cattle on the forest than their permits call for, but that I am shutting one eye to that, since the season is nearly over anyway, and I've no mind to fight the entire Stillwater at this time. But when next the permits are issued, there'll be no violations without the penalty attached. And for these good deeds perhaps the queen will reward me by consenting to a little fishing trip next Thursday!"

Whereupon Patrick O'Neill resumed his whispered whistling of the love tune he liked best, and rode contentedly into the tiny settlement that was called Bad Cañon post office to distinguish it from the cañon itself, and into an event which spoiled whatever vanity he may have indulged in because of his saintliness.

A small group of rangemen sat dangling spurred heels from the narrow platform in front of the store, smoking and gossiping of this thing and that, when Patrick O'Neill rode jauntily up to the hitch rail and dismounted, still

whistling the love tune under his breath. From the tail of his eye he saw them jerk thumbs in his direction, exchange a muttered sentence or two and laugh. Young Patrick O'Neill did not like that—being Irish; but being a saint for the moment as well, he let it pass.

AS he approached the store, he nodded casually toward a man or two whom he disliked the least, and would have walked inside quite inoffensively had not Gus Peterson, the owner of the Box S brand, reached out a hairy paw and caught O'Neill by the arm.

"Aw, don't be in such a damn hurry!" he arrogantly commanded. "I'd like to know what you let them sheep do with my grass. I think you're one hell of a ranger! You can't tell cows from sheeps! I paid good money for that grass. And I don't stand for no damn ranger lettin' sheep come and eat my grass!"

"Take your dirty claw off me!" snapped the saintly Patrick O'Neill, as he threw off Peterson's hand. "No sheep are on your grazing ground, and you know it. And I think," he added meaningly, "if you'd count your cattle, you'd find you were getting your money's worth of grass, all right!"

"Yes, my cows ate grass before you come here an', by damn, they eat grass when you go! Maybe you charge money for breathin' air! Maybe——"

"And if I did, I'd collect the same, remember that! I'm running this proposition, my fine bully, as you'll find out if you stick around a while. You're going to pay for the grass your cows eat on the national forest—and you'll pay for the cows on the range, mind you! As for the sheep—— Well, I'm running that end of it, too."

"Yes, you'll be runnin' out of this country!" Peterson bellowed truculently, his red face thrust close to the blazing eyes of Ranger O'Neill. "We

don't need no damn forest ranger in here as a boss. We can run our cows without help from the government, and we'll run you out just like we ran out the other damn rangers!"

"And when," grated Patrick O'Neill, no longer wishing to be counted a saint, "do you expect to start running me out?"

"I'll start now!" bawled Peterson, as he dived forward with outstretched arms for the grappling hold which was his pet way of crushing an enemy.

Patrick O'Neill stepped backward and waited until the huge arms had all but embraced him. Then he lifted his right knee sharply, grabbed Peterson's head and jerked it down upon that knee. The impact was terrific. The big rancher staggered back with a roar of pain and baffled rage, and as he straightened, he got a frightfully direct blow in his middle and another on the jaw that snapped his head backward. A second blow found the big jaw, and Peterson of the Box S, bully of the Stillwater District, crumpled down in a heap and lay there.

"Git him!" yelled a lanky cow-puncher, one of Boyce's riders, as Patrick O'Neill knew well. The puncher came in with a sideswipe, two others at his heels.

Patrick O'Neill grinned and gave him the neatest uppercut West Point boxers could teach him. A man at his right tried to trip him, while the Boyce man came in again, and it was right then that the spirit of all the wild, fighting O'Neills came into its own.

Young Patrick—no more a saint—lost a sleeve from his coat, which was likewise split up the back to his collar. He barked a knuckle against a man's teeth—who thereafter grew a mustache to hide the gap in his grin—and his lip was cut where a flailing fist found him. But, oh, how the fighting spirit of all the Irish O'Neills did glory in the fray!

"Cleaned 'em cleaner than a new shotgun!" the postmaster reported the incident to his wife that night.

Ranger Patrick O'Neill did not whistle a love tune as he rode home with his mail, but that was chiefly because of his swollen lip, for the fighting spirit of the O'Neills once aroused was hard to down.

"Pat, me lad, I think you'd better not broach the subject of a fishing trip next Thursday," he reflected, as he climbed the steep trail up along the west bank of Limestone Creek. "I think you'll be better considerin' how you're to convince Queen Isabelle that you're a man of peace." And then he sighed, and grinned as well as his stiff and puffy lip would permit. "But oh, doctor! It sure was one lovely scrimmage while it lasted, and it did the heart of me good to hear them howl that they'd had enough!" he murmured unrepentantly, and flexed his sore muscles in pleasant retrospection.

WITH the lip still swollen, and standing askew in a sardonic smile of irony which his twinkling eyes belied, Patrick O'Neill rode with some secret trepidation next Thursday to make his weekly report to the girl whom he had now called "Queen Isabelle" to her face.

She listened in silence to his cheerful account of the manner in which he had taught Blanding a lesson in good pine timber, and when he had stressed his mild demeanor as much as he dared, she looked at him coldly and said:

"I've heard another story of how you, representing the government, cheated Mr. Blanding out of more than twenty-five thousand feet of timber by scaling the butts of his logs instead of the tops. According to your version, he brought the loss on himself, so I'll say nothing about that—except that as a measure of winning the Stillwater to friendship with the forest service, you seem to have made haste backward.

The timber men are all up in arms over what they call a government steal, and Blanding says he is going to write to Washington and have you removed. We can't very well call that a gain in friendly confidence, but I suppose it will straighten out in time. What else, Mr. Ranger?"

Patrick O'Neill thereupon told her of the trespassing sheep and how he had dealt with the owner.

"That's better," she praised him, "though if I know anything about old Jensen, you aren't through with him yet by any means. You'll have to go carefully there, if you want to avoid trouble. Is that all?" And she looked very meaningfully at the swollen lip. "You've hurt yourself, I see. Did you fall off your horse, Mr. O'Neill?"

"I did not," Pat returned, in a distressed tone. "A Bar B man—the long-legged one you call 'Little Bill'—flung out a hand in his sleep, as it were, and it chanced to graze my lip. It's no more than a scratch, for the man was unconscious—or nearly so—when he made the gesture. I'm sure he never meant to touch me there, Queen Isabelle. And now I have to tell you that I had dinner at the Seven L Ranch last Saturday—"

"Little Bill didn't mean to strike you in the mouth, I know," said Isabelle, disregarding the change of subject. "What he meant to do—what he still means to do, in fact, is to beat your blinkety-blink, do-re-mi-sol-dough brains out and spread them thinly over the entire Stillwater district. Or, at least, that is what I heard him saying as I rode past the bunk house last evening. I suppose he was dreaming while he slept!"

"I think he must have been, Queen Isabelle, and others along with him."

"I suppose he also dreamed that you swaggered up to him and others at the post office, and boasted that you would show them who was running this coun-

try, thereupon attacking them with your loaded quirt."

Patrick O'Neill stared fixedly into her face, his own a bit pale under his tan. He swung his horse short around in the trail then and started back the way they had come.

"Where away, Mr. Bad Man?" Isabelle's voice held a note of panic under the raillery.

Ranger O'Neill held his horse to a walk while he looked back at her. "I was going to bring Little Bill to you and hear him admit how the tongue of him lied," he said grimly. "Or you may come with me, if it pleases you better than to wait." He looked at her, eyes demanding an answer.

Isabelle laughed as she rode up to him. "I was only teasing you, Mr. Ranger Man," she said pacifically, perhaps because she understood the look she saw in his eyes. "The postmaster's wife told me all about it. She saw the whole thing through the window, and heard what was said. I can't blame you for fighting them, and since you did fight, I'm glad you whipped the bunch. Do please get down off your high horse, you man of peace, and let's talk seriously. I don't blame you for fighting—they must learn to respect you, I suppose, before they will ever come to like you, and if you had backed down from Peterson, every cowboy in the country would despise you for it. Not one of them would ever have taken you seriously after that, or given you anything but contempt.

"Little Bill happens to be a great crony of Peterson's outfit, though why he doesn't work for the Box S instead of for father I never could tell you. He isn't so awfully popular with our boys. Most of our riders are pretty good fellows, as you would discover for yourself if there wasn't this grudge against the forest reserve which keeps you seeing their most disagreeable traits.

"One thing I wanted to tell you, ranger man, is that Peterson and his bunch are going to 'get' you, on account of that fight. I heard Little Bill telling the boys so. He wanted them to go in on the scheme, but they wouldn't do it: or, at least, that's what I understood from what I overheard."

"I take it your father would not object to the plan, at any rate." Patrick O'Neill was not smiling now.

"Father? He never would have anything to do with it! I—I happen to know, ranger, that he has a scheme of his own for getting rid of you."

"Yes? And if I might ask—"

"I shouldn't tell you, because it isn't going to work, anyway. He merely wrote to his brother-in-law—who is my uncle, of course—in Washington, asking him to see that you are removed from this district as your conduct is most obnoxious. But that doesn't mean anything at all, for I wrote in the very next mail to my uncle, and told him that father is merely prejudiced against the forest service in general, and that—that you are the most competent ranger we have ever had here. I said he must not pay any attention to father. He won't, either. I lived with Uncle John and Aunt Martha while I was in school, and they know just how cranky and unreasonable father can be. So that's all right. But Peterson is a different proposition. From what Little Bill said—"

"I think," said Ranger O'Neill, turning to his horse, "I had better go and have a little talk with our friend Peterson."

"You will not!" Isabelle caught him by the arm. "That's exactly what you must *not* do! I only told you so that you would be on your guard and refuse to be drawn into any argument, as you were at Bad Cañon the other day. Can't you see? If you know how they feel, you can avoid coming into contact with them until they forget about

it. It's only because they were licked, and Peterson hates that worse than anything else."

"And would you have me stick close to my station, then?" O'Neill's eyes held a sparkle it was as well Isabelle did not see. "And what then, if they come after me there?"

"That," cried Isabelle, "is beside the point! They would never dare attack you at the station. What I think they will do is probably start another quarrel with you, and when you are silly enough to fight, they mean to—to shoot you, for all I know! Little Bill said: 'We're goin' to get him, next time, and get him *good!*' And you've got to keep out, I tell you. All this fighting is exactly what they want."

"And they'll get what they're wantin' or my name is not Patrick O'Neill! Leave go my arm, Queen Isabelle, and let me carry the war to the enemy's camp—for that's what they taught me at West Point, and it's one thing they taught that I thoroughly approve!"

"Oh," wailed Isabelle, while tears of anger stood in her eyes, "you're such a blithering fool! All you Irish can think of is fighting! You're worse than Cushman or Waller or any of the other shoot-'em-up rangers that had to leave or get killed. You *promised* me you'd win them to you with kindness and courtesy, and if you break that promise, I hope they break your head!"

"And thank you for that same, Miss Boyce," said Patrick O'Neill, with icy politeness, as he sprang to the saddle. "It's a fine example of kindness and courtesy you're setting me now—as like your father as one white bean is like another! So I'll pass it along to Peterson and Little Bill, and crack their heads as you so sweetly wish them to do by me!"

He lifted his hat from his thick brown hair and gave her a courtly bow that left her furiously stamping her foot and gritting her teeth at him as

he galloped away, headed north to the Box S Range that lay along Bad Cañon Creek, between Lodgepole Basin and Trout Creek where the sheep had entered. That the trail led homeward as well never once occurred to Isabelle, who saw him going foolhardily to place his head in the jaws of the lion that roared for his bones to crunch; in other words, to fight on their own ground Peterson and his crowd that had boasted how they would get him.

"She'll do me the favor to be thinking of me now," said Patrick O'Neill to himself, though he never once looked back.

CHAPTER V.

PLOTTERS AT WORK.

AS the valley of the Stillwater River—so named because of its swiftness—approaches the high Rockies, it is divided into many sections by the streams that go rushing down to join the larger river; so that the valley resembles a giant hand with outstretched fingers pointing toward the higher peaks to the westward.

Each branch bears a name which grew out of its most conspicuous characteristic, and little timber grows in the valley but crowds close to the base of the mountains. So the broad plateaus that lie between the tributaries of the Stillwater make wonderful grazing ground, while the creeks running down the cañons are bordered with willows and quaking aspen groves that give shelter to the cattle and horses that tread down the trails from higher ground to water.

Before the national forest reserve brought this fine cattle country under its supervision and allotted to each settler certain well-defined grazing grounds for which he must pay an annual fee based upon the number of animals which feed thereon, Stillwater Valley saw many a range battle waged between rival ranchers. Now that the

national forest service held all the range—or at least the best of it next the mountains—the fight went much the same, except that the policing of the forest injected a new factor into the struggle. Isabelle Boyce was right, and Ranger Cushman also summed up the situation rather accurately. The stockmen were ready to fly at each other's throats for little cause, but they stood as one man against the forest service.

"And it's man by man that I must take them and make them see sense, if I have to crowd it down the throats of them with my fist!" mused Patrick O'Neill, as he reined his horse into the trail that led with steep and devious turnings down into Bad Cañon, which he must cross in order to reach Peterson's home ranch.

"I'll talk to him fair," Pat promised himself. "No man shall ever say that Ranger O'Neill rushed into a fight for the pure love of the scrimmage, without first giving the enemy a chance to eat his words and go in peace. I'll first reason with the big bully—should it so happen that I have time enough for that. Then if he comes at me—which he will!—I'll use the fists God gave me for the purpose, and drive my meaning home to the point of his jaw.

"For to teach a dog new tricks you must first convince him that you're the master of him—and faith, I shall point that out to Queen Isabelle, should some rumors of what is to take place to-day reach her before next Thursday. They'll likely be out riding, since it's the round-up time, and he'll have his friends about him, so that none can say I took an unfair advantage of the man."

SO, thinking piously of his duty to Peterson, he rode splashing into Bad Cañon Creek. A mountain trout the length of his forearm slid from under the very feet of his horse and, with one flip of his tail, darted into the

shadow of a still pool sheltered by a mossy boulder, and Ranger O'Neill forgot the duty which brought him there and pulled back to the gravelly bank, dismounting in haste. For fishing stood close to fighting in his Irish heart, and there were other trout lying like slaty, living shadows in the depth of that pool.

To cut a short, pliable willow row and take a white miller from the fine assortment of flies hooked into his hatband was the work of two minutes, with another spent in unwinding trout line and leader from a small card in his breast pocket, where he kept his book of cigarette papers. Then O'Neill led his horse into the shade and tied him there against wandering, pulled his hat low over his eyes to shield them from whipping brush and sun glare alike, and stepped catwise to the brink of the pool.

His tutelage of Peterson could wait, while the trout stream called to the sporting blood of him. He got two trout from that small pool, threaded their panting gills on a bit of line which he tied to his gun belt—on the left side of him, since he was no fool after all—and began fishing upstream, going stealthily from riffle to pool, oblivious to all else for the time being, like all born anglers held entranced with the whipping of a fly out over a mountain stream, skittering it above the water to tempt the king of all willness from his dusky retreat beneath a rock.

Any trout fisherman knows the lure of the next pool above, and the next, and yet another. Patrick O'Neill crept warily upstream, parting the bushes with care, landing each trout in silence and putting back all but the largest of his catch. Just one more pool would he whip before he turned back, he promised himself, and stole up to a willow-bordered spot, where the slack water lay enticingly under a high bank grown thick with bushes.

HE stopped to reach forward, poised for the cast, then froze in his tracks as some one beyond the bushes spoke his name. He turned his head and stared upward, but could see nothing save the yellow-leaved thicket.

"Aw, that damn ranger!" came Peterson's drawling voice. "Forget him! Plenty of time for gettin' him outa the way. Now we'll settle about the cattle for Whiskers. When will he be through gatherin' 'em?"

"We're through now with the bunch I told yuh about," the voice of Little Bill made reply. "All you can git away with safe. They was thrown in on Castle Creek yesterday. That's the reason the old man's been keepin' cattle outa Castle Creek, so the feed'll be good to hold his beef steers on till he gits ready to trail 'em out."

"Somebody'll stay with 'em, perhaps. Will you be the one, Bill?"

"Aw, they don't need herdin', Gus. The drift fence holds 'em from crossin' to Drew's range and they won't work back up over the ridge the other way—not with the feed like it is in there. That's the way old Boyce figures on savin' men's wages. He'll throw all the beef in there fast as we gather, and make one drive out. I'm s'posed to be huntin' strays over here, Gus."

Peterson grunted, and another voice which O'Neill did not recognize spoke up, offering a few choice remarks on the subject of Boyce's stinginess. He was answered by yet another, and when Peterson spoke again, a third man's voice was raised in protest.

"If you take 'em up around Lodgepole Basin and across Squaw Gulch and that way—why, hell! You might just as well ride up to Boyce and tell 'em you got his steers—and what'll he do to yuh! He's goin' to miss the bunch first time any one rides to Castle Creek, an' a blind man could foller their trail.

"Now, what yuh want to do is take 'em out on Drew's range, on Limestone.

We can break the drift fence there and make it look like the cattle done it, and take the bunch out that way, on Drew's range, and haze some of Drew's cattle back through the fence onto Castle Creek. That way, old Boyce won't miss his cattle for a week, maybe. Neither will Drew, because he ain't half through with his round-up yet. When they're ready to make their drive out, it'll look like the cattle got mixed up, is all. And if Boyce don't find his steers over on Drew's range, let 'em lock horns over it if they want to! They're always fighting, anyway, over the line or some darn thing.

"That way, there ain't any mysterious tracks across Myers Creek and up Squaw Gulch way, and it's about as close to where you want to hold 'em, Gus. Time the brands is healed and you get 'em down outa that high basin, winter'll be on and you're dead safe. You'll make a late drive this year with your beef, that's all, and you'll have all Box S brands—see? If that damn O'Neill don't go prowling around up there——"

"Aw, what's goin' to take him up there? That basin is hemmed in on all sides with young lodgepole pines, and the chances are he don't even know it's there. Yeah, that scheme oughta work fine, Gus. We'll see yuh as far as the hideout, for five dollars a head, and from then on you'll have to handle it alone."

"You fellows should help change the brands, too, for five dollars," Peterson objected. "A five-spot just for drivin' the cattle is too much. I won't pay five dollars for just to-night's work."

WHILE they wrangled over the money, Patrick O'Neill went down the creek to where his horse was tied, mounted and urged the animal across the creek and up the farther side of the cañon, taking a trail that led sharply away from his objective, which was the

trail up from Bad Cañon to the Box S Ranch. He wanted very much to see the three men whose voices he failed to recognize.

Little Bill and Peterson, the ranger could swear to, if it came to a court trial for cattle stealing, but he would feel much easier in his mind if he had the added evidence of meeting the group riding up the cañon where he had heard them planning the details of the crime.

Morenci, the horse, was sweating to his ears when O'Neill finally reached the trail he wanted and loped along it to Bad Cañon. The detour had been made in record time, but even so he was too late, as he was forced to admit when he rode down to the creek at the point where he had heard the discussion, and found the men gone. A windowless log hut set back from the creek bank beyond the willow thicket had been their meeting place, he discovered. There were signs enough of their presence—cigarette stubs on the dirt floor, burned matches, boot tracks, while farther back from the creek he found the place where they had tied their horses.

"They went down the creek, and I missed them entirely," he decided ruefully, at last. "Rode straight away from them as if the devil was after me, when all I had to do was stop where I was, at the creek with my fishing tackle, and they'd have been atop of me before they knew I was there—and me with the best and most peaceful excuse any man could want! Pat, me lad, you should be well booted for that blunder!"

That night they would make the drive, they had said. They were wise to hurry the job, since there was little time to spare before the winter snows would send the stolen herd down from the high basin; and the altered brands would take some time to heal so that the theft would not be apparent. Fur-

thermore, it was only a matter of days until Boyce or Drew would discover the broken drift fence and begin to search for strayed cattle.

Ranger O'Neill rode with a cigarette gone cold from neglect between his lips while he pondered the best manner of protecting Boyce. He could ride to the Bar B and warn them—

"But what if those strange men are Bar B riders?" he argued the point with himself. "Or what if Boyce is not at home, or more likely starts his tongue wagging at me and stirs the Irish before I get out the news? I'd ride away and let Peterson put through the steal—if Boyce makes me mad enough. And the time is short for a ride to the Bar B and back again to Castle Creek soon enough to stop them.

"Morenci, you've the mark of a good cow pony in the way you handle yourself on range inspection, and if you work fast enough, I'm thinking we can handle this little matter alone; though it's little encouragement I've lately received for playing the patron saint to old Boyce. Still, there's a way to work it that appeals to my sense of humor, and it's that we're going to do. So shake a leg, Morenci! You've a lot of violent exercise between you and your feed box to-night."

And Patrick O'Neill, for the first time that day, whistled under his breath, as he galloped, to show how content he was with his mission.

CHAPTER VI.

A QUICK CHANGE.

LATER Pat O'Neill did not whistle, though he still rode in haste. The afternoon was older than he had suspected when he rode up out of Bad Cañon and across the high grazing ground that lay between his fishing place and Lodgepole Basin. He had a plan which he felt would work beautifully, if only he had time for it; but

now with the sinking of the sun, he was not so sure. A great deal depended upon his horse, and he had not spared the animal in his roundabout ride to cut the homeward trail of Peterson and his men.

"First, I must be sure that Boyce's steers are safe," he decided, and crossed Limestone Creek with a splash and a clatter of hoofs on the stones. "It's a new range the Bar B cattle are on, and if I can read the mind of cow brutes, they have traveled as far down the creek as they can go. They will not be satisfied to stay at the upper end of the bottom where the grass is quite as good, but must range farther in the vain hope of finding range that pleases them better. At any rate, it's worth the gamble."

As he opened the wire gate in the drift fence which separated Drew's range from Boyce's on Castle Creek just above its junction with Limestone, the parklike basin was dusky with the coming of night, but as he led his horse through, closed the gate and remounted, a steer snorted dew from its nostrils not far away. O'Neill turned and rode that way, peering down satisfiedly at the dark forms of the Bar B beef steers bedded down on a rise of ground just back from the creek and the mosquitoes and close to the fence.

"What did I tell you, Morenci? Now, rout them up and we'll haze them on down the fence toward Picket Pin. If it's through a fence they want to travel, they may try the other side of the fence on Picket Pin and welcome—and the farther they drift, the safer they'll be, though it will make more work for the Bar B riders."

When he had finished that job and the Bar B steers were plodding in the dark to find another bed ground on Picket Pin, Patrick O'Neill cautiously lighted a match in the crown of his hat and looked at his watch.

"Eight o'clock and our work only

begun! Get away from here, Morenci, and show the stuff that's in you!" And striking into a cow path that wound through thickets of aspen and across little open glades, he pelted away up Castle Creek to the steep trail where the rim rock broke down in a great slide of boulders on the divide between Myers Creek and Castle.

When he reached Lodgepole Basin, his watch said ten o'clock and Ranger O'Neill had a deep crease between his eyebrows, for Morenci was wet to his ears—and that not from splashing through creeks, though he had crossed two—and there were more cattle to be moved.

But these were Peterson's and Ranger O'Neill was not so gentle. Across Lodgepole Basin, he galloped, to where a hundred head or more of Box S cattle ranged happily enough and had for their bed ground a knoll not far from Squaw Gulch, which was not very distant from the Myers Creek divide. For the Stillwater Forest Reserve, you must know, is a network of streams and their cañons, once you are back in the hills.

So Ranger O'Neill made a hasty gathering of Peterson's cattle and hazed them along at a lumbering gallop to the fenced gap in the rim rock and so down into the Castle Creek pasture which was leased to Boyce. Just for good measure he rode after them and threw a hastily gathered rock or two, and the cattle went down the creek as if a full crew rode hard at their heels.

Ranger O'Neill pulled up and listened until the last sound of whipping brush and the clicking of cloven feet against the rocks had died to silence. The cattle were tired after that headlong drive up Myers Creek to the rim. It had been steep in places and only the manner in which he had rushed them along had held them to the trail. Morenci was standing with his feet

slightly braced—the mark of a tired horse—and his flanks palpitating with exhaustion. O'Neill listened while the horse caught his wind, then suddenly he leaned forward and gave the reeking neck a grateful slap.

"Not a dozen horses in the district could have done it, and that's the truth, Morenci!" Then he fell silent, though his thoughts went on quite as definitely as if he were actually speaking them.

"No sound of riders down below there, so the cattle will quiet down before Peterson comes for them—he chooses late hours for his stealing, thank the Lord! So now let him steal his own stock, though what he'll think or what he'll say when he sees their brands in the morning, I sure would like to know. I'd like to go and collect a bit of gratitude from Queen Isabelle and the Honorable Standish Boyce for this night's work, but that will have to wait until Thursday, for I'm due at Blind Bridger to-morrow. But when I do see her, she will admit I'm doing much to promote peace and quiet along the Stillwater, I'm thinking."

Wherefore Ranger Patrick O'Neill was a contented young man although a weary one as he rode home under the cool stars of midnight. Morenci got an extra rubdown as well as his supper before O'Neill went away to the cabin to fill his own empty stomach. The fish he had caught were far past their fresh toothsome-ness and he threw them away and dined upon what happened to stand ready cooked in the cupboard. But it was a good night's work and he grinned over it frequently.

"Murray would appreciate that!" O'Neill chuckled, as he pulled off his boot. He was thinking of Peterson's slack-jawed amazement when he recognized the cattle he had stolen away from Castle Creek that night.

The ranger's last thought as he put his head on the pillow was of the peppery Bar B owner and his probable

mystification when he found his beef herd over on the Picket Pin. Some one would catch a tongue lashing, O'Neill suspected.

"But I'll ride over and tell him about it before he has time to discover the change of pasture," he comforted himself. "Peterson was counting on a week or so before the rustling would be suspected, and I'll see Boyce before then. And Isabelle," he added sleepily, and then began to dream of all that he would have to say.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM BAD TO WORSE.

SURE and a most loyal subject bows before the queen this day!" cried Patrick O'Neill, with his best brogue and a somewhat self-satisfied grin on his face. "I was scarce hoping you'd ride out to meet me, and that's why I was taking the short cut to the Bar B this morning. I've things to report that——"

"I should think you would have," Isabelle Boyce told him sharply. "With all this mix-up over the cattle, and the trouble it's making, I should think you would have something to say on the subject! Do you know how Tod Drew's cattle came to be on father's best range, and father's beef herd over on that barren ground that wouldn't furnish grazing for a sheep? And the drift fence down——"

"Do I know? It's a night's sleep I lost in getting full knowledge of the mystery, Queen Isabelle! I drove your father's cattle to the Picket Pin——"

"Indeed?" So much meaning may be crowded into one word with a rising inflection that Patrick O'Neill felt a momentary panic. "I hope, Mr. O'Neill, you will oblige me with your reasons for so astounding a piece of trouble making. I am frankly curious to know what possessed you to commit such a deed."

"It was a good deed, of which I am proud to tell," he informed her, secretly pleased at the dramatic change he would presently produce in her mood. "On last Friday afternoon I chanced to hear a plan to steal your father's gathering of beef steers which he was holding on Castle Creek. Peterson was the leader, and they meant to tear down the drift fence between your father's range and Drew's, and drive out the steers that way. They would then drive as many of Drew's cattle as they could handily gather through the fence and onto Castle Creek, so that it would look as though the cattle had broken down the drift fence and were trespassing of their own accord, and it would not be suspected at once that the beef herd was stolen. Castle Creek Basin being brushy in the hollows, the plan had a fair chance of success.

"I failed to see the men—and that was a bit of bad guessing, of which I am not proud. But I recognized the voice of a Bar B rider, among others. It was late, and though I could have waited at the drift fence and held them up when they came, I could bring no charge against them unless they had actually stolen the cattle. So I thought I would play a trick on Peterson.

"I went to Castle Creek and moved the Bar B steers out of harm's way—regretting the poor pasturage but having little time to choose a range for them. Then I rode back to Lodgepole, where a bunch of Peterson's cattle grazed, took them across Squaw Gulch to the head of Myer's Creek, and up over the divide and through the gap to Castle Creek Basin. It was fast work and it was pretty work, Miss Boyce, and I repeat that I am proud of it!"

WITH lips slightly parted and eyes wider than usual, Isabelle stared at him and did not speak. So presently the grin smoothed itself from his

lips and the twinkle died in his eyes and left a puzzled look there, which could easily turn hostile.

"Would you rather I had let them take your father's whole beef herd and run the fat off them getting them into some hidden place in the mountains? Or perhaps you think I should have confronted Peterson and fought the lot of them!"

"Of course I don't think you should do anything so insane! But it couldn't be much worse. Why didn't you come and tell father? Why did you let days go by without saying a word? Is it possible you don't know that father and Tod Drew are always at sword's points over something, and jump at the least excuse for quarreling? You've managed to stir up a pretty mess, Mr. O'Neill. You may have saved father's beef herd—but what is that when he and Drew have sent each other warning that it will be shoot on sight from now on? I've had all I could do to keep father from riding over and killing Drew deliberately!"

"It couldn't be for what I did the other night," O'Neill protested. "What if the fence is down and Drew's cattle were found on your father's range? That's not a shooting matter, with sane men."

Isabelle gave him a withering look. "Oh, how can you be so dense! Do you suppose for one minute that father could ride to Castle Creek and discover Tod Drew's cattle there, and his own driven over on Picket Pin—because there was no fence broken down *there* to lay the blame on the cattle!—without doing something about it? He drove Drew's cattle off with his six-shooter. He killed one and crippled another so Drew had to have it shot. If Tod Drew had been at that drift fence, Mr. O'Neill, there would have been murder! There will be yet, if something isn't done to stop them, for Tod Drew shot our cattle with a shot-

gun! For a man who was going to do such great things in psychology," she cried distractedly, "and instill both liking and respect for the forest service into the hearts of the Stillwater men, you have promoted as bloodthirsty a feud as ever happened anywhere! The only difference is that it is confined to two men, so far—though the cowboys are just as likely to take it up as not, just for the excitement of it!"

"I have received no instructions, Miss Boyce, for guarding the morals of other men," Patrick O'Neill said somewhat stiffly. "But since your respected parent has not yet committed a murder as well as a felony against his neighbor's property, I have time enough perhaps to curb his homicidal tendencies. A bit of an explanation will clear the air, I'm thinking." And he reached for Morenci's dragging bridle reins.

