SEPTEMBER 7, 1923
VOL. LXIX No. 4

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE 20 Cents

COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL EACH ISSUE

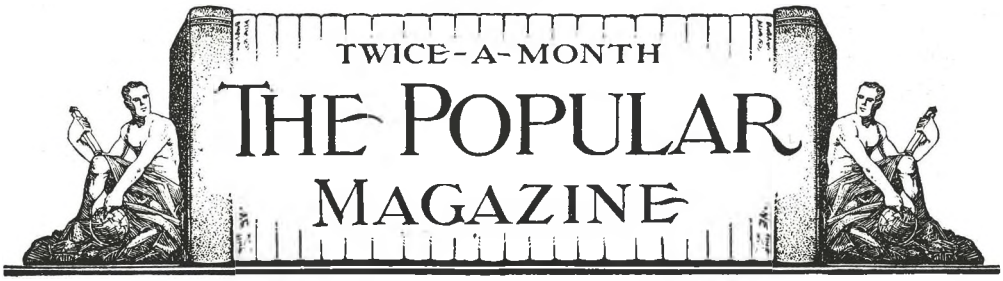
TWICE-A-MONTH SEPT. 7, 1923

The Popular Magazine

20 cts.

In the next issue of THE POPULAR—the first installment of "FOUR BELLS," Ralph D. Paine's romance of the sea. Also a complete book-length novel by Theodore Goodridge Roberts. Place an order for your copy with your news dealer now.

Vol. LXIX SEPTEMBER 7, 1923 No. 4



Twice-a-month publication issued by Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York. ORMOND G. SMITH, President, GEORGE C. SMITH Treasurer; GEORGE C. SMITH, JR., Secretary; Copyright, 1923, by Street & Smith Corporation, New York. Copyright, 1923, 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.

WARNING—Do not subscribe through agents unknown to you. Complaints are daily made by persons who have been thus victimized.

IMPORTANT—Authors, agents, and publishers are requested to note that this firm does not hold itself responsible for loss of unsolicited manuscripts while at this office or in transit; and that it cannot undertake to hold uncalled-for manuscripts for a longer period than six months. If the return of manuscript is expected, postage should be inclosed.

Address all communications to the Street & Smith Corporation

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION $4.00 **SINGLE COPIES 20 CENTS**

Wonderful 32-Piece Aluminum Set consists of 2 Bread Pans; Doughnut Cutter; 2 Loose Bottom Jelly Cake Pans; Combination Tea-kettle and Rice Boiler with lid; Saucepan Set with lid; Dipper; Colander; Measuring Cup; Percolator; 2 Pie Pans; Complete Caster Set; Tea or Coffee Strainer; Fry Pan; also cooker set of 5 pieces—makes 11 utensil combinations: Preserving Kettle; Convex Kettle; Combination Cooker; Casserole; Pudding Pan; Tubed Cake Pan; Colander; Roaster; Corn Popper; Steamer Set; Double Boiler.

FREE 10-Piece White Enameled Kitchen Set

No Money Down!

Just mail the coupon and we send this 32-Piece Aluminum Cooking Set, and the 10-Piece Kitchen Set Free. When the goods arrive, pay only $2.00 and small postage charges on the Aluminum Set. Nothing for the Kitchen Set—it is FREE. Use both sets *30 days on Free Trial* and if not satisfied send them back and we will refund your money and pay transportation both ways. If you keep them, pay for Aluminum Set, only a little every month.

FREE
10-Piece Kitchen Set
Not a penny to pay for this set. You get it absolutely free with Aluminum Set.
Potato Masher
Mixing Spoon
Measuring Spoon
Ice Pick
Egg and Cream Beater
Can Opener
Vegetable & Pan Brush
Fork
Egg and Cake Turner
Wall Rack
All have white enameled handles and hang on wall rack—keeping them conveniently at hand.

Complete 32-Piece Aluminum Set and FREE Kitchen Set

Hartman's special, selected set of heavy gauge Aluminum Ware—a complete cooking outfit, light to handle, easy to clean, always bright as silver. Will never chip, crack or rust. We guarantee it for life. 32 utensils—everything for baking, boiling, roasting, frying. And—absolutely free—a Combination Kitchen Set, 10 utensils with pretty white handles.

Nearly a Year to Pay

You pay only $2.00 and postage on arrival (on the Aluminum Set—not a penny to pay at any time on the Kitchen Set). The balance a little every month.

Order by No. 417EEMA7. Price for Aluminum Set, $18.95. No money down. $2 and postage on arrival. Balance $2 monthly. 10-Pc. Kitchen Set is Free.

HARTMAN Furniture & Carpet Co.
Dept. 5560 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

FREE BARGAIN CATALOG and FREE GIFTS

316-Page Book FREE

This great 316-page book offers the world's greatest bargains in home furnishings, jewelry and farm machinery—*all sold on easy monthly payment terms and 30 days' free trial on everything.*

Wonderful Gifts

Catalog explains how you can get Glassware, Silverware, Tablecloths, Napkins, etc., free with purchases. Send for it today. "Let Hartman Feather YOUR Nest"

HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET CO. Dept. 5560 Chicago, Ill.