"You're never going to face them *now* and tell them you did it?" Isabelle's voice rose to a high note of protest. "They'll kill you!"

But Ranger O'Neill was in the saddle and away, pelting along to Drew's place, since that was closer than the Bar B. Isabelle watched him out of sight, then mounted and galloped up the road in the dust cloud he left behind him, her heart beating queerly, away up in her throat.

IT is strange how training oft will drop away from a man like a garment of winter grown uncomfortable as summer approaches, yet fall into place when the need of it arises again. So with Ranger Patrick O'Neill when he pulled up his horse at Drew's gate. In the years since West Point he had put aside much of his military bearing in everyday life, and he had gone rather irresponsibly out to meet life, with his rollicky Irish manner to the front because it was easy to wear.

Yet when he dismounted and walked up the path to the house, his back was

straight and his step was alert, his chest was out and his belt was in and his eyes looked with keen discernment straight into the leathery countenance of Tod Drew, who glanced cautiously out of a near-by window before he opened the door to his insistent knocking.

"Mr. Drew, I came to report what I know of the drift fence being broken between your range and the Bar B lease on Castle Creek last Friday night." And Ranger O'Neill forthwith explained, with malice toward none and naming no names, but making himself perfectly clear for all that.

"I have no direct evidence upon which to convict these men, for I failed to get a sight of them. There was little time to forestall them, Mr. Drew, but I did what seemed to me best as a measure of precaution. Since there has been a misunderstanding in the matter of the cattle, I stand ready to make a fair adjustment of whatever damages may have resulted from my removal of the Bar B herd without due notice. I want you to go with me to call upon Mr. Boyce, and I feel sure we can arrive at a friendly understanding." Then, and not until then, Drew had a glimpse of the grin that was so much a part of Patrick O'Neill.

Drew gave O'Neill a peculiar, squinting look. "Say, me and that old hewolf has promised to swap lead however and wherever we meet up with each other!" he stated emphatically, at last. "I'll have to ride up a-shootin', or he'll likely think I'm scared and plug me fer a sheep!"

"Not if I ride with you," urged Patrick O'Neill.

"Dern that ole pelican! he shot two steers fer me——"

"And you killed one or two for him, but if necessary I can arrange to pay for the damages. There's nothing like going straight out toward trouble, Mr. Drew. Nine times in ten it backs out

of sight as you ride toward it. If you're willing to take a chance——"

"Oh, I was goin' to ride over there and have it out with him," Drew told him, with dark meaning. "I'm willin' to meet the old coot halfway, whether it's shootin' or shakin' hands!"

"I've had it in mind to get you two together and see what can be done about clearing out this rustling. You may be the next to suffer, you know. I'm here to do whatever you two think best——"

"Well, I got an idea we might set some kinda trap——"

SHORTLY thereafter, Isabelle Boyce reined her horse out of the trail to let the two riders pass. Her heart was still beating heavily in her throat, but she would not acknowledge the smiling salute she received from Ranger O'Neill. They were headed for her father's ranch, but she refused to hurry after them; instead, she waited a while before she turned her horse toward home. Of course, with Tod Drew talking and gesticulating in his usual manner, she could not think that he was going to do murder. Ranger O'Neill would put a stop to all that. But her father would rave and threaten,

and she doubted whether he would stop long enough to listen to the story which Ranger O'Neill had to tell, or believe it when it was told.

But when she rode up to the house, there stood the two horses tied to the fence, and there were no high voices to be heard. She stood for a minute on the porch, looking and listening. A murmur of conversational tones floated out from the living room, and she went in and stood just outside the closed door, eavesdropping with no compunction whatever.

"If one of my men is involved in this nefarious spoilation of the range," her father's rasping voice was saying, "I see no way of exculpating the others until such time as the thieves are apprehended. Mr. O'Neill, I must concur in one statement which you have made, and that is the statement that leasers of government property are entitled to government protection. I shall write to my relative, who stands very close to the head of the department of forestry in Washington——"

Isabelle gave a relieved little laugh which caught in her throat like a strangled sob, and ran upstairs to choose a dainty dress—just in case Ranger O'Neill was invited to stay for supper.

Another story about Ranger Patrick O'Neill, by B. M. Bower, will be published in a forthcoming issue of THE POPULAR.



IMPORTED FIGHTERS

SENATOR JAMES COUZENS of Michigan, the man who became a multimillionaire by investing in Henry Ford's company when everybody else was afraid to, and who goes to the mat with Secretary of the Treasury Mellon, every few months, was born in Canada at Chatham, Ontario. Rear Admiral William S. Sims, who kept the whole American navy flinching for a good many years by saying what he thought on every conceivable subject, was also born in Canada.

The Goddess from the Shades

By John Buchan

Author of
"Mr. Standfast,"
"Huntingtower," Etc.

A Four Part Story—Part III.



THE STORY.

Sir Edward Leithen, the London barrister, is telling the story of his young friend, Vernon Milburne. From their first meeting there grew up a friendship which culminated in Vernon's confiding in Sir Edward the strange dream which so far he had kept a secret. On the first Monday in April of every year, since boyhood, Vernon dreamed that he was in a large room, opposite a door which connected with other like rooms—the whole forming a chain of masonry. In one of those distant rooms was a secret which each year drew nearer, and in the solution of which Vernon felt lay the purpose of his life. In the spring of 1914 Vernon and Sir Edward, while yachting in the Ægean Sea, visited the island of Plakos. Here a strange thing happened: the natives fled in fear at sight of Vernon. Upon returning home Sir Edward learned that Plakos had, before his recent decease, belonged to Shelley Arabin, a dissolute Englishman. Both friends fought in the World War, and although unscarred at the finish there appeared a breach in their friendship, for Sir Edward turned to worldly affairs, while Vernon lived only for his dream. In the winter preceding the April which Vernon expected would solve his mysterious dream, Sir Edward and Vernon met Kore Arabin, and although both disliked her at first for her extreme modernity, Sir Edward soon came to love the charming, if unusual, young lady who, as daughter of Shelley Arabin, inherited the island of Plakos. And so it was that Sir Edward learned of the danger which threatened Kore from the natives of the island, who believed her a person of great evil because of her father's harsh treatment of them. He sought to dissuade her from visiting Plakos that spring, but, determined to clear the family name, she secretly left England for the Ægean Sea. Sir Edward organized a party with which he hoped to rescue Kore from the natives. It was Holy Week when the party landed on Plakos where, finding the natives hostile, they took refuge with the village priest who confirmed Sir Edward's fears for Kore's safety. That very night Sir Edward set out with the purpose of eluding the native guards about the Arabin house and taking Kore away from Plakos.

CHAPTER XV.

A TASTE OF FEAR.

THE Dancing Floor was not a valley so much as an upland meadow, for there was no stream in it nor had there ever been one. Though tilted up gently toward the west, most of it was as flat as a cricket field. There it lay in the

moonlight, yellow as corn, in its cincture of broken ridges, a place plainly hallowed and set apart.

All my life I have cherished certain pictures of landscape, of which I have caught glimpses in my travels, as broken hints of a beauty of which I hoped some day to find the archetype. One is a mountain stream running in broad shallows and coming down

through a flat stretch of heather from a confusion of blue mountains. Another is a green meadow, cut off like a garden from neighboring wildernesses, secret and yet offering a wide horizon, a place at once a sanctuary and a watch tower.

That type I have found in the Scottish Borders, in the Cotswolds, once in New Hampshire, and plentifully in the Piedmont country of Virginia. But in the Dancing Floor I had stumbled upon its archetype. The moonlight made the farther hills look low and near, and doubtless lessened the size of the level ground, but this constriction only served to increase its preciousness.

I sat down and stared at the scene, and in that moment I underwent a great lightening of spirit. For this meadow was a happy place, the home of gentle and kindly and honorable things. Mildness and peace brooded over it. The priest had said that it was "*nefastus*," but he could only have meant that it was sacred. Sacred indeed it must be, what the Greeks of old called a *temenos*, for the dullest could not be blind to the divinity that dwelt here.

I had a moment of wonder why the Arabians, lords of the island, had not included a spot so ineffably gracious in their demesne, until I saw that that could not be. The Dancing Floor must be open to the winds and the starry influences and the spirits of the old earth; no human master could own or inclose it.

You will call me fantastic, but, dry stick as I am, I felt a sort of poet's rapture as I looked at those shining spaces, and at the sky above, flooded with the amber moon, except on the horizon's edge, where a pale blue took the place of gold and faint stars were twinkling. The place was quivering with magic drawn out of all the ages since the world was made, but it was good magic.

I had felt the oppression of Ky-nætho, the furtive, frightened people, the fiasco of Eastertide, the necromantic lamps beside the graves. These all smacked evilly of panic and death. But now I was looking on the Valley of the Shadow of Life. It was the shadow only, for it was mute and still and elusive. But the presage of life was in it, the clean life of fruits and flocks, and children and happy winged things, and that spring purity of the earth which is the purity of God.

THE moon was declining, but it would be a good two hours before I could safely approach the Arabin house. The cover was good; I was protected by the ridge from the side of the village, and no human being was likely to be abroad on the Dancing Floor. I decided that I must get within sight of my destination before the light failed and spy out the land. It was rough going among the ribs of rock and stone falls and dense thickets of thorn and arbutus, but sometimes I would come on a patch of turf drenched with dew and scented with thyme. All the myrrh of Arabia was in the place, for every foot of sward I trod on and every patch of scrub I brushed through was aromatic, and in the open places there was the cool, clean savor of night and the sea. Also at my left hand and below lay the Dancing Floor, lambent under the moon like the cool tides of a river.

By and by I came to the end of the ridge, and had a view of the crest where the house stood. There was a blur of ebony, which must be the wood that surrounded it, and, bounding it, a ribbon of silver gray. I puzzled at this till I realized that it was the wall of which the priest had spoken—a huge thing, it seemed, of an even height, curving from the dip where the village lay and running to what seemed to be the seaward scarp of the island.

I was now in the danger zone and it

behooved me to go warily, so I found a shelter where the cover of the ridge ended and studied the details of the scene. The wall could not be less than fifteen feet in height, and it appeared to be regularly masoned and as smooth as the side of a house. In that landscape it was a startling intrusion of something crude and human, a defiance of nature.

Shelley Arabin had built it for the sake of his sinister privacy, but why had he built it so high? And then I guessed the reason. He wanted to shut out the Dancing Floor from his life. That blessed place would have been a mute protest against his infamies.

There was a black patch in the even sheen of the wall. I worked my way a little nearer and saw that for perhaps a dozen yards the wall had been broken down. I could see the ragged edges and the inky darkness of the shrubberies beyond. This had been done recently, perhaps within the last month. And then I saw something more.

There were men—guards—stationed at the gap. I made out their figures, and they seemed to have the baggy white shirts of the mountaineer I had seen in the village. Also, they were armed. One stood in the gap, and the two others patrolled the sides, and I could see that they carried rifles at the trail.

It seemed absurd that three men were needed for that tiny entrance, and I concluded that they wanted each other's company. There must be something in the task which put a heavy strain on their courage. I noticed, too, that they kept their faces resolutely averted from the Dancing Floor. When one moved, he walked with his head screwed round, facing the house. The shining meadow might be *nefastus*, as the priest had said, or it might be too sacred at this solemn hour of night for the profane gaze.

When I had watched them for a lit-

tle, it seemed to me that, though the moon had not set, these fellows were too preoccupied to be dangerous, and that I might safely continue my reconnaissance. There was not much cover, but the declining moon made an olive shadow at the upper end of the Dancing Floor, and I proceeded to crawl across it like a gillie after deer.

I went very cautiously, stopping every now and then to prospect, but I found the wall now outside my range and I had to chance the immobility of the sentries. My breeches were sopping with dew before I reached the point which I judged to be out of sight of the gap.

The wall, as I had observed, curved at the sea end, and once there—unless there were further guards—I should be at liberty to test my climbing powers. The thing looked a most formidable barrier, but I was in hopes that it might be turned where it abutted on the cliffs.

Before I realized it, I was looking down on the sea.

THE coast bent inward in a bight, and a hundred feet below me the water lapped on a white beach. It was such a revelation of loveliness as comes to a man only once or twice in his lifetime. I fancy that the short commons on which I had subsisted all day and the sense of dwelling among portents had keyed me up to a special receptiveness.

Behind me was the Dancing Floor, and in front a flood of translucent color, the shimmer of gold, the rarest tints of sapphire and amethyst fading into the pale infinity of the sky. I had come again into a world which spoke. From below came the sound of dreamily moving water, of sleepy pigeons on the rocks. Recollections of poetry fled through my mind—

Where Helicon breaks down
In cliff to the sea—

Where the moon-silver'd inlets
Send far their light voice—

Yes, but something was wanting. There should have been white flocks on the sward, something to link up nature with the homely uses of man, in order to produce the idyllic. This place was not idyllic; it was magical and unearthly. Above me was a walled mystery, within which evil had once been followed and a greater evil might soon be done, and there were men with quaking hearts bent upon ancient devilries.

I followed the edge of the scarp as it rose to the highest point where the wall ended. There I had a sharp disappointment. The wall ran sheer to the edge of the cliff, and a steep buttress descended to the face of the limestone crag. The stone was as smooth as a water-worn pebble. I have been a rock climber since I was an undergraduate, and have faced in my time some awkward problems, but this was starkly impossible. Even with a companion and a rope, I don't believe it could have been done, and to attempt it alone meant the certainty of a broken neck.

I prospected eastward along the wall and found no better hope there. The thing was simply not to be climbed, except by a lizard. If I had had Maris with me, I might have stood on his shoulders and made a jump for the coping; as it was it might have been a hundred feet high instead of fifteen, for all the good it was to me. There were no branches about to make a ladder or loose stones to make a cairn—nothing but the short downland turf.

The sight of this insuperable obstacle effectively put a stop to my brief exhilaration of spirit. I felt small and feeble and futile. It was imperative that I should get into the house without further delay and see Kore, and yet the house was as impracticable as the moon, now swiftly setting.

The rapid darkening of the world

pointed out the only road. I must dodge the sentries and get through the breach in the wall. It was a wild notion, but my growing ill temper made me heedless of risks.

The men had no pistols, only rifles, and were probably not too ready in the use of them. After all I had played this game before with success. In the first winter of the war, when I was a subaltern, I used to be rather good at wriggling across No Man's Land and eavesdropping among the German trenches.

I DIDN'T give my resolution time to wane, but in the shadow of the wall made the best pace I could toward the gap. It was now really dark, with only a faint glow from the stars, and I moved in what seemed to my eyes impenetrable shade, after the brightness of the moon. I was wearing rubber-soled boots and cloth gaiters; my garments were dark in color, and I have always been pretty light on my feet. I halted many times to get my bearings, and presently I heard the sound of a man's tread.

So far as I could judge before, two of the sentries had their patrol well away from the wall, and I might escape their notice if I hugged the stones. But one had had his stand right in the breach, and with him I would have difficulty. My hope was to dart through into the shelter of the thick shrubbery. Even if they fired on me, they would be likely to miss, and I believed that they would not follow me into the demesne.

I edged my way nearer, a foot at a time, till I guessed by the sound that I was inside the beat of the patrols. I had no white about me, for my shirt and collar were drab, and I kept my face to the wall. Suddenly my hands felt the ragged edge of the gap and I almost stumbled over a fallen stone. Here it was very dark and I had the

shadow of the trees inside to help me. I held my breath and listened, but I could not hear any noise from within the breach. Had the sentry there deserted his post?

I waited for a minute or so, trying to reckon up the chances. The tread of the man on my right was clear, and presently I could make out also the movement of the man on my left. Where was the third? Suddenly I heard to the right the sound of human speech. The third must be there. There was a sparkle of fire, too. The third sentry had gone to get a light for his cigarette.

Now was my opportunity, and I darted into the darkness of the gap. I was brought up sharp and almost stunned by a blow on the forehead. There was a gate in the gap, a stout thing of wattles with a pole across. I strained at it with my hands, but it would not move.

There was nothing for it but to bolt. The sentries had been alarmed—probably horribly alarmed—by the noise, and were drawing together. The only safety lay in violent action, for they had a means of getting light and would find me if I tried to lurk in the shadows. I raised my arms in the orthodox ghostly fashion, howled like a banshee and broke for the open.

I was past them before they could stop me and plunging down the slope toward the Dancing Floor. I think that for the first moments they were too scared to shoot, for they must have believed that I had come out of the forbidden house. When they recovered their nerve, I was beyond their range. The upper slope was steep, and I went down it as *Pate-in-Peril* in "Redgauntlet" went down Errickstane-brae.

I rolled over and over, found my feet, lost them again and did not come to rest till I was in the flats of the meadow. I looked back and saw a light twinkling at the gap. The guards

there must have been amazed to find the gate intact and were now doubtless at their prayers.

I did not think that, even if they believed me flesh and blood, they would dare to follow me to the Dancing Floor. So I made my way down it at a reasonable pace, feeling rather tired, rather empty and very thirsty. On the road up I had decided that there was no stream in it, but almost at once I came to a spring. It was a yard across, bubbling up strongly, and sending forth a tiny rill which presently disappeared in some fissure of the limestone.

The water was deliciously cold and I drank pints of it. Then it occurred to me that I must put my best foot forward, for there was that trembling in the eastern sky which is the presage of dawn. My intention was to join my fellows in the inn courtyard, and meet Maris there in the morning. After all, the inhabitants of Kynætho had nothing as yet against me. All they knew of me was that I was a surveyor from the government at Athens, whose presence no doubt was unwelcome, but who could hardly be treated as an enemy.

I REACHED the eastern bounds of the Dancing Floor, and climbed up on the ridge above the ilexes of the graveyard. The lamps were still twinkling like glowworms among the graves. From there it was easy to get into the lane where stood the priest's house, and in a few minutes I was in the main village street.

The chilly dawn was very near and I thought lovingly of the good food in our boxes. My first desire was a meal, which should be both supper and breakfast.

The door of the courtyard stood open, and I pushed through it to the barn beyond. The place was empty—not a sign of men or baggage. For a moment I thought they might have been given quarters in the inn, till I re-

membered that the inn had no guest room. I tried the other outbuildings—a stable, a very dirty byre, a place which looked like a granary. One and all were empty.

It was no use waking the landlord, for he probably would not answer, and in any case I did not understand his tongue. There was nothing for it but to go back to the priest. My temper was thoroughly embittered and I strode out of the courtyard as if I were at home in my own village.

But my entrance had been observed, and the street was full of people. I doubt if Kynætho slept much those days, and now it seemed that from every door men and women were emerging. There was something uncanny in that violent vigilance in the cold gray light of dawn. And the crowd was no longer inert. In a second I saw that it was actively hostile, that it wanted to do me a mischief, or at any rate to lay hands on me. It closed in on me from every side, and yet made no sound.

It was now that I had my first real taste of fear. Before, I had been troubled and mystified, but now I was downright afraid. Automatically I broke into a run, for I remembered the priest's advice about the church.

My action took them by surprise. Shouts arose, meaningless shouts to me, and I broke through the immediate circle with ease. Two fellows who moved to intercept me I handed off in the best rugby football style. The street was empty before me and I sprinted up it at a pace which I doubt if I ever equaled in my old running days.

But I had one determined pursuer. I caught a glimpse of him out of a corner of my eye. He was one of the young men from the hills, a fellow with a dark, hawklike face, and a powerful raking stride. In my then form he would have beaten me easily if the course had been longer, but it was too

short to let him develop his speed. Yet he was not a yard behind me when I shot through the open door of the church.

I flung myself gasping on the floor behind one of the squat pillars. As I recovered my breath, I wondered why no shot had been fired. A man with a gun could have brought me down with the utmost ease, for I had been running straight in the open. My second thought was that the priest had been right. The pursuit had stopped in its tracks at the church door. I had found safety for the moment—a sanctuary or, it might be, a prison.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN GREAT PERIL.

THE morning light was filtering through the windows and, since the glass was a dirty yellow, the place seemed still to be full of moonshine. As my eyes grew accustomed to it, I made out the features of the interior. A heavy curtain separated the sanctuary from the chancel; the floor was of rough stone, worn with the feet and knees of generations of worshipers; there were none of the statues and images which one is accustomed to in a Roman church, not even a crucifix, though there may have been one above the hidden altar.

From a pillar hung an assortment of votive offerings, crutches, oar blades, rudders of ships, old-fashioned horn spectacles. The walls were studded with little ikons of saints, each one with its guttering lamp before it. The place smelled dank and unused and moldy, like a kirk in wintertime in some Highland glen. Behind me the open door showed an oval of pure, pale light.

I was in a mood of profound despondency which was very near despair. My men had gone and with them our stores of food and ammunition. Heaven knew where Maris was or how

I should find him again. The village was actively hostile, and I was shut up in the church as in a penitentiary. I was no nearer Kore than when we landed—farther away indeed, for I had taken the wrong turning, and she was shut off from me by mountainous barriers.

I could have laughed bitterly when I thought of the futility of the help which I had been so confident of giving her. And her danger was far more deadly than I had dreamed. She was the mark of a wild hate which had borrowed some wilder madness out of the deeps of the past. She had spoken of a "sacrifice." That was the naked truth of it! Any moment tragedy might be done, some hideous rite consummated, and youth and gallantry laid on a dark altar.

The thought drove me half crazy. I fancy the lack of food and sleep had made me rather light-headed, for I sat in a stupor which was as much anger as pity—anger at those blinded islanders, at my own feebleness, at Kore's obstinacy. This was succeeded by an extreme restlessness.

I could not stay still, but roamed about, examining the ill-favored ikons. There was a little recess on the right of the chancel which was evidently the treasury, for I found a big chest full of dusty vestments and church plate. Sacrilege must have been an unknown crime in Kynætho, for the thing was unlocked.

Then I noticed a strange object below the chancel step. It seemed to be a bier with a shrouded figure laid on it. The sight gave me a shock, for I thought it a dead body. Reluctantly I approached it and drew back the shroud, expecting to see the corpse of a peasant.

To my amazement it was a figure of Christ—a wooden image, rudely carved but with a strange similitude of life. It reminded me of a "John the

Baptist," by Donatello which I once saw in Venice. The emaciated body was naked, but for the loin cloth; the eyes were closed, the cheeks sunken. It was garishly painted, and the stigmata were done in a crude scarlet. But there was power in it, and dignity, and a terrible pitifulness.

I remembered Kore's story. This was the figure which on the night of Good Friday, after the women had kissed it and wailed over it, was borne in procession among the village lanes and then restored to its sepulcher. This was the figure which at the Easter Resurrection stood in a blaze of candles before the altar, the Crucified and Risen Lord.

THAT sight worked a miracle with me. I felt then that I was not alone, but had august allies. The Faith was behind me, that faith which was deep in the heart of Kynætho, though for the moment it was overlaid. The shabby church, the mazed and ignorant priest took on suddenly a tremendous significance. They were the visible sign and warrant of that creed which we all hold dumbly, even those who call themselves unbelievers, the belief in the ultimate omnipotence of mercy and purity and meekness.

I reverently laid the shroud again over the figure, and must have stood in a muse before it, till I found that the priest had joined me. He knelt beside the bier and said his prayers, and never have I heard such an agony of supplication in a man's voice. I drew back a little and waited. When he had finished, he came to me and his eyes asked a question.

I shook my head and got out my notebook.

He asked me if I had breakfasted, and when I wrote the most emphatic negative which my Latin could compass, he hobbled off and returned with some food under his cassock. It was

only cheese and black bread, but I ate it wolfishly and felt better for it. I looked on the old man now with a sincere liking, for he was my host and my ally, and I think he had changed his attitude toward me. Those minutes beside the bier had established a bond between us.

In the recess I have mentioned, there was a door which I had not hitherto noticed. This opened into a kind of sacristy, where the priest kept his odds and ends. There was a well in the floor of it, covered by an immense oaken lid, a well of cold water of which I had a long drink. The old man drew several buckets, and set about cleaning the chancel, and I was glad to lend a hand.

I spent the better part of the morning like a housemaid, on my knees scrubbing the floor and the chancel steps while he was occupied inside the sanctuary. The physical exertion was an anodyne to my thoughts, which in any case were without purpose. I could do nothing till the night came again.

ON one of my journeys to the sacristy after water, I saw a face at the little window, which opened on the yard of the priest's house. To my immense relief it was Maris, very dirty and disheveled, but grinning cheerfully. That window was a tight fit, but he managed to wriggle half through and a strong pull from me did the rest. He drank like a thirsty dog out of my bucket, and then observed that a church had its drawback as a resort, since one couldn't smoke.

"I have much to tell you, my friend," he said, "but first I must interview his holiness. My, but he has the mischievous flock!"

I do not know what he said to the priest, but he got answers which seemed to give him a melancholy satisfaction. The old man spoke without ever look-

ing up, and his voice was flat with despair. Often he shook his head, and sometimes he held up his hand, as if to avert a blasphemy.

Maris turned to me with a shrug of the shoulders. "This madness is beyond him, as it is beyond me. It is a general breaking down of wits. What can you and I, soldiers though we be, do against insanity? Presently I must sleep, and you, too, my friend, to judge by your heavy eyes. But first I make my report."

"I suppose we are safe here?" I said.

"Safe enough, but impotent. We can take our sleep confidently, but it is hard to see that we can do much else. We are in quarantine, if you understand. But to report——"

He had gone to the inn the night before, and found our five men supping and playing cards like Christians. They seemed to understand what was required of them—to wait for me and then join Janni and the others at the rendezvous on the western cliffs. So far as he could judge, they had no communication of any kind with the people of the village. Then he had set out with an easy mind on the road to Vano. No one had hindered him. The few villagers he met had stared, but had not attempted even to accost him. So over the moonlit downs he went, expecting to find Janni and the other five in bivouac in the open country toward the skirts of the hills.

He found Janni alone—on the roadside some miles east of Vano, squatted imperturbably by a fire, in possession of five revolvers and ample stores, but without a single follower. From the one-armed corporal, he heard a strange tale.

The party had made Vano before midday in the *Santa Lucia*, had landed and marched inland from the little port, without apparently attracting much attention. He himself had explained to the harbor master that they had been

sent to do survey work, and the wine shop, where they stopped for a drink, heard the same story. Then they had tramped up the road from Vano to the hills, stopping at the little farms to pass the time of day and pick up news.

They heard nothing till at nightfall, when they camped beside a village among the foothills. There Janni talked to sundry villagers and heard dark stories of Kynætho. There was a witch there who by her spells had blighted the crops and sent strange diseases among the people, and the cup of her abominations was now full. St. Dionysus had appeared to many in a dream, summoning them to Kynætho in the Greek week, and the best of the young men had already gone thither.

THAT was all that Janni heard, for being the party's leader, he spoke only with the elders, and they were wary in their talk. But the others, gossiping with the women, heard a fuller version which scared them to the bone. Your Greek townsman is not a whit less superstitious than the peasant, and he lacks the peasant's stolidity, and is prone to more speedy excitement.

Janni did not know exactly what the women had told his men, except that Kynætho was the abode of vampires and harpies for whom a surprising judgment was preparing, and that no stranger could enter the place without dire misfortune. There might be throat cutting, it was hinted, on the part of the young men now engaged in a holy war, and there would for certain be disaster at the hand of the *striglas* and *vrykolakes* in the house, for to them a stranger would be easy prey.

Whatever it was, it brought the men back to Janni gibbering with terror and determined to return forthwith to Vano. The island was accursed and the abode of devils innumerable, and there was nothing for honest men to do but to flee. They would go back to

Vano and wait on a boat, the *Santa Lucia* or some other. To do the rascals justice, Janni thought that they might have faced the throat cutting, but the horrors of the unseen and the occult were more than they could stomach.

Janni, who was a rigid disciplinarian, had fortunately possessed himself of their pistols when they camped for the night, and he was now in two minds whether he should attempt to detain them by force. But the sight of their scared eyes and twitching lips decided him that he could do nothing in their present mood, and he resolved to let them go back to Vano till he had seen Maris and received instructions.

They had already had wages in advance, and could fend for themselves till he made a plan. So he doled out to each man a share of the supplies and watched them scurry off in the direction of the coast, while he smoked his pipe and considered the situation. There, about two in the morning, Maris found him.

The defection of these five men suggested to Maris that the same kind of trouble might be expected with the batch in Kynætho. So he and Janni humped the stores and started off across the downs to the rendezvous on the cliffs which he had settled with me. That occupied a couple of hours, and there Janni was left with orders not to stir till he was summoned. The place was a hollow on the very edge of the cliffs, far removed from a road or a dwelling—a lucky choice, for it had been made at haphazard from the map without any local knowledge. Then Maris set off at his best pace for Kynætho, skirting the Dancing Floor on the south, and striking the road to Vano a mile or so from the village.

There he met the rest of our posse, and a more dilapidated set of mountebanks he declared he had never seen. So far as he could gather from their babble, they had been visited in the

small hours by a deputation of villagers, who had peremptorily ordered them to depart. The deputation reinforced its arguments not by threats, but by a plain statement of facts.

Kynætho was laboring under a curse which was about to be removed. No doubt the villagers expounded the nature of the curse, with details which started goose flesh on their hearers. What was about to be done was Kynætho's own affair, and no strangers could meddle with it and live.

The villagers may have reinforced their plea with the sight of their rifles, but probably they did not need to barb the terror which their tale inspired by any mundane arguments. For they succeeded in so putting a fear of unknown horrors into these five Athens guttersnipes that they decamped without a protest. They did not even stay to collect some provender, but fled for their lives, completely terrified, along the Vano Road.

When Maris met them, they were padding along in abject panic. One man still carried unconsciously a tin from which he had been feeding, another clutched a crumpled pack of cards. They had their pistols, but they had no thought of using them. Pantingly they told their story, irking to be gone, and when Maris seemed to be about to detain them, they splayed away from him like frightened sheep. Like Janni, he decided that it was no good to try to stop them—indeed, he was pretty clear by now that even if they stayed, they would be useless for the job we had in hand. He cursed them thoroughly and speeded the hindmost on his way with a kick.

His next business was to find me, and he concluded that I would probably be still in the neighborhood of the Arabin house. So, as the moon was down, he retraced his steps by the south side of the Dancing Floor and reached the edge, where the wall abutted on

the cliffs, probably an hour after I had been there. He shared my view about the impracticability of an entrance to the demesne at that point.

As it was now almost daylight, he did not dare to follow the wall, but returned to Janni on the cliffs, who gave him breakfast. Maris was getting anxious about my doings, for he argued that if I returned to the inn to look for the men, there would probably be trouble. It seemed to him important that the village should still believe him to have gone off, so he was determined not to show himself. But he must get in touch with me, and for that purpose he decided first to draw the priest's house.

He had a difficult journey in the broad daylight by way of the graveyard. It would have been impossible, he said, if the village had been living its normal life, for he had to pass through a maze of little fields and barns. But all farm work seemed to have been relinquished, and not a soul was to be seen at the lower end of the Dancing Floor. Everybody, except the guards round the Arabin house, seemed to be huddling in the village street. In the end he got into the priest's house, found it empty and followed on to the church.

I TOLD him briefly my doings of the night. I saw that he was completely in the dark as to what was happening, except that Kynætho, under the goad of some black superstition, intended very resolute mischief to the Arabin house and its chatelaine. You see, he had not talked to Kore—had indeed never seen her, nor had he read the disquieting manuscript which Vernon had translated for me. I did not see how I could enlighten him, for on that side he was no scholar, and was too rooted in his brand of minor rationalism to take my tale seriously. It was sufficient that we were both agreed

that the house must be entered, and Kore willy-nilly removed.

"But we have no ship!" he cried. "The lady would be no safer in the open than in the house, for they mean most certainly that she shall die. I think it may come to putting our backs to the wall, and the odds are unpleasant. We cannot telegraph for help, for the office is in the village and it has been destroyed. I have ascertained that there is no wire at Vano, or elsewhere in the island."

Things looked pretty ugly, as I was bound to admit. But there was one clear and urgent duty, to get into the house and find Kore. Before we lay down to snatch a little sleep, we made a rough plan. Maris would try the coast to the north and see if an entrance could be effected by a postern above the jetty where Vernon and I had first landed. He thought that he had better undertake this job, for it meant skirting the village, and he believed he might pass in the darkness as one of the men from the hills.

He could talk the language, you see, and, if accosted, could put up some kind of camouflage. I was to make for Janni, and then the two of us would try along the shore under the cliffs in the hope that some gully might give us access to the demesne north of the point where the wall ended. We were to rendezvous about breakfast time at Janni's camp, and from the results of the night frame a further program.

I slept without a break till after eight o'clock in the evening. Then the priest woke us and gave us another ration of the eternal bread and cheese. I felt frowsy and dingy and would have given much for a bath. The priest reported that the day in the village had passed without incident, except that there had been a great gathering in the central square and some kind of debate. He had not been present, but the thing seemed to have deepened his uneasiness.

"There is no time to lose," he told Maris, "for to-morrow is Good Friday, and to-morrow I fear that unhallowed things may happen."

MARIS discussed his route with him carefully and several more pages of my notebook were used up in plans. It was going to be a ticklish business to reach the jetty—principally, I gathered, because of the guards who watched all the sides of the demesne which were not bounded by the cliffs or the great wall. But the priest seemed to think it possible, and Maris' Gascon soul had illimitable confidence.

My road was plain—up the ridge on the south side of the Dancing Floor till it ended at the sea, a matter of not more than four miles. I skirted as before the little graveyard with its flickering lamps, and then made a cautious traverse of a number of small fields each with its straw-covered barn. Presently I was out on the downs, with the yellow levels of the Dancing Floor below me on the right. I was in a different mood from the previous night, for I now was miserably conscious of the shortness of our time and the bigness of our task. Anxiety was putting me into a fever of impatience and self-contempt.

Here was I, a man who was reckoned pretty competent by the world, who had had a creditable record in the war, who was considered an expert at getting other people out of difficulties—and yet I was so far utterly foiled by a set of barbarian peasants. I simply dared not allow my mind to dwell on Kore and her perils, for that way lay madness. I had to try to think of the thing objectively as a problem to be solved, but flashes of acute personal fear for the girl kept breaking through to set my heart beating.

I found Janni cooking supper by his little fire in a nook of the downs and the homely sight for the moment com-

forted me. The one-armed corporal was, I dare say, by nature and upbringing as superstitious as any other Greek peasant, but his military training had canalized his imagination, and he would take no notice of a legend till he was ordered to by his superior officer. He reminded me of the policeman *Javert* in "Les Miserables;" his whole soul was in the ritual of his profession, and it must have been a black day for Janni when the war stopped. Maris, whom he worshiped blindly, had bidden him take instructions from me, and he was ready to follow me into the sea. Mercifully his service at Salonika had taught him a few English words and a certain amount of bad French, so we could more or less communicate.

He had supplies with him, so I had a second supper—biscuits and sardines and coffee, which after two days of starvation tasted like nectar and ambrosia. Also he had a quantity of cigarettes, with which I filled my pockets. Our first business was to get down to the beach, and fortunately he had already discovered a route a few hundred yards to the south, where a gully with a stone shoot led to the water's edge. Presently we stood on the pebbly shore looking out to the luminous west over a sea as calm as a mill pond. I would have liked to bathe, but decided that I must first get the immediate business over.

That shore was rough going, for it was a succession of limestone reefs encumbered with great boulders which had come down from the rocks during past winters. The strip of beach was very narrow and the overhang of the cliffs protected us from observation from above, even had any peasant been daring enough to patrol the Dancing Floor by night. We kept close to the water, where the way was easiest, but even there our progress was slow.

It took us the better part of an hour to get abreast of the point where the

wall ended. There the cliffs were at least two hundred feet high and smooth as the side of a cut loaf. Crowning them we could see the dark woodlands of the demesne.

MY object was to find an ascent, and never in all my mountaineering experience had I seen a more hopeless proposition. The limestone seemed to have no fissures, and the faces had weathered smooth. In the Dolomites you can often climb a perpendicular cliff by the countless little cracks in the hard stone, but here there were no cracks, only a surface glassy like marble. At one point I took off my boots and managed to ascend about twenty yards, when I was brought up sharp by an overhang, could find no way to traverse, and had my work cut out getting down again. Janni was no cragsman, and in any case his one arm made him useless.

Our outlook ahead was barred by a little cape, and I was in hopes that on the other side of that the ground might become easier. We had a bad time turning it, for the beach stopped and the rock fell sheer to the water. Happily the water at the point was shallow and, partly wading and partly scrambling, we managed to make the passage. In the moonlight everything was clear as day, and once round we had a prospect of a narrow bay, backed by the same high perpendicular cliffs, and bounded to the north by a still higher bluff which ended to seaward in a sheer precipice.

With a sinking heart, I sat down on a boulder to consider the prospect. It was more hopeless than the part we had already prospected. There was no gully or chimney in the whole glimmering semicircle, nothing but a rim of unscalable stone crowned with a sharp-cut fringe of trees. Beyond the bluff lay the olive yards which I had seen six years before when I landed from the

yacht, but I was pretty certain that we would never get round the bluff. For the margin of shore had now disappeared, and the cliffs dropped sheer into deep water.

Suddenly Janni by my side grunted and pointed to the middle of the little bay. There, riding at anchor, was a boat.

AT first it was hard to distinguish it from a rock, for there was no riding light shown. But, as I stared at it, I saw that it was indeed a boat—a yawl-rigged craft of, I judged, about twenty tons. It lay there motionless in the moonlight, a beautiful thing which had no part in that setting of stone and sea—a foreign thing, an intruder in this unhallowed sanctuary. I watched it for five minutes and nothing moved aboard.

The sight filled me with both hope and mystification. Here was the “ship” which Maris had postulated. But who owned it and what was it doing in this outlandish spot, where there was no landing? It could not belong to Kynætho, or it would have been lying at the jetty below the house or in the usual harbor. Indeed it could not belong to Plakos at all, for, though I knew little about boats, I could see that the cut of this one spoke of western Europe. Was any one on board? It behooved me forthwith to find that out.

I spoke to Janni, and he whistled shrilly. But there was no answer from the sleeping bay. He tried again several times without result. If we were to make inquiries, it could only be by swimming out. Janni of course was no swimmer, and besides the responsibility was on me. I can't say I liked the prospect, but in three minutes I had stripped and was striking out in the moon-silvered water.

The fresh, cold, aromatic sea gave me new vigor of body and mind. I realized that I must proceed warily. Sup-

posing there was some one on board, some one hostile, I would be completely at his mercy. So I swam very softly up to the stern and tried to read the name on it. There was a name, but that side was in shadow, and I could not make it out. I swam to the bows and there again saw a name of which I could make nothing, except that the characters did not seem to me to be Greek.

I trod water and took stock of the situation. It was the kind of craft of which you will see hundreds at Harwich and Southampton and Plymouth—a pleasure boat, obviously meant for cruising, but with something of the delicate lines of a racer. I was beginning to feel chilly, and felt that I must do something more than prospect from the water. I must get on board and chance the boat being empty or the owner asleep. Noiselessly I swam toward it.

There was a fender amidships, hanging over the port side. I clutched this, got a grip of the gunwale, and was just about to pull myself up, when a face suddenly appeared above me, a scared, hairy face, surmounted by a sort of blue nightcap. Its owner objected to my appearance, for he swung a boat hook and brought it down heavily on the knuckles of my left hand. That is to say, such was his intention, but he missed his aim and only grazed my little finger.

I dropped off and dived, for I was afraid that he might start shooting. When I came up a dozen yards off and shook the water out of my eyes, I saw him staring at me as if I was a merman, with the boat hook still in his hand.

“What the devil do you mean by that?” I shouted, when I had ascertained that he had no pistol. “What boat is it? Who are you?”

My voice seemed to work some change in the situation, for he dropped the boat hook, and replied in what

sounded like Greek. I caught one word, "Ingleez," several times repeated.

"I'm English!" I cried. "English—philos—philhellene—damn it, what's the Greek for a friend?"

"Friend," he repeated, "Ingleez," and I swam nearer.

He was a tough-looking fellow, dressed in a blue jersey and what appeared to be old flannel bags, and he looked honest, though puzzled. I was now just under him, and smiling for all I was worth. I put a hand on the fender again, and repeated the word "English." I also said that my intention was of the best, and I only wanted to come aboard and have a chat. If he was well disposed toward England, I thought he might recognize the sound of the language.

Evidently he did, for he made no protest when I got both hands on the gunwale again. He allowed me to get my knee up on it, so I took my chance and swung myself over. He retreated a step and lifted the boat hook, but he did not attempt to hit me as I arose like Proteus out of the sea and stood dripping on his deck.

I held out my hand, and with a moment's hesitation he took it. "English—friend," I said, grinning amicably at him, and to my relief he grinned back.

I was aboard a small yacht, which was occidental in every line of her, the clean decks, the general tidy workmanlike air. A man is not at his most confident standing stark naked at midnight in a strange boat, confronting somebody of whose speech he comprehends not one word. But I felt that I had stumbled upon a priceless asset, if I could only use it, and I was determined not to let the chance slip.

He poured out a flow of Greek, at which I could only shake my head and murmur "English." Then I tried the language of signs, and went through a vigorous pantomime to explain that, though I could not speak his tongue, I

had a friend on shore who could. The yacht had a dinghy. Would he row me ashore and meet my friend?

IT took me a long time to make this clear to him, and I had to lead him to where the dinghy lay astern, point to it, point to the shore, point to my dumb mouth and generally behave like a maniac. But he got it at last. He seemed to consider; then he dived below and returned with a thing like an iron mace which he brandished round his head as if to give me to understand that if I misbehaved, he could brain me. I smiled and nodded and put my hand on my heart and he smiled back.

Then his whole manner changed. He brought me a coat and an ancient felt hat and made signs that I should put them on. He dived below again and brought up a bowl of hot cocoa, which did me good, for my teeth were beginning to chatter. Finally he motioned me to get into the dinghy, and set his mace beside him, took the sculls and pulled in the direction I indicated.

Janni was sitting smoking on a stone, the image of innocent peace. I cried out to him before we reached shore, and told him that this was the skipper and that he must talk to him. The two began their conversation before we landed, and presently it seemed that Janni had convinced my host that we were respectable.

As soon as we landed, I started to put on my clothes, but first I took the pistol from my coat pocket and presented the butt end to my new friend. He saw my intention, bowed ceremoniously and handed it back to me. He also pitched the mace back into the dinghy, as if he regarded it as no longer necessary.

He and Janni talked volubly and with many gesticulations, and the latter now and then broke off to translate for my benefit. I noticed that as time went

on the seaman's face, though it remained friendly, grew also obstinate.

"He says he awaits his master here," said Janni, "but who his master is and where he is gone, he will not tell. He says also that this island is full of devils and bad men and that on no account will he stay on it."

I put suggestions to Janni, which he translated, but we could get nothing out of the fellow except the repeated opinion—with which I agreed—that the island was full of devils and that the only place for an honest man was the water. About his master, he remained stubbornly silent. I wanted him to take me in his boat round the farther bluff so that we could land on the olive yard slopes and possibly get in touch with Maris, but he peremptorily refused. He would not leave the bay, which was the only safe place. Elsewhere were the men and women of Plakos, who were devils.

After about an hour's fruitless talk, I gave it up. But one thing I settled. I told him through Janni that there were others besides ourselves and himself who were in danger from the devils of the island. There was a lady—an English lady—who was even now in dire peril. If we could bring her to the spot, would he be on the watch and take her on board?

He considered this for a little and then agreed. He would not leave the island without his master, but he would receive the lady if necessary, and if the devils followed, he would resist them. He was obviously a fighting man and I concluded he would be as good as his word. Asked if in case of pursuit he would put to sea, he said, no, not till his master returned. That was the best I could make of him, but of that precious master he refused to speak a syllable. His own name he said was George—known at home as "Black George," to distinguish him from a cousin, "George of the Harelip."

We parted in obscure friendliness. I presented him with my empty cigarette case, and he kissed me on both cheeks. As I handed him back the garments which he had lent me to cover my nakedness, I noticed a curious thing. The coat was so old that the maker's tag had long since gone from it. But inside the disreputable felt hat I saw the name of a well-known shop in Jermyn Street.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON THE DANCING FLOOR.

JANNI and I returned to the camp before dawn. For some unknown reason, a heavy weariness overcame me on the way back and I could scarcely drag my limbs over the last half mile of shore and up the stone shoot to the edge of the downs. I dropped on the ground beside the ashes of the fire, and slept like a drugged man.

When I woke, it was high forenoon. The sun was beating full on the little hollow, and Janni was cooking breakfast. My lethargy had gone and I woke to a violent, anxious energy. Where was Maris? He ought to have rejoined us, according to plan, before sunrise. But Janni had seen no sign of him. Had he got into the Arabin house? Well, in that case he would find means to send us a message, and to send it soon, for this was Good Friday, the day which the priest feared.

I was in a fever of impatience, for I had found a boat, a means of escape of which Maris did not know. If he was in the house, I must get that knowledge to him, and he in turn must get in touch as soon as possible with me. Our forces were divided, with no link of communication.

I did my best to possess my soul in that hot, scented forenoon, but it was a hard job, for the sense of shortening time had got on my nerves. The place was cooled by light winds from

the sea, and for Janni, who lay on his back and consumed cigarettes, it was doubtless a pleasant habitation. Rivers of narcissus and iris and anemone flooded over the crest and spilled into the hollow. The ground was warm under the short herbage, and from it came the rich, clean savor of earth quickening after its winter sleep under the spell of the sun.

The pigeons were cooing in the cliffs below me and the air was full of the soft tideless swaying of the sea. But for all the comfort it gave me I might have been stretched on frozen bricks in a dungeon. I was constantly getting up and crawling to a high point which gave me a view of the rim of the down up to the wall, and eastward toward the Vano Road. But there was no sign of Maris in the wide landscape.

ABOUT one o'clock the thing became ominous. If Maris was in the Arabin house I must get in touch with him; if he had failed, I must make the attempt myself. It was a crazy thing to contemplate in broad daylight, but my anxiety would not let me stay still. I bade Janni wait for me, and set off toward the Vano Road, with the intention of trying Maris' route of the previous night and making a circuit by the east side of the village toward the jetty.

I had the sense to keep on the south side of the ridge, out of sight of the Dancing Floor and the high ground beyond it. There was not a soul to be seen in all that grassy place; the winding highway showed no figure as far as the eye could reach; even the closes and barns clustered about the foot of the Dancing Floor seemed untenanted of man or beast. I gave the village a wide berth and, after crossing some patches of cultivation and scrambling through several ragged thickets, found myself due east of Kynætho and some three hundred feet above it.

There I had the prospect of the

church, rising above a line of hovels, a bit of the main street, the rear of the inn and the houses which straggled seaward toward the jetty. The place had undergone another transformation, for it seemed to be deserted. Not one solitary figure appeared in the blinding-white street. Every one must be indoors, engaged in some solemn preparation against the coming night.

That gave me a hope that the northern approaches to the house might be unguarded. So great was my anxiety that I set off at a run, and presently had reached the high ground which overlooked the road from the village to the harbor. Here I had to go circumspectly, for once I descended to the road I would be in view of any one on the jetty, and probably, too, of the northernmost houses in the village.

I scanned the foreground long and carefully with my glasses, decided that no one was about, so slipped down from the heights, crossed the road a hundred yards above the harbor, and dived into the scrub which bordered the beach on the farther side. Here I was completely sheltered, and made good going till I rounded a little point and came into a scene which was familiar.

It was the place where, six years before, Vernon and I had landed from Lamancha's yacht. There were the closes of fruit blossom, the thickets, the long, scrubby ravine where we had listened to the "Spring Song." I had a sudden sense of things being predestined, of the ironical foreordination of life.

I knew what to expect. Round the horn of the little bay where I stood lay the house with its jetty and the causeway and the steep stairs to the postern gate. My success thus far had made me confident and I covered the next half mile as if I were walking on my own estate. But I had the wit to move cautiously before I passed the containing ridge, and crept up to the sky line.

It was well that I did so, for this was what I saw. On the jetty there were guards, and there were posts along the causeway. More, some change had been wrought in the seaward wall of the house. The huge place rose, blank and white, in its cincture of greenery, but at the points where the steps ended in postern doors, there seemed to be a great accumulation of brushwood, which was not the work of nature. My glass told me what it was. The entrance was piled high with fagots. The place had been transformed into a pyre!

But it was not that sight which sent my heart to my boots—I had been prepared for that or any other devilry—it was the utter impossibility of affecting an entrance. The fabric rose stark and silent like a prison, and round it stood the wardens.

I DID not wait long, for the thing I made me mad. I turned and retraced my steps, as fast as I could drag my legs, for every ounce of kick had gone out of me. It was a dull, listless automaton that recrossed the harbor road, made the long circuit east of the village, and regained the downs beyond the Dancing Floor. When I staggered into camp, where the placid Janni was playing dice, left hand against right, it was close on five o'clock.

I made myself a cup of tea and tried to piece the situation together. Maris could not have entered the house—the thing was flatly impossible, and what had happened to him I could only guess. Where he had failed, I certainly could not succeed, for the cliffs, the wall and the guards shut it off impenetrably from the world. Inside was Kore alone—I wondered if the old servant whom she had called Mitri was with her, or the French maid she had had in London—and that night would see the beginning of the end.

The remembrance of the fagots piled about the door sent a horrid chill to my heart. The situation had marched clean outside human power to control it. I thought with scorn of my self-confidence. I had grievously muddled every detail, and was of as little value as if I had remained in my Temple chambers. Pity and fear for the girl made me clench my hands and gnaw my lips. I could not stay still. I decided again to prospect the cliffs.

One-armed Janni was no use, so I left him behind. I slid down the stone shoot and in the first cool of evening scrambled along that arduous shore. When I had passed the abutment of the wall I scanned with my glass every crack in the cliffs, but in daylight they looked even more hopeless than under the moon. At one place a shallow gully permitted me to reach a shelf, but there I stuck fast, for the rock above could only have been climbed by a hanging rope.

The most desperate man—and by that time I was pretty desperate—could not find a way where the Almighty had decided that there should be none. I think that if there had been the faintest chance, I would have taken it, in spite of the risks; I would have ventured on a course which at Chamonix or Cortina would have been pronounced suicidal; but here there was not even the rudiments of a course—nothing but that maddening, glassy wall.

By and by I reached the cape beyond which lay the hidden bay and Black George with his boat. It occurred to me that I had not prospected very carefully the cliffs in this bay, and in any case I wanted to look again at the boat, that single frail link we had with the outer world. But first I stripped and had a bath, which did something to cool the fret of my nerves. Then I waded round the point to the place where Janni and I had talked with the seaman.

Black George had gone! There was not a trace of him or the boat in the shining inlet into which the westering sun was pouring its yellow light. What on earth had happened? Had his mysterious master returned? Or had he been driven off by the islanders? Or had he simply grown bored and sailed away? The last solution I dismissed; Black George, I was convinced, was no quitter.

The loss of him was the last straw to my hopelessness. I was faced with a situation with which no ingenuity or fortitude could grapple—only some inhuman skill in acrobatics or some berserker physical powers which I did not possess. I turned my glass listlessly on the cliffs which lined the bay. There was nothing to be done there. They were as sheer as those I had already prospected and, although more rugged and broken, it was by means of great masses of smooth rock on which only a fly could move.

I was sitting on the very boulder which Janni had occupied the night before, and I saw on the shingle one or two of his cigarette stumps. And then I saw something else.

It was a cigarette end, but not one of Janni's. Moreover, it had been dropped there during the past day. Janni's stumps, having been exposed to the night dews, were crumpled and withered; this was intact, the butt end of an Egyptian cigarette of a good English brand. Black George must have been here in the course of the day. But I remembered that Black George had smoked a peculiarly evil type of Greek tobacco. Had he been pilfering his master's cigarettes? Or had his master come back?

I remembered that Black George had refused to utter one word about that master of his. Who could he be? Was he an Englishman? He might well be, judging from Black George's reverence for the word "English." If so, what

was he doing in Plakos, and how had he reached this spot, unless he had the wings of a bird? If he had come along the downs and the shore, Janni would have seen him. Anyhow, he was gone now, and our one bridge with a sane world was broken.

I MADE my way back to Janni, feeling that I had come to the edge of things and would presently be required to go over the brink. I was now quite alone—as much alone as Kore—and Fate might soon link these lonelinesses. I had had this feeling once or twice in the war—that I was faced with something so insane that insanity was the only course for me, but I had no notion what form the insanity would take, for I still saw nothing before me but helplessness.

I was determined somehow to break the barrier, regardless of the issue. Every scrap of manhood in me revolted against my futility. In that moment I became primitive man again. Even if the woman were not my woman, she was of my own totem and, whatever her fate, she should not meet it alone.

Janni had food ready for me, but I could not eat it. I took out my pistol, cleaned and reloaded it, and told Janni to look to his. I am not much of a pistol shot, but Janni, as I knew from Maris, was an expert. There would be something astir when the moon rose, and I had an intuition that the scene would be the Dancing Floor. The seaward end of the house might be the vital point in the last stage of the drama, but I was convinced that the Dancing Floor would see the first act. It was the holy ground, and I had gathered from the priest that some dark ritual would take the place of the Good Friday solemnity.

There was only one spot where Janni and I might safely lie hidden, and at the same time look down on the Dancing Floor, and that was in the shadow

of the wall between the guarded breach and the cliffs. There were large trees there and the progress of the moon would not light it up, whereas everywhere else would be clear as noonday. Moreover, whatever mischief was intended against the house would pass under our eyes.

But it was necessary to get there before the moon was fully risen, for otherwise to men coming from the village we should be silhouetted against the cliff edge. I cut Janni's supper short and we started out, using every crinkle of the ground as cover, much as stalkers do when they are fetching a circuit and know that the deer are alarmed and watchful.

We had not much more than a mile to go and, by the route we chose, we managed, as it happened, to keep wholly out of sight of the Dancing Floor. Janni—no mountaineer—grumbled at my pace, for I had acquired an extraordinary lightness of limb so that I felt as if I could have flown. I was puzzled to explain this, after my listlessness of the day, but I think it was due partly to tense nerves, and partly to the magic of the evening.

The air was cool and exhilarating, and when the moon rose with a sudden glory above the house, it was as tonic as if one had plunged into water. Soon we were on the edge of the inky belt of shadow and moving eastward to get nearer the breach. But now I noticed something I had forgotten. The wall curved outward and beyond that bulge—a couple of hundred yards from the breach—the light flooded to the very edge of the stone. We came to a halt at the apex of the curve, flat on our faces, and I turned to reconnoiter the Dancing Floor.

I WISH to Heaven I had the gift of words. It is too much to ask a man whose life has been spent in drawing pleadings and in writing dull legal

opinions, to describe a scene which needs the tongue or pen of a poet. For the Dancing Floor was transfigured. Its lonely beauty had been decked and adorned, as an altar is draped for high festival.

On both slopes people clustered—men, women and children—all silent, so that I thought I could hear them breathe. I thought, too, that they mostly wore white—at any rate the moonlight gave me the impression of an immense white multitude, all Kynætho and doubtless half the hills. The valley was marked out like a race course. There seemed to be posts at regular intervals in a broad oval, and at each post was a red flicker which meant torches. The desert had become populous, and the solitary places blossomed with roses of fire. It was a strange, fascinating scene.

The people were clustered toward the upper end, making an amphitheater of which the arena was the Dancing Floor, and the entrance to the stage the breach in the wall of the house. I saw that this entrance was guarded, not as before by three sentries, but by a double line of men, who kept an avenue open between them.

Beyond the spectators and round the arena was the circle of posts, and between them lay the Dancing Floor, golden in the moon, and flanked at its circumference by the angry crimson of the torches. I noticed another thing: Not quite in the center but well within the arena was a solitary figure waiting. He was in white—gleaming white, and, so far as I could judge, he was standing beside the spring from which I had drunk the night before.

I have set out the details of what I saw, but they are only the beggarly elements, for I cannot hope to reproduce the strangeness which caught at the heart and laid a spell on the mind. The place was no more the Valley of the Shadow of Life, but Life itself—a

surge of demonic energy out of the deeps of the past.

It was wild and yet ordered, savage and yet sacramental, the advent of an ancient knowledge which shattered for me the modern world and left me gasping like a cave man before his mysteries. The magic smote on my brain, though I struggled against it. The passionless moonlight and the passionate torches—that, I think, was the final miracle—a marrying of the eternal cycle of nature with the fantasies of man.

The effect on Janni was overwhelming. He lay and gibbered prayers with eyes as terrified as a deer's, and I realized that I need not look for help in that quarter. But I scarcely thought of him, for my trouble was with myself. Most people would call me a solid fellow, with a hard head and a close-texture mind, but if they had seen me then, they would have changed their view. I was struggling with something which I had never known before, a mixture of fear, abasement and a crazy desire to worship. Yes—to worship! There was that in the scene which wakened some ancient instinct, so that I felt it in me to join the votaries.

It took me a little time to pull myself together. I looked up at the dome of the sky, where on the horizon pale stars were showing. The whole world seemed hard and gemlike and unrelenting. There was no help there. Nature approved this ritual— And then a picture flashed into my mind which enabled me to recover my wits. It was the carven Christ lying in its shroud on the bier in the church.

I am not a religious man in the ordinary sense—only a half believer in the creed in which I was born. But in that moment I realized that there was that in me which was stronger than the pagan—an instinct which had come down to me from believing generations. I understood then what were

my gods. I think I prayed. I know that I clung to the memory of that rude image as a Christian martyr may have clung to his crucifix. It stood for all the broken lights which were in me as against this charmed darkness.

I WAS steadier now and with returning sanity came the power of sound thought. Something, some one, was to be brought from the house. Was there to be a trial in that arena? Or a sacrifice? No—I was clear that to-night was only the preparation, and that the great day was the morrow. There was no sound from the gathering. I could not see the faces, but I knew that every one, down to the smallest child, was awed and rapt and expectant. No crowd, hushing its breath in the decisive moments of a great match, was ever more rigidly on the stretch. The very air quivered with expectation.

Then a movement began. Figures entered the arena at the end farthest from me—men, young men. My glass showed me that each wore a sort of loin cloth, or it may have been short drawers. They aligned themselves, like runners at the start of a race, and still there was no sound. The figure who had been standing by the well was now beside them and seemed to be speaking softly. Each held himself tense, with clenched hands, and his eyes on the ground. Then came some kind of signal and they sprang forward.

It was a race—such a race as few men can have witnessed. The slim youths kept inside the torches, and circled the arena of the Dancing Floor. Over the moonlit sward they flew, glimmering like ghosts—once round, a second time round. And all the while the crowd kept utter silence.

I ran the mile myself at school and college, and know something about pace. I could see that it was going to be a close finish. One man, I noted, I think the very fellow who had

hunted me into the church—he ran superbly and won a lead at the start. But the second time round I fancied another, a taller and leaner man who had kept well back in the first round, and was slowly creeping ahead. I liked his style, which was oddly like the kind of thing we cultivate at home, and he ran with judgment, too.

Soon he was abreast of the first man, and then he sprinted and took the lead. I was wondering where the finish would be, when he snatched a torch from one of the posts, and ran strongly up the center of the Dancing Floor and plunged the flame in the spring.

Still there was no sound from the crowd. The winner stood with his head bent, a noble figure of youth who might have stepped from a Parthenon frieze. The others had gone; he stood close beside the wall with the white-clad figure who had acted as master of ceremonies—only now the victor in the race seemed to be the true master, on whom all eyes waited.

The sight was so strange and beautiful that I watched it half in a trance. I seemed to have seen it all before, and to know the stages that would follow. Yes, I was right. There was a movement from the crowd and a man was brought forward. I knew the man, though he wore nothing but pants and a torn shirt. One could not mistake the trim figure of Maris, nor his alert birdlike head.

He stood confronting the beautiful young barbarian beside the spring, looking very much as if he would like to make a fight of it. And then the latter seemed to speak to him, and to lay a hand on his head. Maris submitted, and the next I saw was that the runner had drawn a jar of water from the well and was pouring it over him. He held it high to the arm, and the water wavered and glistened in the moonshine. I could see Maris spluttering and wringing out his wet shirt sleeves.

WITH that, recollection flooded in on me. This was the ceremony of which Vernon had read to me from Kore's manuscript. A virgin and a youth were chosen and set apart in a hallowed place, and the chooser was he who was victor in a race and was called "the King." The victims were hallowed with water from the well by the white cypress. I was looking at the well, though the cypress had long disappeared. I was looking at the King, and at one of those dedicated to the sacrifice. The other was the girl in the house. Vernon had said that if we knew what the word *hasiotheis* meant we should know a good deal about Greek religion. That awful knowledge was now mine.