Send the **32-Piece Aluminum Cooking Set No. 417EEMA7, Price $18.95,** and 10-Piece Kitchen Set. Will pay $2 and postage on the Aluminum Set on arrival. Kitchen Set is FREE. I am to have 30 days' free trial. If not satisfied, I will ship both sets back. If I keep them, I will pay you $2 monthly until the price of the Aluminum Set, $18.95, is paid. Title remains with you until final payment is made.

Name_____

Occupation_____
R. F. D., Box No.
or Street and No._____

Post Office_____ State_____
(If shipping point is different from your post office, fill in line below.)

Send shipment to _____

Classified Advertising

Agents and Help Wanted

BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. Every owner buys gold initials for his auto. You charge $1.50, make $1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. American Monogram Co., Dept. 170, East Orange, N. J.

MAKE $25 to $50 a Week representing Clows' Famous Philadelphia Hosiery, direct from mill—for men, women, children. Every pair guaranteed. Prices that win. Free book "How to Start" tells the story. George Clows Company, Desk 66, Philadelphia, Pa.

WE START YOU IN BUSINESS, furnishing everything; men and women $30 to $100 weekly, operating our "Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Booklet free. W. Hillyer Ragsdale, Drawer 29, East Orange, N. J.

$60-$200 a Week Gold Letters for Store Windows. Easily applied. Free Samples. General Agents, Metallic Letter Co., 428-B North Clark, Chicago.

SILVERING MIRRORS, French plate. Easily learned; immense profits. Plans free. Wear Mirror Works, Excelsior Springs, Mo.

MAKE MONEY silvering mirrors, all kinds plating, knives, spoons, auto headlights. Outfits furnished. Free booklet. International Laboratories, Dept. 110, 311 Fifth Ave., New York.

EARN up to $400 monthly, living expenses paid. We place men and women; trained in spare time at home for hotel executive positions. Easy Terms. Free Booklet. Stand. Business Training Inst., 211 Carlton Court, Buffalo, N. Y.

AGENTS—90c. an hour to advertise and distribute samples to consumer. Write quick for territory and particulars. American Products Co., 9692 American Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.

EARN $10 daily silvering mirrors, plating, refinishing metalware, headlights, chandeliers, bedsteads. Outfits furnished. Decie Silver Laboratories, 1133 Broadway, New York.

INVENTIONS COMMERCIALIZED. Patented or unpatented. Write Adam Fisher Mfg. Co., 223, St. Louis, Mo.

AGENTS: $15 daily easy—Your pay in advance. Introducing new insured hosiery. Must wear or replaced free. No capital or experience required. Just show samples—write orders. Elegant outfit furnished. All colors—grades, including silks. Mac-O-Chee Mills Co., Desk 4509, Cincinnati, O.

Detectives Wanted

BE A DETECTIVE. Excellent opportunity, good pay, travel. Write C. T. Ludwig, 436 Westover Building, Kansas City, Mo.

MEN—Age 17 to 55. Experience unnecessary. Travel; make secret investigations, reports. Salaries; expenses. American Foreign Detective Agency, 114, St. Louis.

DETECTIVES EARN BIG MONEY. Travel. Excellent opportunity. Experience unnecessary. Write, George Wagner, former Government Detective, 1968 Broadway, New York.

Help Wanted—Female

$6—$18 a dozen decorating pillow tops at home, experience unnecessary; particulars for stamp. Tapestry Paint Co., 110 LaGrange, Ind.

EARN $20 weekly spare time, at home, addressing, mailing, music circulars. Send 10c. for music, information. American Music Co., 1658 Broadway, Dept. 19 W., N. Y.

Help Wanted—Male

EARN $110 to $250 monthly, expenses paid, as Railway Traffic Inspector. Position guaranteed after 3 months' spare time study or money refunded. Excellent opportunities. Write for Free Booklet CM-28. Stand. Business Training Inst., Buffalo, N. Y.

BE A FINGER PRINT EXPERT. Demand increasing. Write for special free offer. American Finger Print System, 1970 Broadway, New York.

ALL MEN—WOMEN, 17 to 65, willing to accept Government Positions, $117-$250, traveling or stationary. Write, Mr. Ozmont, 308 St. Louis, Mo., immediately.

$100 to $300 a Week. Men with slight knowledge of motors who can reach car owners can earn $300 weekly without making a single sale. If they can also make sales their profits may reach $25,000 yearly. Only proposition of its kind ever offered. V. V. Phillips, 1908 Broadway, New York.

Land Opportunities

GOOD FARM LANDS! 20, 40, 80 acre tracts near hustling city in Michigan; $10 to $50 down; balance long time. Investigate. Write today for big booklet free. Swigart Land Company, X1265 First Nat'l Bank Bldg., Chicago.