It was as I expected. The consecrator and the consecrated were moving, still in the same hushed silence, toward the *horkos*—the sanctuary. The torches had been extinguished, as soon as the victor plunged his into the spring, and the pure light of the moon seemed to have waxed to an unearthly brightness. The two men walked up the slope of the Dancing Floor to the line of guards which led to the breach in the wall.

I could not hold my glasses because of the trembling of my hands, but I could see the figures plainly—the tall runner, built on the noblest lines of beauty, his figure poised like some young Apollo of the great age of art, his face dark with the sun, but the skin of his body curiously white. Some youth of the hills, doubtless—his crisp hair seemed in the moonlight to be flaxen. Beside him went the shorter Maris, flushed and truculent. He must have been captured by the guards in his attempt on the house and, as a stranger and also a Greek, had been put forward as the male victim.

I was roused by the behavior of Janni. He had realized that his beloved *capitaine* was a prisoner, toward whom some evil was doubtless in-

tended, and this understanding had driven out his fear and revived his military instincts. He was cursing fiercely and had got out his pistol.

"Sir," he whispered to me, "I can crawl within shot, for the shadow is lengthening, and put a bullet into yon bandit. Then in the confusion my *capitaine* will escape and join us and break for the cliffs. These people are sheep and may not follow."

For a second it appeared to me the only thing to do. That evil Adonis was about to enter the house, and on the morrow Kore and Maris would find death at his hands, for he was the sacrificer. I seemed to see in his arrogant beauty the cruelty of an elder world. His death would at any rate shatter the ritual.

And then I hesitated and gripped Janni firmly by his one arm. For, as the two men passed out of my sight toward the breach in the wall, I had caught a glimpse of Maris' face. He was speaking to his companion, and his expression was not of despair or terror, but confident, almost cheerful. For an instant the life of the young runner hung on a thread, for I do not think that Janni would have missed. Then I decided against the shot, for I felt that it was a counsel of despair. There was something which I did not comprehend, for Maris' face was puzzling.

I signed to Janni and we started crawling back toward the cliffs. In that hour the one thing that kept me sane was the image of the dead Christ below the chancel step. It was my only link with the reasonable and kindly world I had lost.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FAGOTS ARE FIRED.

[HAD only one impulse at that moment—an overwhelming desire to get back to the church and look again at the figure on the bier. It seemed to

me the sole anchor in the confusion of uncharted tides, the solitary hope in a desire of perplexities. I had seen ancient magic revive and carry captive the hearts of a people. I had myself felt its compelling power. A girl whom I loved and a man who was my companion were imprisoned and at the mercy of a maddened populace.

Maris was, like Ulysses, an old campaigner and a fellow of many wiles, but what could Maris do in the face of multitudes? An unhallowed epiphany was looked for, but first must come the sacrifice. There was no help in the arm of flesh, and the shallow sophistication of the modern world fell from me like a useless cloak. I was back in my childhood's faith, and wanted to be at my childhood's prayers.

As for Janni, he had only one idea in his head, to follow his captain into the house and strike a blow for him. As he padded along the seaward cliffs, he doubtless thought we were bent on attacking the place from another side. We took pretty much the road I had taken in the morning, skirting the Dancing Floor on its southern edge.

One strange thing I saw: The Dancing Floor was still thronged, though a space was kept clear in the center round the well. Clearly it was no longer taboo, but a place of holiday. Moreover, the people seemed to intend to remain there, for they had lit fires and were squatting round them, while some had already stretched themselves to sleep. Kynætho had moved in a body to the scene of the coming epiphany.

When we reached the fringe of the village, I saw that I had guessed correctly. There was not a sign of life in the streets. We walked boldly into the central square, and it might have been a graveyard. Moreover, in the graveyard itself the lamps by the graves had not been lit. Vampires were apparently no longer to be feared, and that struck me as an ill omen. Keats' lines

came into my head about the "little town by river or seashore" which is "emptied of its folk this pious morn." Pious morn!

And then above us, from the squat campanile, a bell began to toll, raggedly, feebly, like the plaint of a child. Yet to me it was also a challenge and a defiance.

THE church was bright with moonshine. The curtains still veiled the sanctuary, and there were no candles lit—nothing but the flickering lamps before the ikons. Below the chancel step lay the dark mass which contained the shrouded Christ. Janni, like myself, seemed to find comfort in being here. He knelt at a respectful distance from the bier and began to mutter prayers.

I went forward and lifted the shroud. The moon coming through one of the windows gave the carved wood a ghastly semblance of real flesh, and I could not bear to look on it. I followed Janni's example and breathed incoherent prayers. I was bred a Calvinist, but in that moment I was not worshipping any graven image. My prayer was to be delivered from the idolatry of the heathen.

Suddenly the priest was beside me. In one hand he held a lighted candle, and the other carried a censer. He seemed in no way surprised to see us, but there was that about him which made me catch my breath. The man had suddenly become infinitely enlarged and ennobled. All the weakness had gone out of the old face, all the languor and bewilderment out of the eyes; the shoulders had straightened; his beard was no longer like a goat's, but like a prophet's. He was as one possessed, a fanatic, a martyr.

He had forgotten that I knew no Greek, for he spoke rapidly words which sounded like a command. But Janni understood, and went forward obediently to the bier. Then I saw

what he meant us to do. We were to take the place of the absent hierophants and carry the image of the dead Christ through the bounds of the village. The bier was light enough even for one-armed Janni to manage. The shroud was removed. He took the fore end, and I the back, and behind the priest we marched out into the night.

The streets were deathly still; the cool night air was unruffled by wind, so that the candle burned steadily; the golden dome of the sky was almost as bright as day. Along the white, beaten road we went, and then into the rough cobbles of the main street. I noticed that, though the houses were empty, every house door was wide open. We passed the inn and came into the road to the harbor and to the cottage among fruit trees where I had first made inquiries.

Then we turned up the hill where lay the main entrance to the Arabin house, past little silent untenanted crofts and olive yards which were all gleaming gray and silver. The old man moved slowly, swinging his censer, and intoning what I took to be a dirge in a voice no longer tremulous, but masterful and strong, and behind him Janni and I stumbled along, bearing the symbol of man's salvation.

I had never been present at a Greek Good Friday celebration, but Kore had described it to me—the following crowds tortured with suspense, the awed, kneeling women, the torches, the tears, the universal lamentation. Then the people sorrowed, not without hope, for their dead Saviour. But the ordinary ceremonial can never have been so marvelous as our broken ritual that night.

We were celebrating, but there were no votaries. The torches had gone to redden the Dancing Floor; sorrow had been exchanged for a guilty ecstasy; the worshipers were seeking another saviour. Our rite was more than a

commemoration; it was a defiance; and I felt like a man who carries a challenge to the enemy.

THE moon had set and darkness had begun before we returned to the church. Both Janni and I were very weary before we laid down our burden in the vault below the nave, a place hewn out of the dry limestone rock. By the last flickering light of the candle I saw the priest standing at the head of the bier, his hands raised in supplication, his eyes bright and rapt and unseeing. He was repeating a litany in which a phrase constantly recurred. I could guess its meaning. It must have been "He will yet arise."

I slept till broad daylight in the priest's house on the priest's bed, while Janni snored on a pile of sheepskins. Since Kynætho was deserted, there was no reason now for secrecy, for the whole place, and not the church only, had become a sanctuary. The aged woman who kept house for the priest gave us a breakfast of milk and bread, but we saw no sign of him, and I did not wish to return to the church and disturb his devotions. I wondered if I should ever see him again; it was a toss-up if I should ever see anybody again after this day of destiny.

We had been partners in strange events and I could not leave him without some farewell. So I took the book of his which seemed to be most in use, put two English five-pound notes inside, and did my best in laboriously printed Latin to explain that this was a gift for the church and to thank him and wish him well.

I did another thing, for I wrote out a short account of the position, saying that further information might be obtained from Ertzberger and Vernon Milburne. Anything might happen today, and I wanted to leave some record for my friends. I addressed the document under cover to the priest, and—

again in Latin—begged him, should anything happen to me, to see that it reached the British minister in Athens. That was about all I could do in the way of preparation, and I had a moment of grim amusement in thinking how strangely I, who since the war had seemed to be so secure and cosseted, had moved back to the razor edge of life.

I have said that there was no need for secrecy, so we walked straight through the village toward the harbor. Janni had made a preliminary survey beyond the graveyard in the early morning, and had reported that the people of Kynætho were still camped around the Dancing Floor.

The trouble would not begin till we approached the Arabin house, for it was certain that on that day of all days the guards would be vigilant. We were both of us wholly desperate. We simply had to get in, and to get in before the evening; for that purpose anything, even wholesale homicide, was legitimate. But at the same time it would do no good to get caught, even if we succeeded in killing several of our captors.

I think I had a faint unreasonable hope that we should find the situation at the causeway more promising than it had appeared on the day before. But when—after a walk where we had seen no trace of man or beast—we came to the crest of the little cape beyond which lay the jetty and the house, I had a sad disillusionment.

The place was thick with sentries. I saw the line of them along the causeway and at the head of the jetty; moreover, there seemed to be men working to the left of the house, where there was a cluster of outbuildings descending to the shallow vale up which ran the road from the sea. My glass showed me what they were doing.

They were piling more straw and brushwood, so that from the outbuild-

ings, which were probably of wood and would burn like tinder, the flames might have easy access to the windows of the house. The altar was being duly prepared for the sacrifice.

Long and carefully I prospected the ground. There was cover enough to take us down to within a few yards of the jetty. If I tried to cross it, I should be within view of the people on the causeway. Even if I got across unobserved, there was the more or less beach between the causeway and the sea. It was true that directly under the wall I should be out of sight of the causeway guards, but then again, though I could get shelter behind some of the boulders, I could not move far without being noticed by whoever chose to patrol the jetty. Nevertheless, that was the only road for me, for my object was to get to the far end of the causeway, where there were olive yards and orchards before the cliffs began, through which some route must be possible to the house.

I considered the left side of the picture, where the valley led upward past the outbuildings. That way I could see no hope, for if I succeeded in passing the fagot stacks I would only reach the confines of the main entrance to the demesne from Kynætho, which was certain to be the best warded of all.

I had also to consider what to do with Janni. He would be a useful ally if it came to a scrap, but a scrap would be futile against such numbers and, in stalking or climbing, his one arm would be a serious handicap. Besides, if our business was to escape observation, one man would be better than two. But it was possible that he might create a diversion. Supposing he tried the road on the left up the valley and made himself conspicuous? He might draw off attention while I crossed the jetty and got under the lee of the causeway wall. That meant of course that one of us would be put out of action, but unless

we tried something of that kind, we should both fail.

I PUT the thing to him, as we lay among the scrubby arbutus, and if he clearly did not like the proposal, since his notion was to manhandle somebody on Maris' behalf, he was too good a soldier not to see the sense of it. He pointed out various difficulties, and then shook his head like a dog and said he agreed.

For his own sake, I forbade any shooting. If he were merely hunted and captured, it was unlikely that any harm would befall him. He could explain that he was one of the survey party who had lost the others, and at the worst he would be shut up temporarily in some barn. He might even find the means to make himself useful later in the day.

So it was settled that I should try to worm my way as near to the jetty as the cover would allow. He was to watch my movements, and when he saw my hand raised three times, he was to march boldly toward the jetty. I would not be able to see what was happening, so when he was pursued and started up the little valley, he was to shout as if in alarm. That would be the signal to me that the sentry had left the jetty and that I might try to cross it.

I started out at once on my first stage. As I have said, the cover was good—boulders overgrown with heath and vines and patches of arbutus and a very prickly thorn. I tried to behave as if I were on a Scotch hill, stalking alone, with deer where the sentries stood. It was not a very difficult passage, for my enemies had no eyes for the ground on my side, their business being to prevent egress from the house.

AFTER about half an hour's careful crawling, I found myself within six yards of the jetty, looking through the tangle to the rough masonry of it, with

a sideway view of the point where it joined the causeway. I could see none of the guards, but I heard distinctly the sound of their speech. I had marked the spot where I now lay before I started, and knew that it was within sight of Janni. So I straightened myself and thrice raised my arms above the scrub.

For a minute or two nothing happened. Janni must have started, but had not yet attracted attention. I raised my body as far as I dared, but I could only see the shoreward end of the jetty—neither the jetty itself nor any part of the causeway. I waited for a cry, but there was no sound. Was Janni being suffered to make his way up the little valley unopposed?

Then suddenly a moving object flashed into my narrow orbit of vision. It must be one of the watchers from the causeway, and he was in a furious hurry—I could hear the scruff of his heelless boots on the dry stones as he turned a corner. He must be in pursuit of Janni. There would no doubt be others, too, at the job. Their silence might be a ritual business. *Favete linguis*, perhaps? If Janni shouted, I never heard him.

I resolved to take the chance, and bolted out of cover to the jetty. In two bounds I was beyond it and among the gravel and weed of the farther beach. But in that short progress I saw enough of the landscape to know that I was undiscovered, that there was nobody on the causeway within sight or at the mouth of the little glen. Janni had certainly been followed, and by this time was no doubt in the hands of the Philistines and out of my ken.

I ran close under the lee of the sea wall and at first I had a wild hope of getting beyond the causeway into the region of the olive groves before the sentries returned. But some remnant of prudence made me halt and consider before I attempted the last open strip

of beach. There, I had a view of the bit of the causeway toward the jetty, and suddenly figures appeared on it, running figures, like men returning to duty after a hasty interlude. If I had moved another foot, I would have been within view.

There was nothing for it but to wait where I was. I crouched in a little nook between a fallen boulder and the wall, with the weedy rim of the causeway six feet above me. Unless a man stood on the very edge and peered down, I was safe from observation. But that was the sum of my blessings. I heard soft feet above me as the men returned to their posts, and I dared not move a yard.

It was now about two in the afternoon; I had brought no food with me, though I found a couple of dusty figs in my pocket; the sun blazed on the white wall and the gravel of the shore till the heat was like a bakehouse; I was hot and thirsty, and I might have been in the middle of the Sahara for all the chance of a drink. But the discomfort of my body was trivial compared to the disquiet of my mind.

For I found myself in a perfect fever of vexation and fear. The time was slipping past and the crisis was nigh, and yet, though this was now my fourth day on the island, I was not an inch farther forward than the hour I landed. My worst fears—nay, what had seemed to me mere crazy imaginings—had been realized. I was tortured by the thought of Kore—her innocent audacities, her great-hearted courage, her loneliness, her wild graces.

“Beauteous vain endeavor”—that was the phrase of some poet that haunted me and made me want to howl like a wolf. I realized now the meaning of a sacrifice and the horror of it. The remembrance of the slim victor in the race, beautiful and pitiless, made me half crazy. Movement in that place was nearly impossible, but it was ut-

terly impossible that I should stay still. I began in short stages to worm my way along the foot of the wall.

I do not suppose that the heat of that April afternoon was anything much to complain of, but my fever of mind must have affected my body, for I felt that I had never been so scorched and baked in my life. There was not a scrap of shade; the rocks almost blistered the hand; the dust got into my throat and nose and made me furiously thirsty; and my head ached as if I had a sunstroke.

The trouble was with the jetty and the watchers on it, for I was always in view of them. Had they detected a movement below the wall, a single glance would have revealed me. So I had to make my stages very short, and keep a wary outlook behind.

There seemed to be much astir on the jetty. Not only the guards, but other figures appeared on it, and I saw that they were carrying up something from a boat at anchor. That I think was what saved me. Had the sentries had nothing to do but to stare about them, I must have been discovered, but the portage business kept them distracted.

The minutes seemed hours to my distraught mind, but I did indeed take an inconceivable time crawling along that grilling beach, with the cool sea water lapping not a dozen yards off, to put an edge on my discomfort. When I reached the point where the causeway ceased, and long ribs of rock took the place of the boulders of the shore, I found that it was nearly six o'clock.

The discovery put quicksilver into my weary limbs. Looking back I saw that I was out of sight of the jetty, and that a few yards would put me out of sight of the causeway. I wriggled into the cover of a bush of broom, lay on my back for a minute or two to rest, and then made for the shade of the olive yards.

THE place was weedy and neglected —I don't know anything about olive culture, but I could see that much. There was a wilderness of a white, umbelliferous plant and masses of a thing like a spineless thistle. I pushed uphill among the trees, keeping well in the shade, with the west front of the Arabin house glimmering through the upper leaves at a much higher elevation. Above me I saw a deeper shadow which I took to be cypresses, and beyond them I guessed must lie the demesne. I hoped for a gate, and in any case expected no more than a hedge and a palisade.

Instead, I found a wall. There was a door to be sure, but it was no use to me, for it was massive and locked. I might have known that Shelley Arabin would leave no part of his cursed refuge unbarricaded. I sat and blinked up at this new obstacle, and could have cried with exasperation. It seemed to run direct from the house to the edge of the cliffs, which began about a quarter of a mile to my right, and was an exact replica of the wall above the Dancing Floor.

I decided that it was no good trying it at the house end, for there I should certainly be in view of some of the guards. The masonry was comparatively new and very solid, and since none of the olive trees grew within four yards of it, it was impossible to use them as a ladder. Already I felt the approach of night, for the sun was well down in the west and a great golden tide of sunset was flooding the sky. I do not think I have ever before felt so hopeless or so obstinate. I was determined to pass that wall by its abutment on the cliffs or break my neck in the effort.

My memory of the next hour is not very clear. All I know is that in the failing daylight I came to the cliff's edge and found an abutment similar to the one at the Dancing Floor. It was

similar, but not the same. For here some storm had torn the masonry and it seemed to me that it might be turned. The rock fell steep and smooth to the sea, but that part which was the handiwork of man was ragged. I took off my boots and flung them over the wall, by way of a gauge of battle, and then I started to make the traverse.

It was a slow and abominable business, but I do not think it would have been very difficult had the light been good, for the stone was hard enough and the cracks were many. But in that dim gloaming, with a purple void beneath me, with a heart which would not beat steadily, and a head which throbbed with pain, I found it very near the limit of my powers. I had to descend before I could traverse, and the worst part was the ascent on the far side. I know that, when I at last got a grip of a wind-twisted shrub and tried to draw myself over the brink, it needed every ounce of strength left in me. I managed it and lay gasping beside the roots of a great pine—inside the demesne at last.

WHEN I got my breath, I found that I had a view into the narrow cove, where Janni and I had seen the boat. Black George had returned, and returned brazenly, for he was showing a riding light. A lantern swung from the mast and there was a glow from the cabin skylight. I wondered what was going on in the little craft, and I think the sight gave me a grain of comfort, till I realized that I was hopelessly cut off from Black George. What was the good of a link with the outer world, when unscalable walls and cliffs intervened—when at any moment murder might be the end of everything?

Murder—that was the word which filled my head as I pushed inland. I had never thought of it in that way, but of course I was out to prevent murder. To prevent it? More likely to

share in it! I had no plan of any kind, only a desire to be with Kore, so that she should not be alone. It was her loneliness that I could not bear. And anyhow I had a pistol and I would not miss the runner. "The priest who slew the slayer and shall himself be slain"—the tag came unbidden to my lips. I think I must have been rather light-headed.

The last fires of the sunset did not penetrate far into the pine wood, the moon had not yet risen and, as I ran, I took many tosses, for the place was very dark. There were paths, but I neglected them, making straight for where I believed the house lay.

I was not exact in my course, for I bore too much to the right in the direction of the breach in the wall at the Dancing Floor. Soon I was among shrubberies in which rides had been cut, but there were still many tall trees to make darkness. I thought I saw to the right, beyond where the wall lay, a reddish glow. That would be the torches on the Dancing Floor where the people waited for the epiphany.

Suddenly on my left front a great blaze shot up to heaven. I knew it was the signal that the hour had come. The outbuildings had been fired, and the house would soon be in flames. The blaze wavered and waned, and then waxed to a mighty conflagration as the fire reached something specially inflammable. In a minute that wood was bright, as if with daylight. The tree trunks stood out black against a molten gold, which at times crimsoned and purpled in a devilish ecstasy of destruction.

I knew now where the house lay. I clutched my pistol, and ran down a broad path, with a horrid fear that I was too late after all. I ran blindly, and had just time to step aside to let two figures pass.

They were two of the guards—hill-men by their dress—and even in my

absorption I wondered what had happened to them. For they were like men demented, with white faces and open mouths. One of them stumbled and fell, and seemed to stay on his knees for a second praying, till his companion lugged him forward. I might have faced them with impunity, for their eyes were sightless. Never have I seen men suffering from such extreme terror.

The road twisted too much for my haste, so I cut across country. The surge and crackle of the flames filled the air, but it seemed as if I heard another sound, the sound of running feet, of bodies, many bodies, crashing through the thickets. I was close on the house now, and close on the road which led to it from the broken wall and the Dancing Floor. As I jumped a patch of scrub and the gloom brightened in the more open avenue, I bumped into another man and saw that it was Maris.

He was waiting, pistol in hand, beside the road, and in a trice had his gun at my head. Then he recognized me and lowered it. His face was as crazy as the hillmen's who had passed me, and he still wore nothing but breeches and a ragged shirt, but his wild eyes seemed to hold also a dancing humor.

"You have come in time!" he whispered. "The fools are about to receive their gods. You have your pistol? But I do not think there will be shooting."

He choked suddenly as if he had been struck dumb, and I, too, choked. For I looked with him up the avenue toward the burning house.

CHAPTER XIX.

WITH RECKLESS COURAGE.

THIS part of the story—said Leithen—I can only give at secondhand. I have pieced it together as well as I could from what Vernon told me, but on many matters he was naturally not

communicative, and at these I have had to guess for myself.

Vernon left England the day after the talk with me which I have already recorded, sending his boat as deck cargo to Patras, while he followed by way of Venice. He had a notion that the great hour which was coming had best be met at sea, where he would be far from the distractions and little-nesses of life. He took one man with him from Wyvenhoe, a lean gypsy lad called Martell, but the boy fell sick at Corfu and Vernon was obliged to send him home.

In his stead, he found an Epirote with a string of names, who was strongly recommended to him by one of his colleagues in the old Ægean secret service. From Patras, they made good sailing up the Gulf of Corinth and, passing through the canal, came in the last days of March to the Piræus. In that place of polyglot speech, whistling engines and the odor of gas works, they delayed only for water and supplies, and presently had rounded Sunium, and were beating up the Euripus with the Attic hills rising sharp and clear in the spring sunlight.

Vernon had no plans. It was a joy to him to be alone with the racing seas and the dancing winds, to scud past the little headlands, pink and white with blossoms, or to lie of a night in some hidden bay beneath the thymy crags. He had discarded the clothes of civilization. In a blue jersey and old corduroy trousers, bareheaded and barefooted, he steered his craft and waited on the passing of the hours.

His mood, he has told me, was one of complete happiness, unshadowed by nervousness or doubt. The long preparation was almost at an end. Like an acolyte before a temple gate, he believed himself to be on the threshold of a new life. He had that sense of unseen hands which comes to all men once or twice in their lives, and both

hope and fear were swallowed up in a calm expectancy.

Trouble began under the snows of Pelion as they turned the north end of Eubœa. On the morning of the first Monday in April, the light winds died away, and foul weather came out of the northwest. By midday, it was half a gale, and in those yeasty, shallow seas, with an iron coast to port and starboard, their position was dangerous. The nearest harbor was twenty miles distant, and neither of the crew had ever been there before. With the evening the gale increased, and it was decided to get out of that maze of rocky islands to the safer deeps of the Ægean.

It was a hard night for the two of them, and there was no chance of sleep. More by luck than skill they escaped the butt of Skiathos, and the first light found them far to the southeast among the long tides of the north Ægean. They ran close-reefed before the gale, and all morning with decks awash nosed and plunged in seas which might have been the wintry Atlantic. It was not till the afternoon that the gale seemed to blow itself out, and two soaked and chilly mortals could relax their vigil. Some bacon was frizzling on the stove, and hot coffee and dry clothes restored them to moderate comfort.

THE sky cleared, and in sunlight with the dregs of the gale behind him, Vernon steered for the nearest land, an island of which he did not trouble to read the name, but which the chart showed to possess good anchorage. Late in the evening, when the light was growing dim, they came into a little bay carved from the side of a hill. They also came into fog. The wind had dropped utterly, and the land which they saw was only an outline in the haze.

When they cast anchor, the fog was rolling like a tide over the sea, and muffling their yards. They spent a

busy hour or two, repairing the damage of the storm, and then the two of them made such a meal as befits those who have faced danger together. Afterward, Vernon, as his custom was, sat alone in the stern, smoking and thinking his thoughts. He wrote up his diary with a ship's lantern beside him, while the mist hung about him, low and soft as an awning.

He had leisure now for the thought which had all day been at the back of his mind. The night—the great night—had passed and there had been no dream. The adventure for which all his life he had been preparing himself had vanished into the Ægean tides. The hour when the revelation should have come had been spent in battling with the storm, when a man lives in the minute, at grips with too urgent realities.

His first mood was one of dismal relaxedness. He felt as useless as an unstrung bow. I, the only man to whom he had ever confided his secret, had been right, and the long vigil had ended in fiasco. He tried to tell himself that it was a relief, that an old folly was over, but he knew that deep down in his heart there was bitter disappointment.

The Fates had prepared the stage, and rung up the curtain and lo! there was no play. He had been fooled, and somehow the zest and savor of life had gone from him. After all, no man can be strung high and then find his preparations idle, without suffering a cruel recoil.

And then anger came to stiffen him—anger at himself. What a fool he had been, frittering away his best years in following a phantom! In his revulsion, he began to loathe the dream which he had cherished so long. He began to explain it away with the common sense which on my lips he had accounted blasphemy. The regular seasonal occurrence was his own doing—

he had expected it and it had come—a mere case of subjective compulsion.

The fact that each year the revelation had moved one room nearer was also the result of his willing it to be so, for unconsciously he must have desired to hasten the consummation. He went through every detail, obstinately providing some rationalistic explanation for each. I do not think he can have satisfied himself, but he was in the mood to deface his idols, and one feeling surged above all others—that he was done with fancies now and forever. He has told me that the thing he longed for chiefly at that moment was to have me beside him, that he might make formal recantation.

By and by he argued himself into some philosophy. He had dallied certain years, but he was still young and the world was before him. He had kept his body and mind in hard training and that, at any rate, was not wasted, though the primal purpose had gone. He was a normal man now among normal men, and it was his business to prove himself. He thought that the bogus vision might have been sent to him for a purpose—the thing might be hallucination, but the asceticism which it had entailed was solid gain.

HE fetched from his locker the little book in which he had chronicled his inner life, and wrote in it "Finis." Then he locked it again and flung the key overboard. The volume would be kept at Severns to remind him of his folly, but it would never be opened by him.

By this time he was his own master again. He would sail for England next morning and get hold of me and make a plan for his life.

He was now conscious for the first time of his strange environment. The boat was in a half moon of bay in an island of which he had omitted to notice the name, but whose latitude and

longitude he roughly knew. The night was close around him like a shell, for the fog had grown thicker, though the moon behind it gave it an opaque sheen. It was an odd place in which to be facing a crisis.

His thoughts ran fast ahead, to the career which he must shape from the ruins of his dream. He was too late for the bar. Business might be the best course—he had big interests in the north of England which would secure him a footing and he believed that he had the kind of mind for administration. Or politics? There were many chances for a young man in the confused post-bellum world.

He was absorbed in his meditations and did not hear the sound of oars or the grating of a boat alongside. Suddenly he found a face looking at him in the ring of lamplight—an old, bearded face, curiously wrinkled. The eyes, which were shrewd and troubled, scanned him for a second or two, and then a voice spoke:

"Will the signor come with me?" it asked, in French.

Vernon, amazed at this apparition which had come out of the mist, could only stare.

"Will the signor come with me?" the voice spoke again. "We have grievous need of a man."

Vernon unconsciously spoke not in French, but in Greek.

"Who the devil are you, and where do you come from?"

"I come from the house. I saw you enter the bay before the fog fell. Had there been no fog, they would not have let me come to you."

"Who are 'they?'" Vernon asked, but the old man shook his head.

"Come with me and I will tell you. It is a long story."

"But what do you want me to do? Confound it, I'm not going off with a man I never saw before who can't tell me what he wants."

The old man shrugged his shoulders despairingly. "I have no words," he said. "But Mademoiselle Elise is waiting at the jetty. Come to her at any rate and she will reason with you."

Vernon—as you will admit, if I have made his character at all clear to you—had no instinct for melodrama. He had nothing in him of the knight-errant looking for adventure, and this interruption out of the fog and the sea rather bored him than otherwise. But he was too young to be able to refuse such an appeal. He went below and fetched his revolver and an electric torch, which he stuffed into a trouser pocket. He cried to the Epirote to expect him when he saw him, for he was going ashore.

"All right!" said Vernon, then. "I'll come and see what the trouble is."

He dropped over the yacht's side into the cockleshell of a boat, and the old man took up the sculls. The yacht must have anchored nearer land than he had thought, for in five minutes they had touched a shelving rock. Somebody stood there with a lantern which made a dull glow in the fog.

Vernon made out a middle-aged woman with the air and dress of a lady's maid. She held the lantern close to him for a moment, and then turned wearily to the other. "Fool, Mitri!" she cried. "You have brought a peasant."

"Nay," said the old man, "he is no peasant. He is a signor, I tell you."

The woman again passed the light of her lantern over Vernon's face and figure. "His dress is a peasant's, but such clothes may be a nobleman's whim. I have heard it of the English."

"I am English," said Vernon, in French.

She turned on him with a quick movement of relief.

"You are English—and a gentleman? But I know nothing of you—only that you have come out of the sea.

Up in the house we women are alone, and my mistress has death to face, or a worse than death. We have no claim on you, and if you give us your service it means danger—oh, what danger! See, the boat is there! You can return in it and go away, and forget that you have been near this accursed place. But, monsieur, if you hope for heaven and have pity on a defenseless angel, you will not leave us."

Vernon's blood was slow to stir and, as I have said, he had no instinct for melodrama. This gesticulating French maid was like something out of an indifferently play.

"Who is your mistress?" he asked. "Did she send you for me?"

The woman flung up her hands. "I will speak the truth. My mistress does not know you are here. Only Mitri and I saw you. She will not ask help, for she is foolishly confident. She is proud and fearless, and will not believe the evidence of her eyes. She must be saved in spite of herself. I fear for her and also for myself, for the whole house is doomed."

"But, mademoiselle, you can't expect me to intrude uninvited on your mistress. What is her name? What do you want me to do?"

She clutched his arm and spoke low and rapidly in his ear: "She is the last of her line, you must know—a girl with a wild estate and a father dead these many months. She is good and gracious, as I can bear witness, but she is young and cannot govern the wolves who are the men of these parts. They have a long hatred of her house and now they have it rumored that she is a witch who blights the crops and slays the children.

"Once, twice, they have cursed our threshold and made the blood mark on the door," she went on. "We are prisoners now, you figure. They name her Basilissa, meaning "the Queen of Hell," and there is no babe but will faint with

fright if it casts eyes on her, and she as mild and innocent as Mother Mary! The word has gone round to burn the witch out, for the winter has been cruel and they blame their sorrows on her. The hour is near, and unless salvation comes, she will certainly go to God in the fire."

There was something in the hoarse, excited voice which forbade Vernon to dismiss lightly this extraordinary tale. The woman was patently terrified and sincere. It might be a trap, but he had his pistol, and from an old man and a woman he had nothing to fear. On the other hand, there might be some desperate need which he could not disregard. It seemed to him that he was bound to inquire farther.

"I am willing to go to your mistress," he said, and the woman, murmuring "God's mercy!" led the way up a steep causeway to some rocky steps cut into a tamarisk thicket.

She stopped halfway to whisper an injunction to go quietly. "They cannot see us in this blessed fog," she whispered, "but they may hear us." Then to Vernon: "They watch us like wild beasts, monsieur. Their sentries do not permit us to leave the house, but this night the kind God has fooled them. But they cannot be far off, and they have quick ears."

THE three crept up the rock staircase made slippery by the mist. Presently a great wall of masonry rose above them, and what seemed the aperture of a door.

"Once," the woman whispered, "there were three such posterns, but two were walled up by my lady's father—walled up within, with the door left standing. This our enemies do not know and they watch all three, but this the least, for it looks unused. Behold their work!"

Vernon saw that tall bundles of brushwood had been laid around the

door, which had with difficulty been pushed back when it was opened.

"But what——" he began.

"It means that they would burn us," she whispered swiftly. "Now, monsieur, do you believe my tale, and, believing, does your courage fail you?"

To Vernon, shy, placid, a devotee of all the conventions, it was beginning to seem a monstrous thing to enter this strange house at the bidding of two servants, primed with a crazy tale, to meet an owner who had given no sign of desiring his presence. A woman, too—apparently a young woman. The thing was hideously embarrassing, the more so as he suddenly realized that he was barefooted, and clad in his old jersey and corduroys.

I think he would have drawn back except for the sight of the fagots—that and the woman's challenge to his courage. He had been "dared" like a schoolboy, and after twenty-four-hours' fighting with storms and the shattering of the purpose of a lifetime he was in that half-truculent, half-reckless mood which is prone to accept a challenge. There was business afoot, it appeared, ugly business.

"Go on. I will see your mistress," he said.

With a key the old man unlocked the door. The lock must have been recently oiled, for it moved easily. The three now climbed a staircase which seemed to follow the wall of a round tower. Presently they came into a stone hall, with ancient hangings like the banners in a church. From the open frame of the lantern a second was kindled, and the two lights showed a huge, desolate place with crumbling mosaics on the floor and plaster dropping from the walls and cornices. There was no furniture of any kind and the place smelled damp and chilly like a vault.

"These are unused chambers," the woman said, and her voice was no longer hushed, but high-pitched with

excitement. "We live only on the landward side."

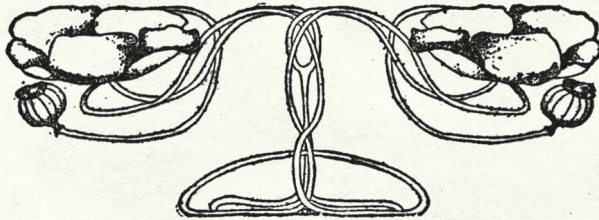
Another heavy door was unlocked, and they entered a corridor where the air blew warmer, and there was a hint of that indescribable scent which comes from human habitation. The woman stopped and consulted in whispers with the old man. Now that she had got Vernon inside, her nervousness seemed

to have increased. She turned to him at last:

"I must prepare my mistress. If monsieur will be so good, he will wait here till I return for him."

She opened a door and almost pushed Vernon within. He found himself in black darkness, while the flicker of the lantern vanished round a bend in the corridor.

To be concluded in the next issue of THE POPULAR, on the news stands June 20th.



THE BIRTH OF A NEW LITERATURE

WE all are more or less familiar with Webster's general dictionary; some of us who are professional men make use of such repositories of the specialized word as: medical dictionaries, law lexicons, biblical concordances, aids to the study of the classics, etc. But there is another kind of lexicon which we do not know so well, if at all—and it is not of recent origin—and that is the dictionary of tramp language. Ever since Martin Luther appended a tramp dictionary to his "Liber Vagatorum" in 1528, tramps, hobos, and wanderers of all sorts have had a robust and oftentimes charming language of their own, the cause of the inception and maintenance of which can be attributed to humor, to the necessity for secret communication and to the spirit of invention which is fed by a life of untrammelled individuality. And as America boasts a self-reliant colony of tramps, it is not surprising to find the following words and expressions current among our knights of the road and even occupying an increasingly important position in the national literature. A "boomer" is a migratory worker, such as a telegraph operator, an electrician, or a brakeman. A policeman is called a "bull." A hobo conveys the meaning of "to beg" by the words, "mooch," "batter," and "buzz." "Be George" is good picaresque for "to understand," "to be wise." A doctor is known as a "crocus," evidently derived from the slang expression "to croak," "to die." A hotel or lodging house is called a "doss house." "The jungle" is a name applied to a hobo camp. A "jocker" is a tramp who trains young boys to steal, and "ghost stories" are the tales told to these young lads to entice them onto the road. And from these very few examples of an extensive hobo vocabulary, we can readily perceive what real poetry there is in the man who daily rides our fast freight across the prairies and over the mountains of these States.



Breakfast at the Plaza

By Fred MacIsaac

Author of "Ice," "Regular People," Etc.

It may happen to you, as it may happen to any one—but it's not likely to; the odds are too long for any comfort to be had in reflecting upon your chances. But it did happen to Rufus Wilkins, and that is our present urgent concern. When a clerk breakfasts at the Hotel Plaza, he usually receives no more than a mighty good meal and an uncomfortably large check. Both were Rufus Wilkins' portion, as was the conversation that he overheard, and that started him upon a series of business operations, the success of which reads like selected clippings from Wall Street's book of golden, overnight fortunes.

THIS story can happen but once in a lifetime—and it happens in very few lifetimes at all. It's all wrong, no question about it, and the author should be expelled from the author's union, if he happens to be a member.

But what are you going to do when you are dealing with facts? Should you distort them to conform with copy-book maxims, or lay them down fearlessly and ask what the other fellow has got?

There was a chap named Rufus Wilkins who had worked up to be chief clerk in the office of Felton Amalga-

mators, which are something that you fasten to something else which gives better results than if you didn't—at least, the salesmen so claim.

Rufus Wilkins had graduated from Columbia at the usual age, full of pep and education and with so much ambition that it didn't look as if anything could stop him from being the youngest bank president or the most successful captain of industry at the age of thirty that the world had ever known. Something stopped him; it was a blond stenographer he married a year after he got a job. If she were not enough of an obstacle, she presented him with

three assistant obstacles, named Mary, Eloise and William, during the next six years.

So we find Rufus Wilkins, Columbia, 1910, at the age of thirty-five, asleep in his bed in his flat in East Forty-ninth Street upon the morning when this truthful tale begins. As a result of sixteen years of close attention to business, Rufus had risen to be chief clerk in the executive office of Felton Amalgamators, with a salary of sixty-five dollars per week and a reputation for punctuality and dependability that must have been very gratifying to the high officers of the company, if they knew of it.

He had a bank balance of about two hundred and thirty-five dollars. If all his creditors were assembled in one spot at the same moment, it would have looked like the annual meeting of some popular society. Mrs. Wilkins had been one of the prettiest stenographers who ever misspelled a word, and she had developed into an obese lady who thought the world was treating her badly and it was her husband's fault. Rufus himself was no longer the dashing youth of Columbia, class of 1910; his ambition had lowered its aim until it was pointed only at holding his job. Most of his hair had gone; he had developed one of those bookkeeper's mustaches, wore nose glasses, ready-made clothes and an air of apology.

Just the same, Rufus Wilkins was not an ordinary bookkeeper. There was something in him, a remnant of the fire of youth, a justification for an expensive education. To look at him, you wouldn't think it was there, but if he had been a regulation bookkeeper he wouldn't have done what we are about to relate.

SO he was asleep in bed on this spring morning, sleeping as peacefully as though he had not forgotten to set the alarm clock, and was already late

for work. He went right on sleeping, past seven thirty, eight thirty, nine thirty and ten thirty. For the first time since his marriage, he woke up without being nudged, woke up completely rested, full of satisfied nerves, with a sense of well-being most unfamiliar to him.

For a moment he blinked contentedly at the bright light. Then he wondered where the family might be. Ah! He remembered that they had departed in a body the previous afternoon to visit his wife's father, who was dangerously ill, probably about to die. If there was any doubt of it, the arrival of the Wilkins contingent would cause him to make up his mind.

By the time, Rufus got dressed and bathed and shaved it would be noon, half a day gone. Why not be hanged for a sheep instead of a lamb and take the whole day off? Heaven knew he was entitled to a holiday, if any man in the organization might be. A holiday without a clamoring wife and sticky children to absorb his attention, a day in which he was absolutely free! He fondled the idea until it became a determination.

Grinning like a truant schoolboy, he called his office and asked to be connected with the second vice president, John Thompson, his boss.

"This is Wilkins, Mr. Thompson," he said. "I won't be able to be down to-day."

"You won't? Why not? A heck of a time you selected to tell me. Things are all balled up because you are not down already. What's the matter with you?"

The lack of consideration evinced by the second vice president toward the man whose punctuality was a byword in the office slightly angered Rufus Wilkins.

"I'm not sick," he retorted. "I just happen to be unable to come to the office."

"If you're not sick, what in Hades is the matter with you?"

"A private matter."

"Attend to your private matters outside of office hours. I need you right away. Jump into a taxi and be here in half an hour."

A streak of stubbornness developed in the bookkeeper. He had waited long for this holiday and the second vice president was not going to bully him out of it.

"Sorry, Mr. Thompson," he said calmly. "I won't be down to-day."

"But I have to have those estimates on the Grew job!"

"Get somebody else to do them."

"Nobody here knows the facts."

"Then they'll have to wait until tomorrow."

His impudence almost terrified him. He cringed, for he expected Thompson to say:

"If you can't come now, don't come at all. You are fired."

Thompson, however, did not say that. He sputtered, grumbled and finally remarked: "If your business is so important, all right."

Wilkins hung up, then smirked at his reflection in the mirror. The telephone conversation had been a triumph, for it had convinced him of something that he had long suspected—his standing in the office was secure. An ordinary clerk who would not explain the reason for his absence and who refused the appeal of his boss to do a certain piece of work would have landed on his ear on the sidewalk. Thompson had caved in, and Wilkins knew that they couldn't afford to discharge him.

By George, he felt like a fighting cock! He had talked back to the second vice president and got away with it. Now he was free, nothing to bother him, no wife or children around. Why, he was like a bachelor, a clubman, a man about town! What the deuce would he do with his leisure?

Well, he wouldn't cook his own breakfast. He would don his best suit, buy a flower for his buttonhole and breakfast in the Hotel Plaza. It would set him back a couple of dollars, that breakfast, but this was a red-letter day, a fellow was entitled to indulge himself, once in fifteen years.

Half an hour later, Rufus Wilkins strolled out of his two-by-four apartment near Third Avenue in the East Forties, and sauntered through pleasant side streets to Fifth Avenue, where he joined the well-dressed and leisurely throng which moved slowly northward.

Entering the sunny breakfast room of the big hotel, he allowed the head waiter to conduct him to a well-located table. There he settled himself, ordered a few dishes from the menu and accepted the morning newspaper from an attentive waiter.

THE room was not full; it was dotted with rich-looking and contented gentlemen and a few rather plump and expensive-appearing ladies. He glanced leisurely over the front page of the newspaper, then let his eyes wander about the room.

Crash!

It was the collapse of his pretense. Only a few tables away were two men, one of them, a portly, red-faced and irascible-looking person, was no other than Benjamin R. Felton, president of Felton Amalgamators.

Caught!

Rufus ducked down behind his open newspaper, knowing that it was only a temporary refuge. Presently they would set food in front of him, and he would be forced to lay down the journal and eat. Then Felton would see him, demand to know what he was doing there and why he wasn't at the office.

For fifteen years Wilkins had been seeing Felton, though the president rarely spoke to him. The old man rep-

resented Jove with his thunderbolts; minor gods transmitted his instructions. Of course Felton would know his chief clerk, and though Thompson hadn't felt like discharging him Felton would do it without hesitation.

Like a condemned criminal waiting for the order of execution, Rufus cowered behind his newspaper and heard the president ordering breakfast for himself and his companion.

By and by, the waiter, with a breakfast in dishes with silver covers, stood expectantly before Wilkins. He ignored the servitor as long as he could, but, in the end, surrendered. Rufus folded and put down his paper. Mr. Felton looked at him—and through him.

His heart stopped beating for a second as the old man gazed, then shifted his eyes to his plate. Glory be, the president had not recognized him!

Of course it was not extraordinary, after all. Felton knew Wilkins when he wore his office face and suit; in his proper environment the president would have recognized him instantly. The Plaza, however, was not his regular environment, and Wilkins did not wear his nervous, business-wracked, sleep-lacking office face.

Instead, Mr. Felton saw an ordinary, well-dressed man of thirty-five or forty, who seemed in some way familiar. Very likely he had noticed this man on previous occasions in the breakfast room of the big hotel. Felton had only given him a casual glance, and did not consider him further.

However, the danger was not over. Wilkins fell upon his food and tried to keep his face down; his idea was to eat rapidly and get away before the big boss threw him a second, and perhaps recognizing, glance.

HE could overhear the conversation at the president's table; as it was shop talk, it interested him. It seemed that Felton's companion was one of

those wonderful persons called super-salesmen, the rare kind who evade purchasing agents and deal directly with big executives. This man was trying to land a big order of something. As Wilkins' superior, Mr. Thompson, was purchasing agent for the company, and as Wilkins actually did most of the investigating and made the recommendations for purchases, in his opinion, he was justified in his eavesdropping.

The conversation was exciting. The salesman represented an importer who had come into possession of a huge shipment of Chilean zennite, an ingredient which entered into the construction of the Amalgamators. It seemed that the importer had secured two thousand tons of the metal, through the failure of a foreign firm to complete payment for it, and was able to dispose of it at five cents a pound less than the market price, provided the entire shipment was taken. They did not have much time to waste on Felton; other amalgamator companies were in the market and President Felton would have to decide immediately if he would buy.

Zennite was ordinarily purchased by the hundred pounds. Two thousand tons would last Felton two or three years. As the market price was twelve cents per pound and it was being offered to him at seven cents, it seemed a bargain, but it meant a big investment. Naturally Felton talked terms.

"If you will accept a payment of fifty thousand dollars and take notes covering two years, coming due three months apart, I might consider your proposition," said the old man.

"We have to have a hundred thousand dollars cash."

"I can't do it."

"Let me step to the telephone. Perhaps we can come to terms," said the salesman.

Felton waved his hand. The salesman rose and walked out of the room.

Rufus Wilkins was in a terrible predicament. He knew all about zennite; he was, perhaps, the only man in America who did know all about it. He knew that the Chilean government had been holding since the war some twenty thousand tons of zennite, upon which the foreign buyers had defaulted payment. If the Chileans released two thousand tons of it, it meant to Wilkins that they intended to throw it all on the market, as fast as they could get rid of it.

When the news got out, the bottom would fall out of the market and shipments to come would be sold for very much lower prices than the seven cents per pound which Felton proposed to pay. The Felton Amalgamators would be loaded with a commodity which its competitors would be able to buy more cheaply and would be forced to go through with the bargain, because the selling concern held its notes as security for payment.

Wilkins was a very thorough person. Everybody had forgotten this hoard of zennite in the hands of Chile, because it was eight years since they had seized it. Twenty thousand tons was considerably more than the world's yearly production of the metal. Even with the Chileans dribbling it out a tenth of their supply at a time, the price would flop on them and they would get only a cent or two for their last few shipments.

Felton's competitors, buying at such prices, could undersell him and put him out of business. Wilkins had never forgotten the Chilean supply of zennite and had always expected it to come out some day; therefore he had seen to it that the company was never oversupplied with the stuff. Probably the president had gone over his supplies, seen that he had very little zennite ahead, and had grasped at what he thought was a bargain, without consulting his office.

AS an employee, it was Rufus' duty to warn the president instantly. To do so, however, meant to introduce himself, to call attention to his own absence from duty, to permit Felton to know that a clerk was giving himself airs in an expensive hotel. Suppose the old man refused to listen to him, put the deal through and fired him? Rufus' knowledge that the company would be out of business in two or three years would be small satisfaction for his own starvation and the suffering of his wife and children.

The world is full of capable, competent men who have a delusion that there is no other job for them than the one they hold; once out from under cover, they believe they will die of unaccustomed exposure.

Wilkins was loyal to Felton's; he had seen the rise of the company; he could not stand by to see it fall when he could save it. Even if he was to be fired, he could not permit the president to be tricked in this manner. He pushed back his chair, with the boldness of desperation, and sauntered over to his employer.

"How do you do, Mr. Felton!" he said, trying to appear confident and assured.

Felton looked up pleasantly. "Good morning, Mr.—er—aw—"

"Wilkins, sir."

"Wilkins! *Wilkins!*" Recognition dawned upon the old man; his face grew stern. "What are you doing here at this hour?"

"Never mind that now," advised the clerk. "Fortunately I overheard that bunk the man who just left was handing you. You didn't fall for it, did you?"

"How dare you question me? How dare to listen to my conversation?" exclaimed the president, who pushed back his own chair and stood up with a flushed face.

"I've been working for you for fif-

teen years and I don't want to see the company ruined," said Rufus.

"It need interest you no longer! You are fired!"

"Sssh! He's coming back," warned Wilkins. "Listen! There are eighteen thousand tons more of zennite coming out of Chile, after you've bought this shipload."

"All right, Mr. Felton," said the salesman heartily, as he pulled out his chair, but remained standing because of the intruder. "The boss says that he will take fifty thousand dollars from you, but no other concern could get such terms."

"I have an important office matter to discuss with this gentleman," said Felton, rather embarrassed. "This is Mr. Wilkins—Mr. Monahan. If you will excuse me for a moment, I'll step outside with him."

"Meanwhile, I'll tell them that we have closed," remarked Monahan.

"Not so fast!" returned Felton. "I haven't accepted your terms yet."

Monahan concealed his anger with a bland smile. "Don't delay too long. We have several salesmen out," he warned.

"I'll chance it. Come, Mr. Wilkins."

They walked into the lobby, where Felton confronted his clerk excitedly.

"Now, young man, repeat what you were saying in there!"

"I'm through," said Wilkins quietly. "I'm discharged."

"Don't be an ass!" said the president hastily. "I was a bit hasty, but I couldn't understand why you were not at the office. Never mind that now. How do you know there are eighteen thousand tons of this stuff to be released?"

"It's my business to know," replied Wilkins. "I read Spanish and, since we have been buying this stuff, I have been reading the Valparaiso papers. I know they took over from their own people some twenty thousand tons of

zennite in 1917. They have held it, waiting for a favorable time to sell it. There is a new government down there that wants cash and it is evidently shipping the stuff out quietly. This fellow told you that they were getting it from the Chilean government. What more proof do you need?"

"Thompson talked this purchase over with me. Why didn't he know about this twenty thousand tons?"

"He should have," returned Wilkins. "I told him about it six years ago. There has never been an occasion to speak of it since, and I suppose he forgot it."

"Hum! Damn expensive bit of forgetfulness! I'll have your statement verified, Mr. Wilkins, and meanwhile I'll let somebody else secure Mr. Monahan's bargain. If what you say is true, the price of zennite will drop to nothing. Go right down to the office and tell Mr. Thompson not to buy anything until I see him."

"He wouldn't make any purchase without consulting me," said Wilkins jauntily.

"Indeed! Hurry along now."

But Wilkins was still suffering from his dementia.

"Pardon me, Mr. Felton, but I have urgent private business which keeps me from the office to-day. I have already informed Mr. Thompson of this."

The president regarded him speculatively. "It's fortunate your private business brought you to the next table. Do you mind phoning the message to Mr. Thompson?"

"Not at all, sir."

"Thank you, Mr. Wilkins."

THE old gentleman returned to the dining room, but Wilkins phoned the office and, finding Thompson out, left the message for him. Then Rufus paid the waiter for his breakfast—for the man was hovering outside the phone booth with his check—passed through

the lobby and stood upon the steps of the hotel, contemplating the lovely spring day. There was a touch on his shoulder and he turned to see the angry countenance of Monahan, the super-salesman, much too close to his own to be friendly.

"Say," demanded the salesman, "what in hell did you say to old Felton to spoil my sale?"

Wilkins regarded him coldly. While he might be afraid of the president, he wasn't worried about salesmen, to-day or any other day.

"I gave him certain information."

"What information?" demanded the man less truculently. "I offered him one of the biggest bargains ever set before a business man. He was ready to close when you butted in and handed him some bunk. What was it?"

Wilkins was a free man on this day. He had escaped with credit from a great danger a few minutes before, and he was unperturbed. His brain was well oiled and functioning smoothly. That the salesman was really perplexed indicated to him that the man himself was deceived, that he did not know that he was selling something not worth selling. And it occurred to Rufus Wilkins that his information might be of great value to the seller, as well as the buyer.

"There's a reason why your proposition was no bargain. I know it and you don't," he declared. "Why should I give you valuable information?"

"See here, if you've got anything up your sleeve, we will make it worth your while."

"What do you mean—worth my while?"

"Will you come with me and talk to my employer?"

"I might. I haven't anything special to do."

Monahan clutched the clerk by the coat sleeve and drew him into a taxi, which went dashing through traffic, on

downtown until they were very close to the jumping-off place.

Wilkins was thinking furiously during the journey. Suppose this importer was stung, too! Suppose he didn't know that Chile had something up her sleeve! Unless the importer sold his zennite quickly, he was apt to lose a lot of money.

They entered the private office of Nickolas Redmund, head of the firm of Redmund & Walsh, just as he was preparing to go to lunch.

"Hello, Monahan!" he said cordially. "Close the deal?"

"No," replied the salesman, in disgust. "I had Felton all sewed up and this fellow whispered something to him that finished me. I brought him down here to tell you what he told Felton."

"It's Felton's bad luck," said Redmund easily. "The shipment will be snapped up. We have two other bids for the lot."

Wilkins saw that Redmund believed his own statement; evidently he didn't know of the big supply of zennite in Chile.

"My information will save you a couple of hundred thousand dollars," said Wilkins, "if acted upon immediately."

"I doubt it!" remarked Redmund, with a grin.

"It was sufficient to unsell Felton."

"What do you want for it?"

"Five thousand dollars."

"I'll see you hung first!"

"As you please! Perhaps it is my duty to give it to the trade."

"Just a minute." Redmund took off his hat and sat down. "How do I know that your information will be valuable to us?"

"Give me your check for five thousand," returned Wilkins. "If the information doesn't satisfy you, stop payment on the check. Then I shall tell the trade. I can always do that."

"It's fair enough," reflected Red-

mund. "If you hand me a lot of bunk, I'll stop payment quickly enough!"

"I'm satisfied."

The importer wrote out a check for five thousand dollars and handed it to Wilkins.

He scrutinized it and put it in his pocket. Outwardly he was self-possessed, but inwardly he was jubilant. A check for more than a year's salary as a result of a breakfast at the Plaza!

"You purchased this zennite from Chile?" he asked.

"Yes."

"They have eighteen thousand tons more to sell as soon as they get your money."

Redmund turned pale. "How do you know?" he demanded. "You must be crazy. There isn't that much of the stuff in the world."

Wilkins told him what he had already told his employer, adding additional details. "They are out to get all the money they can as quickly as they can and you are the first to be stung," he went on. "Now that you have the dope, you ought to be able to verify it."

"Our agent in Valparaiso must be a crook," declared the merchant. "I don't know whether you are right or not, Mr. Wilkins, and I am not going to waste time trying to verify your statements. We haven't paid for the shipload yet and we can get out of it."

"You were selling it before you bought it?"

"Had to do that in such a big deal. We couldn't swing it all ourselves. We just have an option on the stuff. Now that I have the information you gave me, I could stop payment on that five-thousand-dollar check and let you give the news to the trade. You're not as smart as you thought you were."

Wilkins' heart dropped into his boots.

"But I won't," went on Redmund, with a smile. "Your dope was worth it."

"How about a commission to me out

of that check?" Monahan asked Wilkins. "I brought you here, and you cheated me out of a big one."

"Ten per cent," declared Wilkins happily.

"You are on."

The broker shook hands with Wilkins and, accompanied by Monahan, he went to the bank to cash the check so that he could pay the salesman his commission. The money came into his hands and he counted over five one-hundred-dollar bills to Monahan.

"Do you know what I'm going to do with this?" asked the salesman.

"No. What?"

"Sell zennite short. You'd better do the same."

"How do we know we won't lose?"

"How can we lose? We tell the trade that Chile has twenty thousand tons of the stuff for sale."

"I can't do that. I made a deal with Redmund."

"He doesn't care. He's called the purchase off and is probably selling the stuff short himself. And you bet old Felton has had his broker on the phone.

Wilkins allowed himself to be persuaded. They sold zennite on a ten-point margin. An hour later the financial sheets got the Chilean dope from three different sources and when the market closed, everybody was selling zennite.

WILKINS got a ticket for the "Follies" that night. He bought it from a speculator and sat in the front row. A chorus girl winked at him, which gave him a thrill, but he didn't meet her at the stage door. He was a respectable married man.

After the show he went to a restaurant and ate lobster salad and ice cream. He enjoyed the cabaret, staying until they put the lights out and returned to his apartment at two thirty a. m., setting his alarm clock for seven thirty as usual. "The lobster and ice cream en-

gaged in a battle in his stomach and kept him awake until four a. m. When the alarm went off at seven thirty, it did not disturb him. He slept through its clamor.

It was the telephone bell which finally drew him from his deep slumber; there is something about a telephone bell which will penetrate any trance. He rolled out of bed, glanced at the clock and saw that it was ten thirty.

There was a woman on the phone. "Mr. Felton wishes to speak to you," she said.

Felton himself—on the phone! The president was speaking: "Mr. Wilkins, why are you not at the office?"

"You fired me yesterday, sir. Why should I be there?"

"I fired a clerk. I am now speaking to the second vice president. Thompson is through. I investigated yesterday afternoon and found out he didn't know anything about anything. Apparently you have been the whole works in his office. And now Mr. Second Vice President, will you kindly come down so that this establishment can function?"

"Yes, sir, at once!"

"And say, Wilkins, did you have anything to do with the panic on zennite? The bottom dropped out of it this morning."

"A little, sir."

"Hope you made a killing. I did!"

Felton rang off. Wilkins, in a dream, moved about his chamber. The job of second vice president had paid Thompson ten thousand dollars a year. It was unlikely that they would start him in at that figure, but he would surely get seven thousand five hundred dollars. What a surprise for his wife! Although she nagged and grouched, she loved him and was loyal. He could do things for his family now. And if there had been a panic in zennite, he must have made a lot of money. He

had sold the stock of the Zennite Corporation of America short at eighty-two. With trembling hands he grasped the telephone and called his broker.

"This is Rufus Wilkins, a customer, speaking. What's zennite quoted at this morning?"

"Selling at forty-five and no buyers. It will hit the bottom before night," replied the clerk on the other end.

Rufus hung up, drew out a handkerchief and wiped the beads of perspiration from his forehead. The money he had played on the market had certainly multiplied! He had made a fortune. It could not be true.

He continued dressing, but dared not shave, because his hand was trembling to such an extent that he feared he would cut himself.

Well, he was entitled to it. After all, he was an able man, the only person in America who had all the facts about zennite. How lucky it was that he had remembered! He had even preserved the Spanish newspaper which contained the article regarding the seizing of the Chilean supply eight years before. It was somewhere in the apartment. How lucky he had learned Spanish! How fortunate he was in every respect!

HE went to his desk and looked for the newspaper upon which his prosperity was founded. He discovered it eventually in a pile of papers. He took the sheet to a table and spread it out, running his finger down the columns for the item. Here it was. He read it. Then his eyes dilated; he sank into a chair; his heart pounded furiously. Could it be possible? No! He read it again.

There it was, in black and white. The Chilean government had seized a supply of zennite upon which the buyers had defaulted payment. It amounted to two thousand tons. Not twenty thousand tons—two thousand

tons. He had remembered the item all these years, but remembered it inaccurately. Two thousand tons—that was all there was. It was a great bargain at seven cents. And Rufus Wilkins had prevented Felton from buying it! He had made the importer relinquish his option. He had caused a panic on the stock market all on misinformation. Instead of being made, he was a ruined man!

He could see now how he had made the error. Felton always purchased a few hundred pounds at a time. Two thousand tons seemed a terrific amount. As the years went by—he had never again referred to the paper—in some strange way his mind had added another figure to the total. Though perfectly honest and sincere, he had been responsible for a crime.

IT is hard to describe the condition of the man's mind during the next half hour. He sank to the lowest depths of despair and horror. In no time at all they would discover what he had done. Perhaps they could send him to jail. Most certainly he would lose his job. But the greatest punishment of all was his own, deep humiliation.

Mechanically he took the phone to call his broker. He gave the number and got the clerk with whom he had done business.

"Oh, Mr. Wilkins!" said the clerk. "Zennite is down to thirty. Want to buy?"

"Buy? Buy?" said Wilkins stupidly.

"O. K.," said the clerk and hung up on him.

Wilkins tried to get the number again, but failed. What was the use? The jig was up.

Bowed and stricken he sat at the phone for five minutes, then it rang sharply.

"Mr. Wilkins?" said the broker's clerk. "Bought your stock at twenty-

eight. Congratulations! You make more than twenty thousand dollars."

When he had hung up, Wilkins lifted his head. He had a ray of hope. He might make some return to the firm which had trusted him. He would make over the twenty thousand dollars to President Felton. But that wouldn't save his job. And then he got the big idea. Excitedly he called Redmund & Walsh, and asked for Mr. Redmund. His name brought the importer to the phone.

"Good morning, Mr. Wilkins! Thanks for your tip yesterday. I'm about fifty thousand ahead on the market."

"Have you got rid of your option on the Chilean zennite?"

"No," replied Redmund. "I guess I'll have to forfeit the five thousand I paid for it."

"Want to sell it to me for five thousand?"

"Yes. You can have it. Cash! What do you want it for?"

"It's a deal," returned Wilkins. "I'll be down and take it up."

In this way he repaid Redmund for the five thousand cash paid him for his false tip. That was something. But the idea was getting bigger. There was nothing the matter with zennite. In a day or two the truth would become known and it would shoot up again. Meanwhile Wilkins held the option on two thousand tons of it, and he could turn it over to Mr. Felton. Thus the firm would profit by his mistake.

In fifteen minutes he was in a taxicab on his way to the office. He had no trouble that day in getting admitted to the private office of the president.

Felton greeted him cheerfully. "Seen zennite lately?" he demanded. "It's down to twenty."

"Close your account up quickly—at once, Mr. Felton! I'll explain when you have sold."

"Not me," retorted the old gentle-

man. "Tell me first. It's still going down."

The confession was very hard, but Wilkins managed to get it out in time. The president began by being very angry, finally he began to laugh. In the end he patted Rufus on the back in friendly fashion.

"You pulled a bone," he said. "You were too damn cocksure. But as a result of your error, I have made a hundred thousand dollars. Furthermore, I'll take that shipment of zennite off your hands. I imagine Redmund was paying about five cents for it and we were willing to pay seven yesterday. So that's a big profit.

"Now I'll take my winnings and buy Zennite Corporation stock, which will shoot back to seventy or eighty as soon as this flurry is over. The only person who is stung is Redmund, and it serves him right for not verifying

your statement. Besides, he was selling something he hadn't bought, and that is reprehensible—if you're caught at it."

"I don't suppose you want me as vice president after this!" said Wilkins.

"Not keep a man whose mistakes make big money for the firm? You bet your life you stay! I fired Thompson because he was generally incompetent, not because of that zennite matter. Now do you want to take your profits and buy zennite along with me?"

"No, sir. I'm through with the market."

"Good! I don't like to have my officers speculating—though this is a sure thing. Go over and take up your option and turn it over to me. Then go to work. Vice presidents are supposed to be in at ten, young man."

"Yes, sir," said Wilkins.

Mr. MacIsaac has written a story of the Great War that will be published in THE POPULAR. When you get the June 20th issue of the magazine, turn to the story called "Tin Hats."



THE MAN WHO KNOWS THIS BECOMES RICH

THERE is nothing that men will not bet on, be they idlers about the village general store who wager the money that the harvest brings them upon the outcome of an all-day game of checkers, or rich brokers at Lloyd's in London who put up large sums of money upon the likelihood of a steamship reaching its port of call upon the designated date and insure at high premiums the success of an operatic career. And not to be outdone the residents of Nenana, Alaska, annually bet over \$16,000 in the great ice sweepstakes of the Tanana River. Each guess on the exact date and time of the break-up of the ice in the river costs one dollar. The person who guesses nearest to this mark is awarded the sum collected by the Break-up Committee. And it is no hit-or-miss affair. A red-white-and-blue stake is fastened in the solid ice in midstream of the Tanana. Across the river is stretched a taut wire which lacks but one inch of touching the stake. The wire is run up to the city hall and there connected with an electrical alarm bell, so that the very first movement of the ice in the spring thaw out is flashed to the watching judges.



Tonga Bill

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

WHY *Evening Star* was the schooner's name,
Piled up on the Tonga reef, sir.
Out of the wreck but a lone spar came,
For the sea is a terrible thief, sir.
Yes, every man of the crew was drowned,
All but myself here, hard aground,
For twenty years, and I'm hale and sound,
With never a care or grief, sir.

The breakers had used me wondrous rough,
So I lay forlorned on the beach, sir;
When out of the jungle, sure enough,
Comes trippin' a dusky peach, sir.
She fetched cool water, she bound my head,
She helped me staggerin' up, and led
My fumblin' feet to a nipa shed,
A-cooin' her kind of speech, sir.

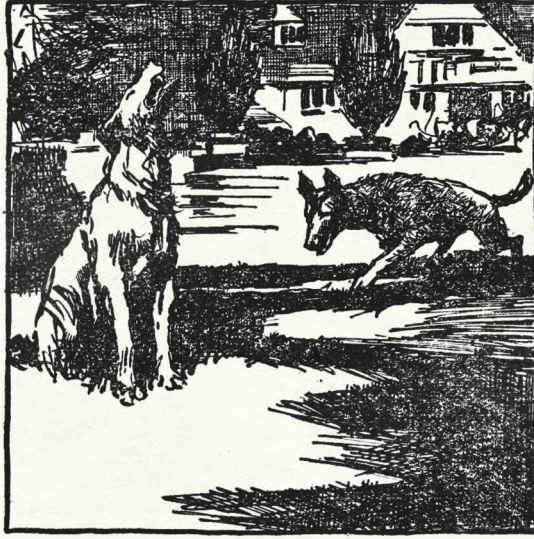
It was not so long when she fetched her pa,
A grand old mahogany lad, sir.
Her eyes were bright and her smile, I saw,
Would never make any one mad, sir.
She says in her lingo: "This man is mine."
He grins and nods me a friendly sign.
'Thinks I, I'm willin' to fall in line,
In fact I was famishin' glad, sir.

We built a hut and she fixed it neat,
Back there in the forest dim, sir.
She was pretty and young and sweet,
And I but a rovin' limb, sir.
But she named the day for our weddin' feast,
And her folks—some seventy-two, at least—
Come singin' along with a native priest,
So the knot was tied and trim, sir.

Twenty years of this island life,
I'm a wonderful fortunate man, sir.
Sons and daughters, a lovin' wife,
And I am chief of the clan, sir.
From the mornin' sun on the blue lagoon,
Till the palms are black on a silver moon,
And the surf a-singin' a lazy tune,
There's never a hitch in the plan, sir.

Friends? What friends did I have before?
None of 'em lived to grow old, sir.
But these that gather around my door,
Know nothing of strivin' or gold, sir.
" 'Big Tonga' Bill is our chief," they say,
"His eye keeps devils and such, away."
Well? It's here I'm anchored, and here I stay,
And that's all there is to be told, sir.





Barking Dogs Never Bite?

By James Parker Long

Rags wasn't much of a dog to look at. But there were other things about him besides his mixed breed, his undersized mediocrity and his uncomely, tawny coat. For instance—there was his loyalty to Judge Eaton; his braving of a trained-to-kill German police dog. And these things count!

RAGS was talking out on the side lawn as he had talked the night before and the night before that: "Wow-wow, wow-wow, wao-o-o!"

There were five people in the house by the lake—Judge Eaton; his client, Ramsey of the L. H. & R.; Leland, the head clerk, and two servants—and they were all awake. If the dog's music affected them as it did the judge, we may also assume that they were all swearing.

There was one man who supposedly slept in the hostler's quarters over the barn, but he was not there now; he had pulled on baggy trousers and what was left of last winter's boots and, armed with a pitchfork, was out on the lawn groping his way toward the dog who stood, a dim shadow in the starshine,

and barked at a corner of the orchard.

"That's right, Rags, me b'y. If himself won't believe what is told him and keep a proper watch, then it's ourselves must be after doing that same for him."

"Dave!" roared a voice from the office window.

"Yis, sor."

"Will you take that damn, barking dog into the barn and keep him there as I told you, or will I have to kill him?"

"Sure, sor, it's yourself that wouldn't be wanting to be killed alive in your sleep and maybe the new safe burshted wid dinamite like the old one, and it's little Rags himself that's spending his nights shtanding guard and keeping the burghlars from the house."

"I'd rather be dead than have to listen to that confounded yawping all

night and every night. Hush him up! If he only did it once in a while, it wouldn't be so bad, but every night ——” The outflung arms, half seen in the darkness, half imagined, expressed utter disgust.

“But, judge——”

“Do as I say and at once!”

Dave Moriarty thrust fingers in his mouth and emitted a shrill whistle. The incessant, irritating defiance that Rags had been hurling off into the trees ceased and the dog materialized. Out of the half seen, he became seen. A medium-sized beast, he was too small to be called large, too large to be called small, with a medium-length coat and as far as could be seen a kind of medium color. In fact, he really seemed to be a medium sort of a beast of a kind of medium breed—mixed, at any rate.

He vouchsafed his master a glance of inquiry and then perceived the judge in the window and immediately threw himself into looping curves of adoration, violently wagging the hinder two thirds of his body in lieu of a tail, crouching, bounding, and always whining a high, half-human whine expressive of ecstatic delight in being near him.

“Ugh!” the judge shuddered. “Take him away.”

Dave snapped his fingers and with the medium dog at his heels, pausing now and then for a glance at the window within which the judge had disappeared, or a growl for the orchard, proceeded to the barn, snapped Rags to a tie chain and went to bed.

BREAKFAST was late the next morning nor was it a pleasant meal, either in the kitchen, where old Dave ate with the maids, or in the dining room. Dave ate solemnly, masticating with whole-hearted abandon and a minimum of conversation. When he was through, he withdrew to the barn with

a plate of scraps for the disgraced Rags and muttered as he went:

“Addle-pated vixens! 'Tis I as could be making it all right with them for the poor beast. If only they knew that ivery night he barks there's tracks in the orchard, they'd maybe be talking differently. But if the master isn't willing to be believing what I tell him, then it's myself that knows women well enough to not be stirring them up.”

In the front of the house, the three men were getting down to work in the office. The judge had arisen, panting, from working the combination of the big safe, new and amazingly efficient looking and out of place in the business room of a lakeside home. The door swung open and Leland carried papers and bundles of ledger sheets to the table, behind which he took his seat with a notebook ready. His employer and the railroad president weren't quite ready after all.

“But wouldn't we be in a difficult situation if the combine did get those books?” asked Ramsey, with a scowl.

“No more so than if you had lost your head or both legs. You might win your suit without them, but it would take divine interposition. There is nothing a flesh-and-blood lawyer could do.”

“Then are we justified in taking the chances that having them out here in the country involves?”

“We aren't taking chances. That is a bank safe. There is a guarantee goes with it that no burglar can open it in less than four hours with the most modern tools. And what would we be doing in the meantime? If you are worried, we can go armed; but, you know, this is a civilized country.”

Ramsey scratched his head, only half convinced, until his eyes fell on Rags, who was stretched out on the porch just in front of the screened door, chin on paws, adoring gaze resting on the lawyer.

"Well," he admitted, "maybe things are all right. Certainly with that little tyke out there keeping an eye on things, we are not apt to be surprised."

"Certainly not catch us sleeping!" snorted Judge Eaton. "Little whelp! What does he think? That he can keep us awake by yelping all night and still have us in shape to do business in the daytime? I've had that wild Irishman out in the barn so long that he has got so he does as he pleases. When he said he wanted a dog, I did not have sense enough to stop him right off. Now it is going to get his Irish stirred up and he'll discipline me for months by being stand-offish and doing what I tell him as though he were a king doing me a favor. But that won't stop me. The scraggly little beast must go."

He went to the door and bellowed: "Dave!"

The terrier jumped to his feet and added his sharp yapping to the summons, which deepened the scowl on the usually, placidly florid countenance of the judge.

When the barn man came, his employer commanded: "Get rid of that dog before dark to-night. I do not want to be kept awake another night and I do not intend that he shall do it."

"But, sor——"

"Not a word!"

"Yis, sor."

Dave turned his back and went down the steps with all the dignity that seventy-five years, a game leg, and a scarcely restrained man would permit. The dog turned around once or twice and again settled himself by the door.

"Now see here, Eaton!" expostulated his client. "If you are going to get rid of that dog, you will have to do something else. Maybe he was yapping at a coon or a fox, as you say, and maybe he was baying the moon, but I insist upon having a dog out there to watch."

"All right! All right! But we will have a real one." The judge went over to the desk and started fumbling in the pigeonholes. "Where is the card of that fellow that wanted to sell us a German police dog?" he sputtered.

"You threw it in the wastebasket," the secretary informed him, "and I fished it out and filed it." He went over to the filing case, made one of those magical passes of the efficient office man and produced it.

"Oh, you did, did you?" grunted the judge. "Then will you please call him up and tell him to bring a dog out here some time to-day?"

AFTERNOON brought a high-powered car, a great dog and trouble for Rags. When the car stopped, the salesman climbed out and gestured to the prick-eared, wolflike dog who promptly joined him with an easy, graceful leap and stood with dignified ease waiting for the next command. With perfect self-control the animal followed to the office, was introduced to the men and, at the command, "Wait outside," slipped through the screen and stood looking down across the lawn.

The salesman turned back to the men and then all of them rushed to the doors and windows. A deep roar from the new dog had joined with shrill yelping from Rags. As the men reached the windows and doors, they saw the terrier rise from the ground on which the police dog had flung him and race for the barn, punctuating his frantic bounds with yells for help and only keeping ahead of the pursuing terror by that space that had once been tail.

In the doorway appeared Dave, with a brandished manure fork. Past his legs fled Rags as the other dog checked at sight of the gleaming points of the weapon. The police dog checked, but did not retreat. Instead with his own gleaming ivory weapons displayed, he crouched and growled, his eyes alight

with uncanny intelligence, sizing up the situation.

"Call him up here," said the salesman to the judge. "I have told him that you are his new boss. His name is Wolf."

The dog had risen and in a half crouch was slowly closing in on the jabbering Irishman when the judge called:

"Here, Wolf! Here, sir!"

The dog whirled and with alert ears trotted nonchalantly up the walk, as if he had not been planning to tear a wizened Irishman into soup meat only the half minute before.

"That is a proper sort of a dog," the judge chuckled. "That is the way to do. Few words and considerable action. I never had any use for dogs, but that one looks as if he had an excuse for living. Eh, Ramsey? He ought to suit both of us—me, because he is close-mouthed enough to let me sleep, and you, because he sure will keep strangers from the house at night."

He patted Wolf's keenly intelligent head, which was up on a level with his waist and made much of him. The dog endured the caresses with no sign either of pleasure or the opposite and merely stood with eyes fixed on the salesman.

"But," said the judge, "you will have to tell him to leave old Dave alone. He is the man that will have to care for him."

"Call him up and tell the dog yourself. He knows who is giving orders now."

When the old man arrived, he was still trembling, also what teeth he had were clenched as firmly as his fist.

"This is my new dog," announced the judge by way of introduction. Then to the dog he said: "Don't you touch Dave. Remember now. He's the one that is to feed you and see that your house is kept in shape."

"You're not going to keep the murdering beast, sure, sor? A man's life wouldn't be safe the while he was on the place."

"That is what we are figuring on. Your talk about somebody hanging around has got Mr. Ramsey nervous, and we are fixing it so that if any one does come, he will lose an arm or a leg."

"Sure, sor, if ye'd only be taking my advice——"

"I'd never have bought my first car; I'd never ride on a train; and I'd have the house full of yapping dogs with doormat hair! I know. Go on back to your work and don't be afraid of this dog; he'll leave you alone hereafter."

WHEN the salesman had gone and work resumed, the dog lay on the porch with his back to the door and never stirred, except to make an arrow-like dash toward the barn whenever Rags appeared. Then he would walk sedately back and pose some more, and a fine, eye-filling picture of a dog he made.

Each sally brought a chuckle from his new owner.

"Watch the little tyke beat it," the judge would say. "A fine watchdog he would make! I always thought his hair was straw-colored, but I guess it must be yellow."

When work was done and the men went out for their walk, Ramsey looked back and saw the little fellow's face in a barn window. Rags was following the much-adored judge with his eyes, since the long-legged, gracefully striding foreign dog made it impossible for him to be there in person. The man could not suppress a wave of sympathy as he remembered the exuberance which had betrayed the terrier's happiness on former days when he had been permitted to come along. Ramsey did not mention what he saw, because it was

getting late in the day and there seemed to be no evidence of an intention on Dave's part to obey the order of banishment.

Night came. Rags was not in sight. The household went to bed and to sleep. For half the night they slept. Then there arose from the stable a yipping and a yapping that roused the judge to vengeful wakefulness.

"Confound that Irishman!" he mumbled, as he felt for slippers and fumbled for the door. When he approached the office and saw the gleam of light from beneath the door, he grinned. "Well, it got Ramsey or Leland before me, anyway," he jerked it open.

He instantly tried to close it, but was too late. The room was full of people, but they were only half seen, his attention being riveted on the charging figure of Wolf, charging him at the command of a masked man, but a man whose figure and voice were unmistakably those of the man who had sold the dog.

The door caught the dog by the shoulders. As well try to hold a bull by pinching its tail. Then the judge was back in the corner of the stairs, half seeing, by the reflected light from the room, a phantom dog that slipped about before him but did not leap to come to grips with the judge's futile, clutching fingers. Then he realized that it was in accordance with orders. A voice from the other room was saying:

"Don't take him, Wolf. Just hold him. That's the boy. Now, judge, if you will come in and join your friend, we will proceed with the business of the night. The dog won't touch you unless you start something, though I am doubtful if he will obey you any more."

In silent dignity the judge stalked into the room to line up against the wall with Ramsey and form part of a picture which might have formed the basis of a parable—so much legal power

and influence and so much financial power personified in two rather poddy gentlemen, whose poorly fastened pajama jackets and tousled heads and predicament showed that they were not so very different from you and me after all.

THE former salesman was talking. He seemed to like to talk. "We lack one more man, I believe," he was saying. "No doubt he will join us soon, if the noise from the barn continues, unless it is true that a man can get used to sleeping through anything. While we wait, I will call your attention to the apparatus that my young friend has set up in front of your safe. It is called an oxyacetylene cutting torch. Are you gentlemen familiar with it? No? Too bad. It is really a remarkable invention. My young friend assures me that in a few hours he can cut his way into any safe of that type and so spare me the need of compelling you to give me the combination.

"I will admit that when I was first given the task of acquiring certain papers which I have reason to believe are in there, I anticipated being compelled to use pressure of a physical sort on you to that end. Always shrinking from violence, however, I made the effort to get in touch with an expert in this line and am sure that we shall all be edified with his work, representing, as it does, years of experience."

The slight figure in the grimy overalls, face hidden by goggles, acted as if he knew his business. He had set two metal cylinders upright before the safe, connected rubber tubes with them and to a triple pipe which ended in a right-angled nozzle. After deftly measuring certain points on the front of the safe, he had opened valves, scratched a match and with a roaring flame was working on the front of the safe which almost instantly showed an

incandescent spot where the flame was applied.

Taking advantage of the leading robber's apparent absorption in the operation, the judge shifted slightly in the direction of the table where a revolver lay hidden in a drawer.

Instantly an automatic flashed in the man's hand. "Don't you move!" he commanded. "Just because I talk politely is no reason for you to think I am not ready to shoot to kill."

"You and me both, brother," drawled the man who was bending before the safe. "I've had a bone to pick with old big belly there, ever since he sent me up for something I didn't do. I said then I'd croak him and nothing's happened to change my mind."

"No, friend, we won't have any roughness here that is not necessary. If the judge and his friends behave themselves, we will go peaceably. Of course if they started anything, I do not see that there is anything I could do to prevent your attacking him. I notice that the dog in the barn is silent. I wonder whether that means that he has given up trying to attract attention or whether the old hostler is up to something?" He walked to the door which looked off toward the barn across the porch and peered out through the screen for a minute. Then he returned.

"Everything seems quiet enough and there is no light down there," he reported.

While his back was turned, the judge had moved nearly a yard nearer the desk. Those steady eyes behind the mask saw the change and he drawled on:

"Judge, I told you I'd shoot if you moved. Now you have moved, but I caught you at it, so I won't shoot this time, but I must admit that I think that Wolf is entitled to one bite. Watch this, fellow, if you've got a grudge. Take him, Wolf!"

The dog leaped to his feet and launched himself. The judge's fist caught the dog in the air and knocked him to one side. As though pulled by a spring, the animal bounded back.

THEN all was dark, save for the light from the torch and the incandescent metal of the safe. But before the light went out, Ramsey had seen the door into the hall open, had seen a chunky, straw-colored doormat of a dog shoot through and dart at the beast that was attacking the adored judge. Rags was followed by the gleaming tines of a pitchfork and an arm that groped along the wall for the switch.

The others heard only a high-pitched, strangling snarl of fury, followed by a startled yelp from Wolf as Rags made fast. Then came a roar as the big dog whirled to demolish the impertinent little creature who had run from him all afternoon and now was rashly attacking him. Almost simultaneous with the animal sounds was the *crash, crash* of the robber's automatic, fired at the spot where the judge had been. An instant later came a deeper *bang, bang* as the judge's revolver spoke from where he had hidden himself behind the heavy, oak desk.

The torch was on the floor now, and the floor boards were throwing up flickering flames already, under its intense heat. That made things a little clearer. It showed two dogs who rolled on the floor with never a yelp of defeat from the smaller one, although the big one was on top and was a mighty fine specimen of a race bred to punish.

It showed the little wizened figure that followed their conflict, stabbing at the upper dog with tines which no longer reflected the uncertain light. It showed the trajectory of a chair, a dictionary and an inkwell as Ramsey carried on a primitive battle with the mechanic, and finally showed the precipitate retreat of the talkative robber.

Two limping strides took the man to the door, another through it.

The dog fight as suddenly came to an end. At his fleeing master's whistle, Wolf left Rags and went out of the door with the snaky suddenness that belongs to the animal from whom came his name. A moment later came the roar of a starting motor.

When the lights were on again, the floor fire smothered with rugs and a couple of siphons of soda water, there came time to check up on breakage. Ramsey bent over the injured robber, who was completely knocked out. Dave was spread out in the center of the room with a fractured chair on top of him. He had intercepted one of the flying missiles with his dome. There was no need to worry about him. No man who has gone to a Kilkenny fair as to a party will ever die from a blow on the head.

Rags and the judge? To the ears of Ramsey came the judge's bellow:

"Hey, let that fellow go and call a doctor for this dog."

"He needs first-aid attention right now, judge."

"Let him go, I say, and lend a hand here! This little tyke forgot how frightened he was of that murdering beast when he saw him attacking me. I have talked mighty harshly about Dave and him these last few days, but I take it back now. I am a cranky old fool, but I know how to be loyal to those who are loyal to me. Lend a hand here!"

The clumsily caressing hand must have been agony to the torn little body, but Rags darted out licking tongue of happiness and attempted to wag a battered body with a heart full of joy at his foreknowledge of what the future held of dreams come true.

Other stories by Mr. Long will be published in forthcoming issues of THE POPULAR.



POLITICS AND READING

THE recent admission of a well-known candidate for high public office that he has never, in all his life, read so many as twelve books through, is by no means proof that reading is unimportant. It is, however, an indication that the politics in which an unread man may achieve such great prominence is not as important in the life of the community as it should be.



THE QUEEN OF THE CAPITAL

THE most powerful woman in Washington is Mrs. Nicholas Longworth, formerly Alice Roosevelt and now wife of Congressman Longworth of Ohio. She does not make her influence felt through speeches in club meetings and heading movements and protests. She wields the wand of her sovereignty by carefully selecting the people to be invited to her dinners, luncheons and bridge parties. She conducts the one political salon in the national capital.



Einstein, Fine Gentleman

By Charles R. Barnes

Author of "Mrs. Sweeny: Cheerleader," "The Holdup Man," Etc.

Wall Street is a seven-day wonder for folks who are accustomed to make their money in three or four-figure batches. Belle Sweeny learned that much from her late race-track-gambler husband, and she also learned to give that big money mart the wide berth. But what could the widow do when the monster unbent to her? Why nothing, of course, but clip coupons.

NOW, there's that Wall Street thing," began Mrs. Sweeny. "What of it?" asked the Boarder.

"Well," she replied, "when my poor, dead Danny was alive and makin' book at the track, he usta keep wonderin', all the time, why the cops didn't raid the Stock Exchange, 'stead of the pool rooms. Somethin' has been happenin' lately that's put me in mind of the time he went down there, and says "Baa-baa!" oncet or twicet and got his hair cut, or whatever they calls it when a gent gets trimmed."

"Shearing the lambs," suggested the Boarder.

"Yes, I guess that's it," she agreed, "and as for me. I think the place ought

to be pinched. Now, everybody knows that a pool room is a gamblin' place, but we're told that the Stock Exchange ain't. We're warned against one, but the other is a gent in open-face clothes, with a slung shot in his pocket."

"You haven't been dabbling in stocks?" queried the Boarder.

"No," I ain't," was the reply, "but I'm thinkin' I'd like to. Every lady gets the stock bug when she's broke, mister. She don't have no idee what it's all about, but she knows that playin' the market stands for money, and so Wall Street comes into her mind right after the idee of pawnin' her di'mon' rings. But it wasn't quite that way with me to-day, though I was wishin' for monev. all right. I've sure got to

have some money to go on a vacation with, for I just can't stand this city heat any longer. Why, it's so hot that the little children is sailin' boats in the asphalt."

"But I thought you had nearly two hundred dollars saved for a trip to the mountains," said the Boarder.

Mrs. Sweeny eyed the Boarder as a teacher regards a child who is unable to learn a very simple lesson.

"I thought you knew that I was made on purpose for folks to take money away from," she said, at length. "I can't keep nothin' but my troubles. Whenever I get a dollar and a half, it fades away, like the dye in a twelve-ninety-eight suit bargain. The only reason I got car fare right now is that nobody has called in to-day yet."

"I suppose you spent the two hundred on clothes," hazarded the Boarder, thoughtfully.

"Yep," she replied, with a cold stare, "I had to have some little thing for my walks in the park." Then, seriously: "I've got a two-dollar pair of gloves to show for that two hundred, mister. Moe Einstein and his wife sent 'em to me on my last birthday. He's the little tailor feller 'round the corner; and if it wasn't that my poor dead Danny almost busted him once, I don't know as I'd of done it."

She passed her dusting cloth jerkily around the frame of a picture, then went to the open window and shook it.

THE Boarder stacked his written sheets before him in a neat pile and lolled back in his chair. Moe Einstein was a new luminary in the Sweeny firmament, who might shine interestingly.

"I never heard of this Mr. Einstein," he remarked.

"He makes ladies' and gents' clothes," she explained, "and beats his wife."

"I see," said the Boarder.

"He don't mean nothin' by his rough-house work, though," she hastened to add. "It's just a habit. But, all the same, mister, when you come to think about it, some of these New York habits is some fierce, ain't they? My Danny never done that—but I don't know if I'd thought any the less of him if he had. My gee, but I sure did like that man! Honust, mister, I thought so much of him that I cut the fringe off my best bedspread, so it wouldn't tickle his chin at night. Yes, I did!

"I ain't sayin' that Mister Einstein thinks anywhere as much of his wife as my Danny thought of me, but when a man will stay away from the corner speak-easy two nights out of a week, just for a woman, it shows there's somethin' to him, don't it? It sure does. And that's Mister Einstein for you. Barrin' his little failin' of biffin' a body in the neck, he's a real gent; and me and Danny usta like him.

"Danny give him many and many a talk on etiquette, pointin' out how unmannerly it was to be alwus soakin' his wife in the jaw, and it done some good for spells; but poor Mrs. Einstein was certain to show up, sooner or later, with a black eye or somethin', and Danny would have his talkin' to do all over again. But, for all that, they was real fr'en'ly, them two, and one time Danny comes home and says:

"I give that there tailor man a hot tip on Bright Eyes this afternoon," he says, "and he pulls down a hundred and fifty on her," he says. "Gee," he says, "the little feller's prouder than a lawyer that's just stung somebody."

"Well, mister, that was the beginnin' of it; Einstein got as nutty as a peanut stand about them ponies. He had to press four pairs of pants to get a dollar for the hand-book man; and as he blowed as much as ten dollars some days, you can see that he had to branch out of the neighborhood to get enough

pants to press. And, my gee, the gas he used up in his irons! Honust, mister, he was a awful race bug. He told Danny about dreamin' of lobsters, and then almost goin' crazy tryin' to decide whether the hunch meant to play The Skipper or Sea Gull. And, when Coney Girl won, Mister Einstein tore out two handfuls of hair because he hadn't connected her with the dream. You can see, mister, what a dreadful feller he was from the very first for them gallopers."

"He went to extremes," commented the Boarder.

"He didn't do no such thing," Mrs. Sweeny corrected. "He run it in the ground."

"I accept your amendment," said the Boarder soberly.

WELL, there ain't no harm done," she went on. "Only sometimes you use words that was just made up so somebody would have an excuse for writing a dictionary. But let me tell you the rest of it about Mister Einstein. You see, he was on the road to All-in-ville, he was, and he was goin' there fast. And, about that time, Danny gets mixed up with a guy that played the curb market—you know that place down there on Broad Street, where a lot of Indians yells their heads off every day, from ten to three. I usta go down there and watch 'em, and think what a fine lot of gent'm'n they'd make for a mob scene in a show. They sure was a wild bunch, mister."

"Yes, very noisy," agreed the Boarder.

"Well," she went on, "in spite of them little talks I usta give Danny about stayin' away from bad company and stickin' to the nice, respectable gent'm'n, like them other gamblers he run with, what does he do but kick in with this short-changin' curb player, Terry Martin! And, mister, that Street dope must be more insid-ibus

than the manicure habit a man gets when the lady's pretty.

"It stuck to Danny like snow in a ditch. It wasn't long b'fore he was pickin' up the mornin' paper and talkin' real wise about Old Hat Copper stock bein' good for a two-point raise, and such a line of cheap bunk, that never did sound as good and classy as his nice old hundred-to-one horse chatter. No, sir!

"But he followed it, like a footpad trailin' a man with a bank roll. There was no let-up to him, at all. Every day it was the same, till I got a crool attack of the pip listenin' to it; and I sure was scared to death for fear them Wall Street men would get all he had, and make a couple of bums of us. Gee, but I was scared! You see, mister, my Danny was fightin' another man's game, and that ain't no brainy trick, to be sure."

"Did he get in very deep?" the Boarder asked.

"I was comin' to that," Mrs. Sweeny continued. "He never told me what he was doin'; but one night he come home madder than a vaudeville amateur that's just got the hook.

"'Belle,' he says, takin' a paper from his pocket, and throwin' it on the floor, 'if I ever say "stocks" to you again, just toss a piano leg at me,' he says, 'or whatever's handy,' he says.

"'What's the matter, Danny dear?' I says.

"'Nough's the matter,' he says.

"'What you been doin'?' I says.

"'Nothin' and nobody,' he says. 'Somebody's been doin' me,' he says.

"'Brace faro?' I says.

"'Aw, Belle,' he says, 'I ain't no child like that. But I been a come-on,' he says, 'worse than the kid that stays up all night to catch Sandy Claus,' he says.

"'You been playin' them stocks?' I says.

"'Not playin' 'em, Belle,' he says.

'not playin' 'em at all. People don't play 'em; all they does is to hand money to the man, and then say "Thank you," when he tells 'em to go and get more and come back. No, I ain't been playin' 'em.'

"What you done, then?" I says.

"I done just this here thing," he says. 'Martin gives me a hot tip that Old Hat Copper is goin' to twenty-five, sure, by the end of the week. So I buys a hundred shares at fifteen. I bought it outright, for I wasn't goin' to take no chances on that margin thing. And Martin pats me on the back, and says I'm a wise guy for to make sure of my winnin's at the beginnin'. Could I of did more, Belle?'

"Oh, Danny," I says, 'them stocks—them wicked stocks! Why didn't you stick that money on a good horse? Don't you remember promisin' me a long time ago to try to do right?' I says.

"I know," he says, real sorrowful, 'but a guy's got to fall down once in a while, ain't he? Well, I've went and did it, Belle,' he says. 'That there stock started to go back the day after I got it, and now look at it! Fifteen dollars a share it was worth a week ago, and now it's down to one and a half. To-morrueh it will be sellin' round fifteen cents, Belle, for I read it on a market bulletin that the Old Hat Mine's petered out. But I ain't goin' to make no holler. I'm stung,' he says, 'and I know it. But remember this here, Belle: I don't never touch no stock no more as long as I live.'

"And, take it from me, mister, he never did. He wouldn't even pick up that stock certificate from the door. He was through with it.

"Don't have nothin' to do with it, Belle," he says. 'Let it go. It's worse stuff to fool with than what you fed me last week, and I got ptomaine poisonin' from—'

"Canned lobster," I finishes for him.

"Yep, that's it," he says. 'Let the old stingerino alone,' he says.

"And so I gathers it up from the floor and chucked it in a drawer with a marked deck of cards and some loaded dice and a few other keepsakes I've got to remember him with."

"Those losses happen in speculation," said the Boarder sympathetically.

"That was a bright remark, mister," she observed. "Of course they happen. Do you s'pose I read this in a dream book? I know only too well that it happened, b'cause Danny had promised me a five-hundred-dollar set of furs, and I didn't get it—Danny bein' out fifteen hundred dollars and also bein' so low in his mind that he felt as if he was standin' on his head. Wait; I'll get that there piece of stock and show it to you."

SHE hurried from the room, returning shortly with a creased and rumpled, green stock certificate, which she deposited on the Boarder's desk.

"That's it," she said, "and it's what you might call a tombstone for two failin's. It marks Danny's passin' up the stock game and Mister Einstein's wavin' so long to the ponies. For that very night, while me and Danny was sittin' round, talkin' over his new resolution, Mr. Einstein rings our bell and come in, lookin' doleful as a mornin' after. Gee, he was that sorrowful!

"Mr. Sweeny," he says, after Danny had pushed him into a chair, 'them ponies has got me. I been vacuum cleaned by 'em,' he says.

"Ain't that too bad, now," says Danny.

"Ain't it, though," says Mister Einstein.

"How much you got left?" asks Danny.

"I got a dollar and a quarter comin' for pressin' five pairs of pants," says Mister Einstein, 'but I alwus have to wait on them parties,' he says.

"Ain't that too bad, now,' says Danny.

"Ain't it, though,' says Mister Einstein, 'for now I got to make it a failure,' he says, in that queer talk of his.

"Can't I do nothin'?" says Danny.

"It I had a hundred,' says Einstein, 'I could stall things off and save my business,' he says, 'and keep on pressin' the gents' pants,' he says.

"Danny thought real deep for as much as half a minute, mister, it bein' his way not to do things in a hurry. Then he says:

"Einstein,' he says, 'kin you say you won't do a thing, and then keep on not doin' it?"

"Sure I can!' says Mister Einstein.

"Then,' says Danny, 'you and me do a swear-off on the same day,' he says; 'or, keepin' strict to the facts, I done it this afternoon, and you do it to-night. I quit playin' the stock market, Einstein,' he says, 'for this dear wife of mine——'

"Guess again, Danny,' I says; 'you done it because they trimmed you.'

"For this dear wife of mine—did you speak, Belle?—Mr. Einstein,' he says, and I knowed better than to butt in again. 'And now, are you willin' to sing au revoir to them ponies?"

"Sure,' says Einstein, 'all the verses and the chorus.'

"Then,' says Danny, 'b'fore I give you that century you want, stand up.'

"Einstein, he stood.

"Hold up your right hand,' says Danny.

"You might as well order 'em both up,' says Mister Einstein, 'for I'm that willin',' he says.

"Now,' says Danny, 'repeat this here solemn oath—listen, Einstein: "I swear, and it goes both ways, and includes the lookout, to chop the ponies; yours truly"—what's your initials?—"I. M. Einstein."'

"Gladly will I do it,' says the feller. And he hadn't hardly got through

before Danny hands him the hundred. Wasn't he a fine gent'm'n, my Danny, mister?"

"He seems to have been good-hearted," said the Boarder cautiously. He never had been able to determine whether the lamented husband of Mrs. Sweeny was a faulty saint or a plain criminal. During the latter part of his landlady's story, he had been examining the stock certificate which she had brought him. "Are you sure that this is valueless?" he now asked.

"You can have it for the two weeks' board you owe me," she responded pleasantly.

The Boarder flushed.

"I have a particular friend in the brokerage business," he said, moving toward the door. "I'll call him on the telephone and make an inquiry about Old Hat Copper. You might as well be sure."

"Go on," she assented grimly, "but you can't get me excited with any such talk as that. If I go to the mountains this summer, that old picce of paper won't take me."

THE Boarder left the room, but he soon came back, and Mrs. Sweeny knew by the look on his face that he had no good news.

"It is worth nothing," he said, giving her the certificate. "Briggs says it's dead. The company was a wildcat affair, and the stock never had any but speculative value, and the boom in it collapsed long ago. I'm sorry, Mrs. Sweeny.

"I ain't," she flashed back, "b'cause I knew it wasn't any good, all the time. But you've went and interrupted my story about Mister Einstein, the poor feller! Do you know, mister, I've had a lot of fun in my time bein' sorry for people? Well, I have. It makes me feel good to feel bad, once in a while. I s'pose I'd go to funerals most every day if I knew more people here,

but it's so hard to get properly acquainted!"

"Yes," said the Boarder sympathetically, "and one must be so careful about meeting people here."

"That's just it," agreed Mrs. Sweeny, "but you can take it from me, them Einsteins is nice folks, even if they ain't rich. They'd of went down and out that time if it wouldn't of been for Danny. But that hundred set Mister Einstein on his feets again, and it wasn't long b'fore he was pressin' all the pants in the neighborhood, happy as ever.

"And he kept goin', all right, too, until some little time ago. Then his wife gets sick and a baby dies, and there was so many expenses that he couldn't of met 'em if all the pants wearers had three legs, givin' him a third more money to the pair.

"He was up here to see me about it, blubberin', and sayin' so help him, he didn't know what to do. So I says to myself: 'Belle Sweeny, somehow you can get them three meals a day and keep pretty well catched up with the rent, and here's this poor Mister Einstein that has got more troubles than a preacher with a son!'

"And there didn't seem to be but one thing to do, which was to stake him along, just as my Danny done. I done it, mister. I let him have my pile, and I do hope he'll soon get back on Sunshine Avenue again. As for me, if I can't go to the mountains, I can go to the roof, which is as good as several millions of folks here can get in the summertime. Life ain't so bad, if you only get your head together and do the things that's possible. It don't cost nothing on the roof."

THE Boarder smiled at her philosophy, but he felt sorry for her. He knew that she needed a change, for the blighting heat of the past few weeks had turned her usual fresh color to a

pallor, and the brightness was gone from her eyes. He himself had found the season so unbearable that he had arranged to go away. At first, he was inclined to view his landlady's administration of her financial affairs with vexation; then he laughed.

"She'll always do those things," he told himself.

A week later, as he was adding the finishing touches to a manuscript, Mrs. Sweeny tapped at his door. At his invitation she entered, bringing with her an early edition of an afternoon paper. She moved in a jaded, discouraged way, and there was dejection in her face.

"Mister," she began, "S-T-U-N-G spells stung. Now, if you was a comic-song writer, mebby you could make somethin' out of that line."

"What's wrong now, Mrs. Sweeny?" he asked.

"Nothin' much," she replied. "Somebody said once that riches takes wings, but mine hitched onto a pair of feet; and, gee, how they can go when they get started!"

"But I thought you had given your money away," he reminded her.

"I didn't know it, then," she answered, "which only means that I don't know feet that'll fit money when I see 'em."

"Has anything happened to your friend Einstein?" he questioned.

"I kinda hope so—somethin' that he deserves," she said. "But, here, take this paper, and read about him." She extended the journal, which was folded so that a brief news paragraph was conspicuous. The Boarder took it, and read the following:

The police have been asked to find I. M. Einstein, a tailor, who had a small shop at 891 West Eighty-fourth Street. It is said that he was unable to withstand the lure of the race tracks and stooped to petty crime to follow them. He passed forged checks on tradesmen in the neighborhood, realized on

his stock of goods, borrowed money wherever he could and disappeared, leaving a wife and six children wholly without the necessities of life. From recent remarks of his, the police think they will find him hanging around some race track. He has recently been talking about a system of beating the races, and it is believed that brooding over it turned his head and caused his disappearance.

"Ain't it fierce?" exclaimed Mrs. Sweeny, as the Boarder finished.

"I call it downright hard luck," he said emphatically, "and I hope he is caught and placed behind the bars."

"What good would that do me?" she inquired calculatingly. "I don't want him sent away; I want my money back."

"There appears to be little hope of that," he said.

"It looks that way," she agreed. "Still," reflectively, "he may make a killin' on some lucky bet and come back. Them horse bugs has had them streaks of luck. And there's this about 'em—sometimes they'll pay you back when they've got a bank roll."

The Boarder, however, was disposed to regard the situation from a gloomy viewpoint. The money seemed to him irretrievably lost. He tried to think of some consoling platitude that might fit the situation, but his heart was too full of real sympathy for Mrs. Sweeny to permit the utterance of conventional things.

"What are you going to do?" he asked presently.

"Kiss them two hundred iron men good-by," she promptly replied.

"Well," he said, "I'm just as sorry as I can be. I wish——" He abruptly stopped, and gazed intently at the paper, at which he had been idly glancing.

"What is it?" Mrs. Sweeny questioned.

The Boarder seemed not to hear her. He had caught sight of a scare head that held him. It was:

THE OLD HAT A LIVE WIRE. SPECTACULAR RISE IN LONG- DEAD ISSUE.

In another minute he had leaped to his feet.

"Hurrah!" he shouted.

Mrs. Sweeny stared at his unusual display of emotion.

"Mebby if you tell me why, I will," she temporized.

"Read that!" he cried, handing her the paper, and indicating the item. "Read it, Mrs. Sweeny, read it!"

Mrs. Sweeny, still wondering at the Boarder's extraordinary excitement, took the paper. As the headline met her glance, an inkling of the truth flashed upon her; the next instant she was eagerly reading the text:

The sensation of the Street during the early-morning trading was the resurrection of Old Hat Copper, an issue that has long been considered practically dead. Rumor got busy early, in effect that the Lydenhams had quietly bought in great blocks of the stock and intended to develop the mine, which adjoins the famous Yellow Dog, a big payer. On this rumor the stock jumped to 5. Later, when it was confirmed, it skyrocketed to 12, amid the wildest excitement among the curb brokers.

Old Hat came on the market a few years ago with a fine flourish, but the boom collapsed.

Mrs. Sweeny read no farther.

"What does it mean, mister?" she asked, a puzzled look on her face.

"Mean!" he exclaimed, glancing hastily at his watch. "Why, it means that your hundred shares is worth twelve hundred dollars—maybe more. It is one o'clock now, and there is no telling what Old Hat has done since that paper was printed. Wait! I'll telephone and find out."

HE ran from the room, but Mrs. Sweeny did not obey his injunction to wait; she hurried after him and watched breathlessly as he snatched the

receiver from the hook and called a number.

"Let me talk to Mr. Briggs," he said, when the broker's office answered. "Briggs? . . . Yes. . . . What is Old Hat now? . . . Fourteen five eighths? . . . Thank you. I'll call again in a minute."

He hung up the receiver and turned to Mrs. Sweeny.

"Your stock is quoted at fourteen and five eighths. That means that you can sell it at once for between fourteen and fifteen hundred dollars. Shall I tell Mr. Briggs to sell it for you?"

"Fif-teen hundred dollars!" breathed Mrs. Sweeny, in an awed tone. "Fifteen hundred dollars! And all for me?"

"Yes," confirmed the Boarder nervously, "but be quick about your decision. You have that much money at your command now. But maybe in another five minutes or so a slump will start."

"Then I'd lose it?" she asked.

"Yes—but be quick. Shall I sell?" There was a nervous tremor in his voice.

"Oh, my goodness, yes," Mrs. Sweeny cried, "sell it!" Then, almost before the Boarder could turn to the telephone, she ordered:

"Stop!"

"But you may lose——"

"Ain't I got a chance to win more?" she asked calmly.

"Yes, but——"

"Then I'm goin' to take it. If my Danny was here, he'd say I was a fine sport to play this good bet only to show. Not me. S'pose you call up that party and ask him what it is now."

"We might go down to the New-riche Hotel, just a block below here, and watch the ticker," the Boarder suggested.

"Not me," Mrs. Sweeny objected. "Danny told me once that them things was the burglars' jimmies of Wall

Street, and I ain't goin' to have nothin' to do with 'em. Call up the gent'm'n."

THE telephone receiver clicked, and in a minute Briggs was calling off a quotation.

"He says it's fifteen and a quarter ——" began the Boarder.

"Good!" interrupted Mrs. Sweeny. "I guess I made some money by havin' my nerve along."

"But," objected the agitated Boarder, "you may lose it all by waiting. Please sell, Mrs. Sweeny."

"I won't," she stoutly replied. "I'm goin' out in my kitchen and watch my little alarm clock for ten minutes. Then we'll ask the party again how is Old Hat." And straightway she marched to the rear of the apartment, ignoring the Boarder's pleading that she stay and look to her interests. She remained away until the time was up, then she hurried in.

"Ask him again," she commanded.

The Boarder called Briggs.

"It's seventeen flat now," he reported.

"I guess," said Mrs. Sweeny slowly, "I guess you might as well tell him to sell it—no, I'll wait a bit."

"Mrs. Sweeny!" expostulated the Boarder.

"I'll wait a bit—I can use the money," she insisted. And then, through another agonizing ten minutes, she conversed happily about everything save the stock market, where the "bulls" were running rampant.

"Now, let's take another peek," she suggested.

Briggs was called, and quoted the stock.

"Eighteen and a quarter," said the Boarder, in a husky voice.

Mrs. Sweeny reflected for a moment. Then she said:

"Sell!"

And as the Boarder turned to explain the situation to Briggs, and put

in the order, she sank limply into a chair.

"My, but that was hard on a party's nerves," she gasped, as the Boarder hung up the receiver. "It's different from horse racin', 'cause you can't see 'em go."

"Well," said the Boarder, in a fagged tone, "I'm glad it's over and we're on the sunny side of the street!"

"Me, too," she echoed. "And if I knew Mister Einstein's ad-dress, I'd write him to never mind about that two hundred, and hope him luck at makin' a killin' with that money he stole. You see, mister, if it wouldn't of been for him, I'd never got that Old Hat on my mind, and this here million-

dollar thing wouldn't of happened. Didn't I tell you he was a fine gent'm'n, mister?"

"You did," agreed the Boarder, with a fine forgetfulness for details, "and he has more than upheld your estimate of him. Now, I think I'd better take that stock certificate down to Briggs' office and get your check. Let me congratulate you. You've got enough now to go to the mountains and——"

"Mountains nothin'," she interrupted. "So many people goes there that there ain't no class to 'em any more. I ain't committin' myself, mister, but would you mind fetchin' me home some time-tables, tellin' when some of them ships starts for Europe?"

More Mrs. Sweeny stories by Charles R. Barnes will be published in THE POPULAR.



OGLE WITH CARE

SLOW eye movements were blamed for many automobile accidents by Doctor W. B. Needles, in an address before the Chicago Optometrical Society recently. He advised motorists whose eyes cannot make two complete oscillations a second to take rhythmic exercises to increase their speed. No doubt this advice is sound, but those who take their eye exercise in public places are likely to be mistaken for the famous Mr. Barney Google.



THE HIGH COST OF BASEBALLS

THE average number of baseballs used in a major-league game is thirty-six. Clark Griffith, president of the Washington club, says he remembers that once when he was one of the leading flingers, he pitched a full game with one ball. Now, however, with stricter rules, smaller parks and the scarring of balls by contact with concrete stands, it is a different story. The American and National Leagues together spend about \$40,000 annually for baseballs alone.

The Last Prospect

By Kenneth Latour



I AM the captain o' my soul!" That's what he says before he dies—
Old "Placer Bill"—an' then he gasps an' waves a hand an' rolls his eyes:
"You tell 'em, Sam, I wasn't licked. I was the master o' my fate!
My head was bloody—but unbowed!" He falls back, then, an' pulls his freight.

I wondered what the hell he meant—for I was young an' green to things;
For forty years, or maybe more, Hard Luck paid all his wanderings;
Never a rush but poor ol' Bill got in when all the claims was gone;
Never a prospect hole he sunk that made up for the work he done.

All that he got was gleanin's left by lucky tenderfeet, and such;
The trails he blazed was all the same—they always led to Nothin' Much!
Well, all my trails run out there, too; an' all my dreams are spent an' dead.
I'm leavin' just like Placer Bill; an' feelin' just the way he said!

When I was young I used to think Fate made up tunes to make me dance;
But now I know the tunes I've jigged was played by snow-blind Circumstance!
Places I've been! An' things I've done! An' jolts I've took! So now I see
I couldn't half have bore it all, but for one thing—my Fate was Me!

That's what ol' Bill was passin' on, the time he died—in 'ninety-eight;
That's what I'm passin' on to you: Fate don't make men, for men *are* Fate!
Not where you go, nor what you get—the falsest gold is gold that's real—
But what you think of it all—that's Fate! What you think, an' the way you feel!

Look at me, boys! I'm dyin' broke—broke in pocket but not in pride;
I'm goin' now, where old Bill went—somewhere over the Great Divide—
"What you think an' how you feel!" I think it's time—and I found it great—
My head is bloody but— Don't forget! So long, boys! It's gettin' late!





The Vacancy

By Leslie S. Waite

An etching from life.

THE man walked slowly between the tall buildings which rose along the water front. He was shabby and down at heel, and wore a shirt and collar which once had been white. As he went, he scanned the signs on the walls of the buildings. Every now and then he entered a doorway, was gone a few moments, then reappeared to continue his search. He had been proceeding thus for some hours since eight o'clock that morning, and a job was as far away as ever.

And now he was approaching a saw-mill, and he sat down to rest for a while on a pile of logs. The yard with its neat piles of sawn lumber stretched before him. At the far end was the mill, whence came a diapason of running machinery, above which rose intermittently the whine of a band saw.

As he sat resting, he made himself a cigarette, for, although he had not a cent to buy himself food, there was still

tobacco left in a package in his pocket. The smoke would stay the hunger which had not been appeased since the previous day. A bearded Hindu passed by, driving a horse with a small truck-load of lumber, and the man called out to him, asking if there were any prospect of obtaining employment in the mill. There was not. Seven men had been laid off the previous day. The man borrowed a match and lit his cigarette.

As he sat smoking, he stared idly at the group of men working round the giant hoisting crane. They were loading square joists of timber onto a scow. As he gazed, he saw a fresh hoist of the lumber swinging over toward the vessel. Then suddenly the weighty bundle dropped downward.

To the man smoking, it seemed at first that the swift descent was simply a smart piece of lowering. And then came the shout, and the sight of the

snapped-off cable swinging threadlike against the sky, and the soiled-blue figure of the derrick engineer peering, from the doorway of his shelter, down at the group huddled round a still figure stretched on the ground.

The man rose and went over to the group by the derrick, and touched one of the men on the arm.

"Is he hurt much?" he asked.

"His neck's broken," was the reply.

"Where's the foreman's office?" asked the man.

"Right over there."

The man soon was in the foreman's office.

"There's a man just been killed over at the loading place," he said. "Can I have the job?"

The foreman rose in his seat and a look of trouble spread over his face.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Did you say a man had just been killed?"

"Yes," replied the man simply. "The hoisting cable snapped and the timber fell and broke his neck."

The foreman was running to the door, when the man stayed him with a hand on his arm.

"You'll give me the job?" he asked.

The foreman stared at him a second. "Stay here," he said. "I'll see you later."

After the business of inquiring into the accident and disposing of the body

were finished, the cable was repaired and the work of loading went on as before, except that the man took the place of the one who had been killed.

AT five o'clock, the man made his way to the foreman's office again, and found him talking to the superintendent of the mill. As he entered, the foreman said to the superintendent:

"This is the very man." And then, turning to the man, he said: "Well, what is it?"

"I'd like the money I earned this afternoon," replied the man. "I've no money to buy a meal with."

The foreman gave him an advance out of his own pocket and then, as the man thanked him and was making for the door, the superintendent called out after him. He halted, and the superintendent said to him:

"You took that fellow's death very callously this afternoon, didn't you? The foreman tells me you were thinking more of a job for yourself than of the poor fellow's misfortune, or the possible bereavement of a wife and family."

The man faced the superintendent.

"He was dead and I was alive," he said simply. Then he unbuttoned his coat, and showed the superintendent a taut leather belt, crushing inward upon an empty stomach.



THE WILLIAM AND MARY TRIO

ONE of the oldest institutions of learning in the United States has three distinguished alumni in the official and social life of the national capital. William and Mary College of Virginia, founded in 1693, is represented in Washington by Judge John W. H. Crim, assistant attorney-general in the department of justice; Rear Admiral Cary T. Grayson, who won fame as Woodrow Wilson's physician; and Graham B. Nichol, publicity head of the bureau of internal revenue.



A Chapter from Victor Hugo

THE world was just recently reminded of the fact that—even though we do ride around in motor cars, fly across oceans in swift airplanes and spend our evenings safely and comfortably at home beside our high-powered radios, listening to the strains of jazz orchestras wafted over thousands of miles of air—there is a convict ship afloat, and that France still maintains a prison camp in French Guiana. It smacks of medievalism and the Spanish Inquisition, but this spring the ship *La Marinière* sailed, for the first time in over two years, with a cargo of 340 lifers and long-term sentence men for the notorious Devil's Island, to which in the eighties the much-talked-of Dreyfus was dispatched. And that brings to mind the story of a modern Jean Valjean, hero of Victor Hugo's famous novel, "Les Misérables." For Jean Hateau, about whom this tale is told, escaped from the penal settlement at Cayenne, the same Devil's Island, twenty-three years before the World War. The young carpenter had been sent there after numerous charges of theft and burglary had been proved against him in the Paris courts of law. But Jean did not remain in Guiana for long. With several prison mates he built a raft and reached the mainland of Central America. His comrades all perished in the heavy wash of the Caribbean Sea, and, alone, Jean set out across the jungles and swamps until he came to Panama. The escaped convict was intelligent and enterprising and made out remarkably well both in escaping detection and in amassing a small fortune. In 1913 he returned to Europe and for the duration of the war Jean worked in a munitions plant in northern France. In 1919 the ex-convict went to Metz, and under the alias of Huntziger—the name of a former friend—set up a modest carpentry business. He thrived, became immensely popular with his fellow townsmen, a friend and companion of the chief of police, and even went so far in making himself solid with the habitants as to nightly engage in a card game in a local café with some city officials. Then one bright day the real Huntziger turned up in Metz in order to obtain pension documents, and the ex-convict's true identity was discovered. Jean was thereupon arrested and sent to jail. But so great an esteem had his new friends for the carpenter that fifty of the most prominent citizens signed a petition requesting that Jean be returned to liberty and to Metz. The law, however, is inexorable, and the man who had violated its iron-bound canons was forced to return to the incarceration he had fled from with so great hardship. Soon, however, pressure was brought to bear upon the penal authorities and Jean was not only saved an ocean voyage to South America and Devil's Island, but his sentence was commuted to a relatively infinitesimal fraction of the original term.

A Chat With You

IF you are too close to a thing, you cannot see it properly. To attain the right angle of vision, one must be off a bit. During the last Great War every one was more or less excited. The effects have not gone off yet. It ended suddenly and in dramatic fashion. It is possible that some folk were prepared for the beginning of the war—we grant that. But for the end of it—who heard the first news? Who knew when the big guns would lie still in their rests and stop spitting flame and smoke? Who could tell when the last call would come for the tin hats to climb out of their narrow trenches, deploy and with rifles slanted across them start their slow and stealthy march into the forest of danger?

* * * *

THE actual tin hats are all in peaceful use now. Many of them have been made into flower pots. The lads that wore them are some—so far as the physical and outward part of them is concerned—lying in Flanders fields and elsewhere. Some are still in hospitals, but the most are back at useful and sensible occupations here at home—working at jobs, bringing up their families, living the wholesome life of an American. And yet the memory of the thing is there. We are far from being militaristic. Sooner or later there will be no more war. We know—frankly speaking—that it is wrong to fight and yet we always liked seeing a fight. The regularity, discipline and control of an army's life, the roll of the drums, the flutter of the colors, the sharp bugle calls, the flash and style of it have a strong and abiding attraction.

WHEN the war ended, we had a good many stories about the war bought and paid for—thousands of dollars had been spent in that way. We never published one, taking our loss for the reason that the new era of peace must make the viewpoint of people during the war obsolete and strange. The stories were simply not right any more.

* * * *

SO now it may seem strange that we have bought a new story of the war—even more, we suggested the writing of it. We believe it is time for such a story, that it may be written now and that people may read it now with a certain sense of detachment. The story starts in the next issue of the magazine. The author is Fred Mac-Isaac. The story is called "Tin Hats." If you ever wore a tin hat in combat, if any close friend of yours ever did, you will like the story. You will like it in any case, for it is a good story. So listen then, when you buy your next **POPULAR**, for the booming of big guns, for the creak of equipment on a marching man, for the sputtering of rifle fire. It is the simple, straightforward story of a man who had no wish to fight, who never expected to be in an army, whose thought and feeling were entirely concerned with peace. It is the story of this man and a girl—no, of two girls—of his trial in an officers' training camp, his sudden shift to an engineer regiment and his appearance in the front-line trenches. How a man may turn out to be a hero in spite of himself is the story of many a man living quietly in the U. S. A. It is the story we are going to start in the next

issue of the magazine. Kipling in one of his verses remarked that all women were "sisters under their skins." Women, generally speaking, resent being told this. Each one likes to believe that she is just a little different from the ordinary run of the mill. Some woman ought to write a poem to the effect that all men are "brothers under their skins." There is a lot in it. The raw material of which heroes and civilians are made is much the same.

* * * *

WE think "Tin Hats" is a good story and will prove to be one of the best serials of the year. A short story by the same author appears in this present issue.

There are other good things in the next number. "The Lost Galleon" is a two-dollar book complete, a tale of adventure of the good old sort, easy to read but hard to forget. Ellery H. Clark is the author. Frederick Niven,

James Parker Long, Victor Lauriston, John Buchan, Henry Herbert Knibbs and Percy Waxman have each done their bit in trying to make it a good magazine.

* * * *

THERE are other good things coming in later numbers. For instance, Elmer Davis has written for us a novel with a Florida background. Half the adventurous folk in the country have been streaming down to Florida during the last year. How many people have taken a flyer there no statistician will ever be able to compute. Davis is the author of two or three successful books. He is a trained newspaper man; he can see things clearly and tell about them so that others see with him as they read. Besides this, he can write a good, human story and he has done his best in this case. It will appear in an early number.

In the next issue, out June 20th

THE LOST GALLEON

A Complete Book

by **Ellery H. Clark**

A legend of long-lost treasure lures adventurers on a perilous journey

THE BEST SHORT STORIES

and

TIN HATS

by **Fred Maclsaac**

"ATTEN-N-N-TION-N-N-N-N!"

The story of an American soldier in the Great War.
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"DIS-S-S-MISS-S-S-S!"

People You Admire , , ,

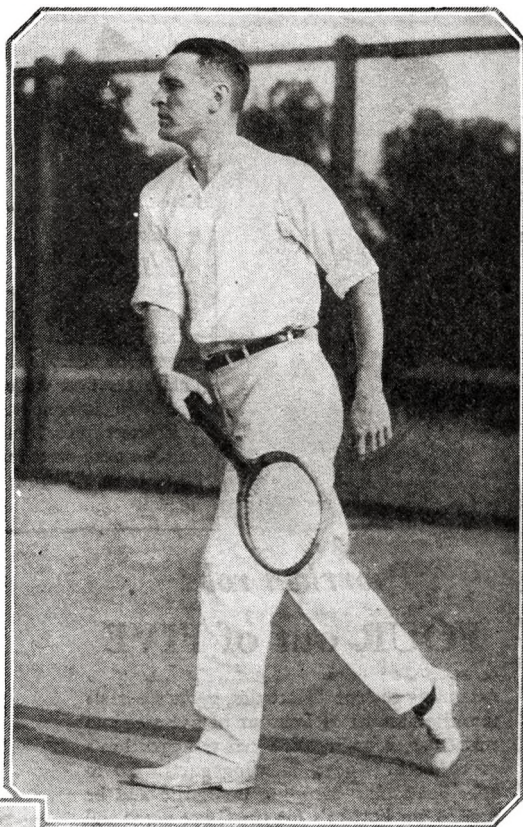
*Buoyant, vital, they banished their ills—
found fresh joy—through one food*

NOT a "cure-all," not a medicine in any sense—Fleischmann's Yeast is simply a remarkable fresh food.

The millions of tiny active yeast plants in every cake invigorate the whole system. They aid digestion—clear the skin—banish the poisons of constipation. Where cathartics give only temporary relief, yeast strengthens the intestinal muscles and makes them healthy and active. And day by day it releases new stores of energy.

Eat two or three cakes regularly every day before meals: on crackers—in fruit juices, water or milk—or just plain, nibbled from the cake. *For constipation especially, dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) before breakfast and at bedtime.* Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days. All grocers have Fleischmann's Yeast. Start eating it today!

Let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Health Research Dept. Z-29, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.



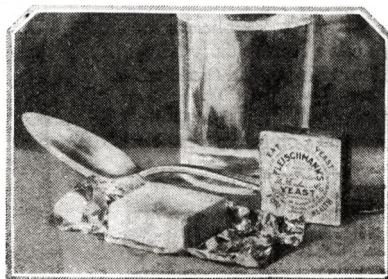
"'YOU' LOOK SO MUCH BETTER than we, who have had vacations, do' remarked several of my teachers today. 'Is it the arduous work of summer school or prosperity that agrees with you?' The truth is that Fleischmann's Yeast has cured the constipation that sapped my strength for so long. Today I feel like a new man."

CHARLES F. WILLIS, Baltimore, Md.



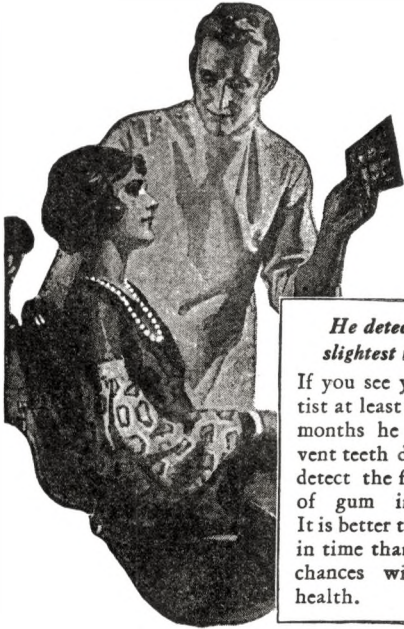
"**RUN-DOWN, IRRITABLE AND DEPRESSED,** my nerves were in a dreadful condition. My physician recommended Fleischmann's Yeast. I took three cakes a day for two months. I noticed a remarkable change. My energy returned, my complexion regained its freshness. And I still take my Fleischmann's Yeast to keep fit."

VIRGINIA B. MAURICE, New York City.



THIS FAMOUS FOOD tones up the entire system— aids digestion—clears the skin—banishes constipation.

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements



He detects the slightest trouble

If you see your dentist at least every six months he can prevent teeth decay and detect the first trace of gum infections. It is better to see him in time than to take chances with your health.

Pyorrhoea robs

FOUR out of FIVE

According to dental statistics, pyorrhoea steals into the mouths of four out of five men and women after forty. You can tell pyorrhoea's approach by tender, bleeding gums. Go to your dentist at once for treatment and be sure to use Forhan's for the Gums night and morning.

Forhan's prevents or checks pyorrhoea. It contains Forhan's Pyorrhoea Liquid which dentists use in combating pyorrhoea's ravages. It firms the gums and keeps them pink and healthy.

The entire family should begin to use Forhan's today. Besides safeguarding the health it cleanses the teeth perfectly.

You owe it to your health to make Forhan's a regular daily habit. At all druggists 35c and 60c in tubes.

Formula of R. J. Forhan, D. D. S.
Forhan Company, New York

Forhan's
FOR THE GUMS

More Than a Tooth Paste . . . It Checks Pyorrhoea



D³AIN'S¹
2 O²

There's an Eversharp for you in any style and size you want. This one, the popular standard gift and business model, with 18 inches of lead up its sleeve, gold-filled at \$5

School days end—Commencement is here—and workaday life is beginning. Give the graduate a gift that carries both sentiment and practicality.

Give something that bridges these momentous days between theory and reality, and helps translate the chance thought into sure advancement.

Give the gift that better than any other teaches Success' first lesson:

PUT IT ON PAPER!



Success waits on the man who keeps in line with his thinking those best friends of an active brain—EVERSHARP AND WAHL PEN.

Perfect writing mate for Eversharp is the new Wahl Pen. Finely balanced; beautifully and lastingly made of precious gold and silver; precisely designed to match your Eversharp, in combination sets, or individually at \$8

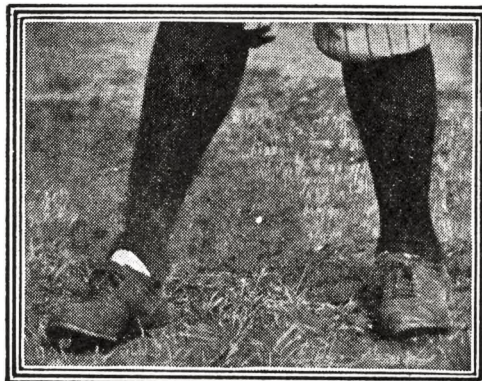


Put it on paper
EVERSHARP
and
WAHL PEN

© 1926, The Wahl Co., Chicago. Canadian Factory, Toronto

FAMOUS FEET

..how they're kept free from corns..



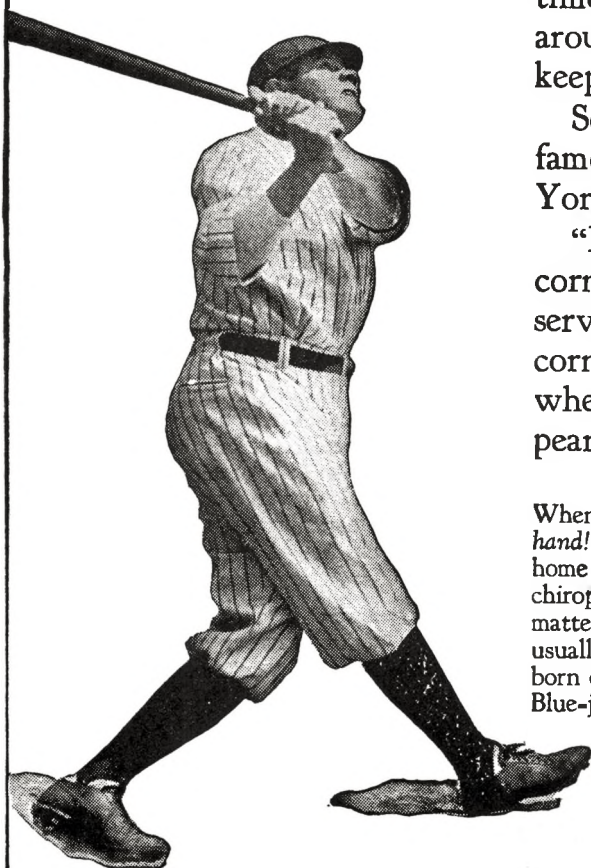
BABE RUTH'S Home Run Feet

"It isn't always the length of the hit that scores the run. Sometimes it's the speed in getting around the bases. So I have to keep my feet in prime shape."

So writes Babe Ruth—the famous "Bambino" of the New York Yankees.

"Ball players are prone to corns. Our feet get pretty rough service. But I keep mine free of corns by putting on a Blue-jay whenever a potential corn appears in the offing."

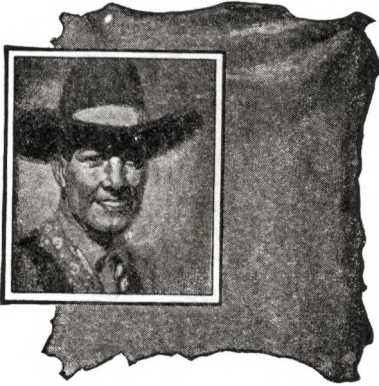
When trouble is a-foot—have Blue-jay at hand! For 26 years it has been the standard home corn-remover. Ask your physician or chiropodist. Blue-jay goes to the root of the matter and routs the troublesome offender—usually in 48 hours. But even the most stubborn corn seldom needs more than a second Blue-jay plaster At all drug stores.



Blue-jay

THE SAFE AND GENTLE WAY TO END A CORN

© 1926



Leather face or baby face

Spreading the gospel of the Mennen Shave naturally makes me notice faces a whole lot.

I've been handed the keys of the city by men with faces as tender-skinned as a baby's and others with faces that looked like a Sunday roast-of-beef on Wednesday.

And they all swear by Mennen Shaving Cream. Here's a lather that can reduce the horniest whiskers to absolute and complete limpness. The great Mennen discovery—Dermutation.

If you're one of those 3-brush-dabs and 7-second-razor artists, it gives you a *shave*—a close shave—better than you've ever had before. A shave that stays all day.

And if you've got a tender, shave-every-other-day skin, your razor goes through literally without any pull or scrapy feeling. A clean, smooth de-bearding every day.

Next, a little squeeze of Mennen Skin Balm rubbed over the shaved area. Tingling, cooling, refreshing. Tones up the tissue—soothes any possible irritation. Greaseless—absorbed in half a minute—and as sensible as putting on a clean collar to go and see your best girl. Comes in tubes.

Same way with Mennen-Talcum-for-Men. Made so it won't show on your face. Dries the skin thoroughly. Antiseptic. Leaves a gorgeous silk-like film that protects against wind, rain, sun or a scraggly collar.

Step into your corner drugstore today and get the makings. It's a good habit to get habituated to.

Jim Henry
(Mennen Salesman)

MENNEN SHAVING CREAM

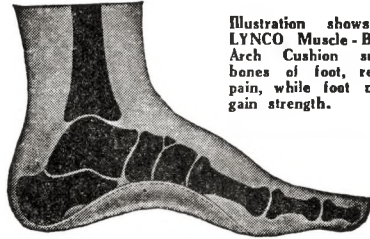


Illustration shows how LYNCO Muscle-Building Arch Cushion supports bones of foot, relieving pain, while foot muscles gain strength.

Rest Your Tender Foot Arches On Soft, Springy CUSHIONS



Never permit them to be propped up by some hard, unyielding support. LYNCO Muscle-Building Arch Cushions are entirely flexible—they're Nature's first-aid protection against foot aches and pains due to weak or fallen arches.

They conform to every curve of the foot in any position it takes, giving continuous, resilient support. It is the only type of support that follows every movement of the foot and allows free muscular action and normal circulation.



LYNCO Muscle-Building Arch Cushions are made of special cellular rubber covered with soft leather—*no metal*. They give immediate and permanent relief from pain. Light in weight and comfortable to wear any time with any shoes.

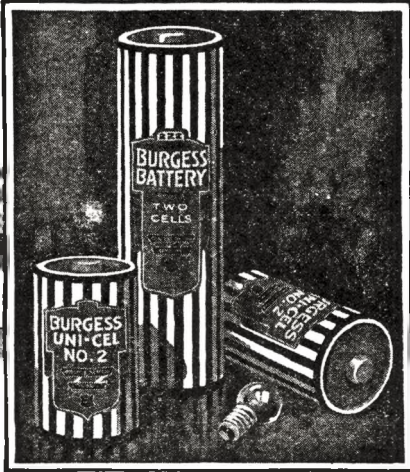
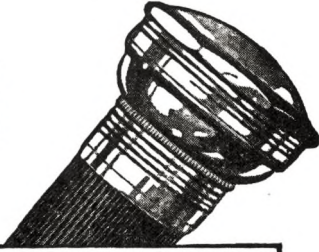


See your doctor, chiroprapist or shoe dealer
—or write us for full information.

KLEISTONE RUBBER CO., Inc.
70 Cutler Street Warren, R. I.

Lynco

EASY-WEAR FOOT AIDS



Why Buy a Burgess Flashlight?

WHY buy fire, life, theft or automobile insurance? Or, why lock your doors?

Simply to guarantee that in emergencies you will receive definite assistance and protection in one form or another which will overcome the immediate danger and possible loss.

Burgess Flashlights have for many years been a convenient and positive guarantee that will guard, guide and aid you against the dangers and inconvenience of darkness.

Don't buy just a flashlight. Ask for Burgess. Look for the distinctive package. The success of Burgess Radio Batteries has proved conclusively the quality of all products of the Burgess Battery Company.

A Laboratory Product

BURGESS BATTERY COMPANY

GENERAL SALES OFFICE: CHICAGO

Canadian Factories and Offices:
Niagara Falls and Winnipeg

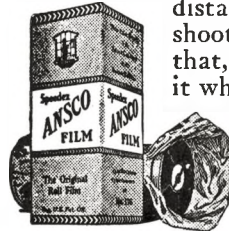
**BURGESS
FLASHLIGHTS &
BATTERIES**



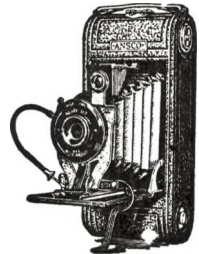
*Prove
your fish stories!
—take pictures!*

The largest always seem to get away but the big beauty that took so much skill to land makes a tale worth telling—if you can prove it with pictures.

Your Ready-Set camera is prepared for instant action required without setting for light, speed or distance. Open—aim—shoot—just as easy as that, and you can prove it when you tell it.



*AnSCO Speedex Film—
in the red box with the
yellow band—fits all roll
film cameras and is
made for inexperienced
picture takers to get just
the pictures they want.*



ANSCO
CAMERAS & SPEEDEX FILM

Pioneer Camera Makers of America

ANSCO—Binghamton, N. Y.



Vitrol Grip
GIRDLOŃ
Patented Feb. 10, 1923

With skirts so short, the younger set are now wearing stockings over the knee instead of rolled, and, still uncorsetted, have joyously welcomed the Girdlon to hold their stockings trimly taut.

The Girdlon is of dainty webbing or shirred ribbon, and is a perfectly comfortable "garter belt." There is no pinching at the waist, because it is

worn around the hips where it is scarcely felt—and it cannot possibly slip down.

If you don't find it readily, your favorite shop will order it. Or we will gladly serve you direct—webbed garters \$1.25, shirred ribbon \$1.75, post-paid. Give hip measure only and color preference.

GEORGE FROST COMPANY, Boston
Makers of the famous Boston Carter for men

Genuine Diamond Wrist Watch



Send for This Book—It's FREE!

\$1

With Order 10 Months to Pay

Simply clip this ad, pin a \$1 bill to it, and mail it with your name and address TODAY. This guaranteed 15 Jewel Wrist watch with 14 K Solid Gold case, set with 4 Blue-white Diamonds and 4 Blue Sapphires will come for your approval and 15 day trial. Price \$42.50. If satisfied, pay only \$4.16 a month, otherwise return and your \$1 will be sent back. No Red Tape—Prompt Delivery. All Dealings Confidential.

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Dept. 9861 - 1660 Broadway
New York City



Be Popular Play Jazz

It sets them going. Young folks are enamored by those tantalizing tunes. Be the Jazz King with your



SAXOPHONE

Teach yourself, 3 free lessons give you quick easy start. Try any instrument in your own home 6 days free. See what you can do. Easy terms if you decide to buy. Send now for beautiful free literature. A postal brings details.

Buescher Band Instrument Co. (68)
1556 Buescher Block Elkhart, Indiana



30 Days' Free Trial

Select from 44 Styles, colors and sizes, famous **Ranger** bicycles. Delivered free on approval, express prepaid, at **Factory Prices**. You can easily save \$10 to \$20 on your bicycle. Prices \$21.50 and up. **152 Month** often advance first deposit. Boys and girls can easily earn small monthly payments. Pay as you ride. Best quality, at factory prices, express prepaid. Lamps, wheels and equipment, low prices. Send \$1.00 money, no business direct with makers.

Mead CYCLE COMPANY
DEPT. M-4, CHICAGO



\$100 a Week Selling Shirts

Others Earning \$100 Weekly selling direct to wearer, Custom Quality Shirts made by Carlton, 6th Ave., N. Y. America's greatest shirt values, silks, staples and exclusive patterns. We deliver and collect. Your profit; 25%, paid daily. Big beautiful sample outfit FREE. Permanent position. Salesmen and Saleswomen write today for outfit.

CARLTON MILLS, INC.
98 Fifth Ave. Dept. 73-E New York

FRECKLES

Tells How to Get Rid of These Ugly Spots and Have a Beautiful Complexion

There's no longer the slightest need of feeling ashamed of your freckles, as Othine—double strength—is guaranteed to remove these homely spots.

Simply get an ounce of Othine from any drug or department store and apply a little of it night and morning and you should soon see that even the worst freckles have begun to disappear, while the lighter ones have vanished entirely. It is seldom that more than an ounce is needed to completely clear the skin and gain a beautiful complexion.

Be sure to ask for the double strength Othine as this is sold under guarantee of money back if it fails to remove your freckles.

DIAMONDS

LOFTIS BROS. & CO. 1328 Stores in Leading Cities
THE OLD RELIABLE ORIGINAL CREDIT JEWELERS
Dept. A222 108 N. State Street Chicago, Ill.

CASH or CREDIT
It's Easy to Own a Genuine Diamond Ring
Our immense stocks include thousands of the latest mountings in platinum and solid gold, and set with brilliant blue white Diamonds of exceptional quality. Order today and get your ring at once. Pay 10% down—we ship goods immediately. Balance weekly, semi-monthly, or monthly as convenient.

Big Diamond Book FREE!
Write for it Today!

No. 28
\$37.50
\$1.00
a wk.

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\$187.50
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a wk.

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\$69
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No. 30
\$97.50
\$2.45
a wk.

Wrist Watch
14-K white gold hand engraved case. Fancy wing ends. Silver dial. High grade 15-Jewel movement, \$25. \$2.50 down and \$1.00 a wk.

17-Jewel Elgin
No. 15—Green gold, 17-Jewel Elgin Watch; 25-Year Quality Case; 12 Size; Gilt Dial; \$30. \$3 down and \$1.00 a wk.

Wedding Rings
No. 626—The "Elite" \$7.50
14-K white gold
Set with 5 Diamonds, \$22.50;
5 Diamonds, \$32.50; 7 Diamonds, \$42.50; 9 Diamonds, \$52.50; 12 Diamonds, \$67.50.



They do notice your cuff buttons



A HUNDRED times a day your cuff jumps into the foreground of the picture—telling your taste in dress!

Kum - a - part Buttons in your cuffs add that touch of correctness that only good jewelry can give.

They're convenient for you to use, click open, snap shut; and they're guaranteed to last a lifetime.

At jewelers or men's shop you can easily match Kum-a-part designs to your favored shirt patterns.

Prices according to quality up to \$25 the pair.



Write for
Correct Dress
Chart "E"

The Baer & Wilde Co.
Attleboro, Mass., U.S.A.

KUMAPART
CUFF BUTTON
TRADE MARK REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

30 x 3 1/2
\$7.65

LET US SEND YOU

Goodyear, Goodrich, Fisk and other standard makes, slightly used tires which have been returned and treated with our secret process and are giving thousands unusual mileage and service.

ALL TUBES POSITIVELY NEW
YOU RUN NO RISK

Size	Tire	Tube	Size	Tire	Tube
30x3	\$3.25	\$1.50	33x4 1/2	8.25	3.00
30x3 1/2	3.85	1.75	34x4 1/2	8.50	3.25
32x4 1/2	3.85	1.85	35x4 1/2	8.75	3.30
31x4 1/2-cd	4.50	2.00	36x4 1/2	7.25	3.35
32x4	4.85	2.25	38x5	7.50	3.50
33x4	5.45	2.50	35x5	7.75	3.75
34x4	6.75	2.65	35x4.40	5.45	2.75
32x4 1/2	8.00	2.85			

Above prices plus postage or express. Should any tire fail to give satisfactory service, we will replace at 1-2 purchase price. Send \$1.00 deposit on each tire ordered, we reserve the right to substitute one make for another. If you send full amount with order, deduct 5 per cent. Specify whether straight side or cl. wanted.

CHICAGO TIRE & RUBBER CO.
3100 S. Michigan Ave. Dept. 162 CHICAGO

No Other Pen invites this test

More convincing than thirty years of everyday use is this *proof* of the *fine quality* and *remarkable endurance* of the JOHN HOLLAND Drop Test Fountain Pen. Let it fall six feet—point down—on *hardwood*. Then pick it up and write *perfectly* with it. We guarantee the Drop Test pen unconditionally.

The GIFT for Graduation



For 61 years, John Holland Fountain Pens have been favored graduation gifts. No fountain pen gives greater value in beauty and service.



JOHN HOLLAND
Drop Test
JEWEL - Fountain Pens

Sir Jewel - - - \$7.00
Lady Jewel - - - \$5.00

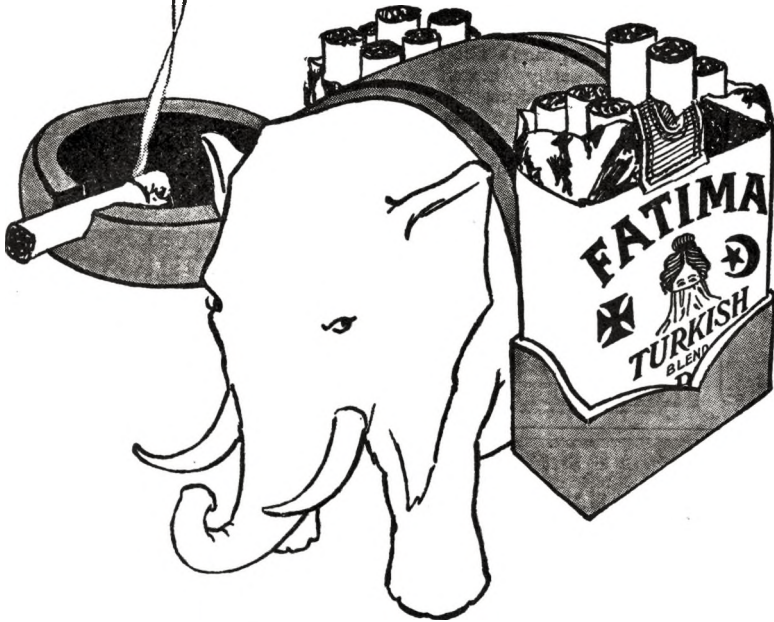
**Unconditionally
Guaranteed**

In black or colors, as you prefer. Barrels and caps are indestructible. Other John Holland Pens, \$2.75 up. Write today for name of nearest dealer.

John Holland
The JOHN HOLLAND GOLD PEN CO.
Pen Makers Since 1841
Cincinnati, Ohio

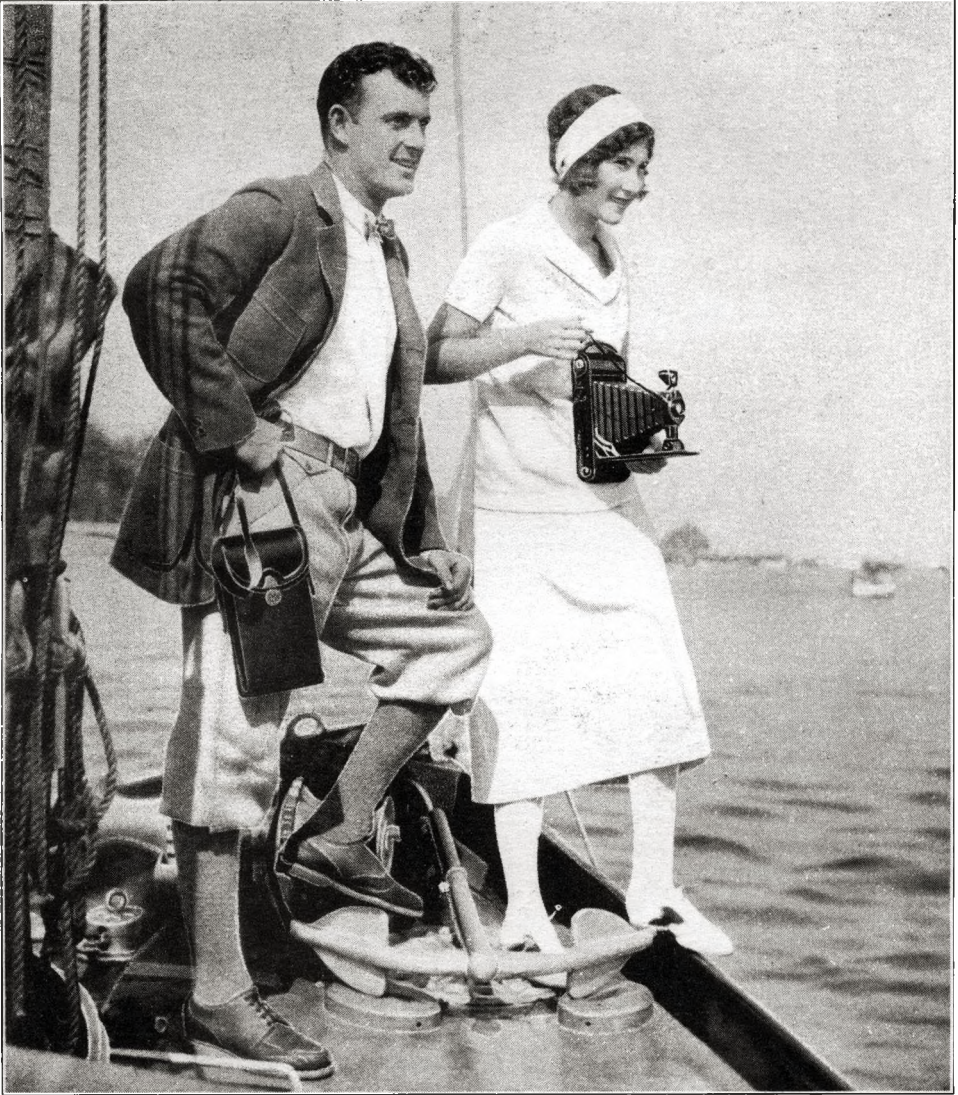
Without question

BECAUSE it costs us more to make Fatima the retail price is likewise higher. But would men continue to pay more, do you think, except for genuinely increased enjoyment? The fact cannot be denied — they *do* continue



What a whale of a difference just a few cents make

LIGGETT & MYERS TOBACCO CO.

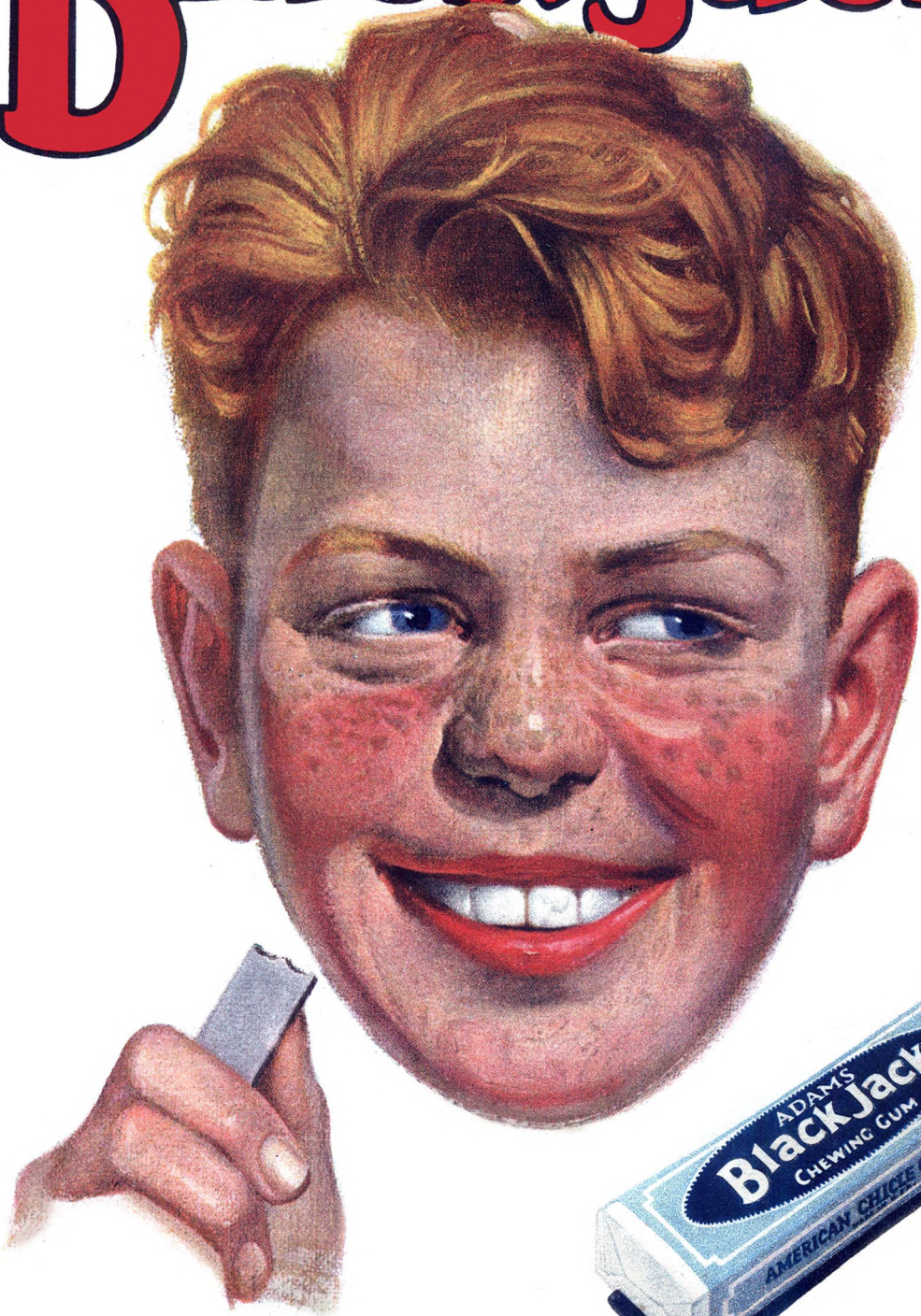


Let Kodak keep your vacation

Autographic Kodaks, \$5 up

Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N. Y., *The Kodak City*

Black Jack



"that good old licorice flavor!"