Patents and Lawyers

INVENTORS desiring to secure patents should write for our guide-book "How To Get Your Patent." Send sketch or description for our opinion of its patentable nature. Randolph & Co., Dept. 412, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS. Write for Record of Invention Blank and free guide book. Send model or sketch and description for free opinion of its patentable nature. Highest references. Prompt Attention. Reasonable Terms. Victor J. Evans & Co., 767 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS. Send sketch or model for preliminary examination. Booklet free. Highest references. Best results. Promptness assured. Watson E. Coleman, Patent Lawyer, 624 F St., Washington, D. C.

Scientific

SEE yourself as others see you—Wonder-Revealing Charts and Personality Tests 10c. Thomson-Heywood, Dept. SS, Chronicle Bldg., San Francisco, Cal.

Short Stories and Photoplays

FREE to writers—A wonderful little book of money-making hints, suggestions, ideas; the A B C of successful Story and Movie writing. Absolutely Free. Just address Authors' Press, Dept. 89, Auburn, N. Y.

WRITE NEWS ITEMS and Short Stories for pay in spare time. Copyright Book and plans free. Press Reporting Syndicate (406), St. Louis, Mo.

WRITE PHOTOPLAYS: $25—$300 paid any one for suitable ideas. Experience unnecessary; complete outline Free. Producers League, 439, St. Louis.

WRITERS: Stories, Poems, Plays, etc., are wanted for publication. Literary Bureau, 175, Hannibal, Mo.

$ $ $ FOR IDEAS. Photoplay Plots accepted any form; revised, criticized, copyrighted, marketed. Advice free. Universal Scenario Corporation, 942 Western Mutual Life Building, Los Angeles.

WRITE photoplays. Big money. Free book tells how. Successful Photoplays, Box 43, Des Moines, Ia.

Songs, Poems, etc.

POEMS WANTED—Sell your song verses for cash. Submit Mss at once or write New Era Music Co., 104 St. Louis, Mo.

WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG. We compose music. Our Chief of Staff wrote many big song-hits. Submit your song-poem to us at once. New York Melody Corp., 402 E. Romax Bldg., New York.

A $500 cash prize is offered to the writer of the best second verse for our future song release "Where is Your Smile." Those wishing to compete may receive a free copy of song and rules of contest by addressing Handy Bros. Music Co., 2573 Eighth Ave., New York.

$500.00 Prize Contest. If you write the best fourth verse for our song "Empty Arms" you will receive $500.00. Send your name and we shall send you free the contest rules and words of this song. World Corp., 245 W. 47th St., Dept. 754A, New York.

PROMINENT London Music Publisher is open for available songs by American writers, amateur or professional; songs judged on merit—not writers' reputations. For further particulars write to American representative, Jack Mahoney—Dept. N—145 West 45th St., New York.

Stammering

ST-STU-T-T-TERING And Stammering Cured At Home. Instructive booklet free. Walter McDonnell, 80 Potomac Bank Building, Washington, D. C.

Vaudeville

GET ON THE STAGE. I tell you how! Send stamp for instructive Stage Book and particulars. K. La Delle, Box 557, Los Angeles, Cal.

Discovers New Way To Teach Salesmanship in 20 Weeks!

After fifteen years an amazing new method has been formulated whereby it is possible for any ambitious man to get into this fascinating and best paid of all professions in 20 weeks.

By J. E. Greenslade

HERE is the biggest discovery that has been made since men first began to prepare themselves for selling positions through spare time study at home.

After fifteen years' intensive study the National Demonstration Method has been perfected—and men can now step into a selling position inside of twenty weeks—with years of practical experience *in their heads.*

This amazing discovery may well enable you to call yourself a MASTER salesman at the very beginning of your actual selling career. For, after all, MASTER salesmanship is nothing more than a knowledge of what to do in *every* situation—and this is what you will have learned from this new method.

For the sales problems which every salesman meets during his experience have all been charted and the most masterful way to handle each of these 64 conditions is shown you. In addition to the National Demonstration Method you will get the same wonderful groundwork of selling and business knowledge which has been responsible for the success of thousands in the past.

How Well It Works

This is the method that enabled Wagner—a fireman—without any previous business training or without any fluency as a talker—to exchange his shovel for a sample case and to exchange his poorly paid hard-working situation for the most fascinating of all professions; with a salary of $7,000 a year.

After 3 months' study, in his spare time, at home, it enabled H. D. Miller, of Chicago, a stenographer, to step out of a $100 a month job right into a $100 a week position.

And I could cite hundreds of other instances, where these remarkable changes from poorly paid positions into this high salaried profession have been made after from 12 to 20 weeks of this easy, fascinating study. Men in every walk of life have made this change—farmers, laborers, mechanics, bookkeepers, ministers—and even physicians and lawyers have found that Salesmanship paid such large rewards and could be learned so quickly by this new method that they have preferred to ignore the years they spent in reading law or studying medicine and have become master salesmen.

EMPLOYERS

are invited to write to the Employment Dept. of the N. S. T. A. No charge for this service to you or our members. Employers are also cordially invited to request details about the N. S. T. A. Group Plan of instruction for entire sales forces. Synopsis and charts sent without obligation.

What This Method Means to You

Are you tired of doing routine work which wears a man out long before his time? Are you tired of the daily monotonous grind at a salary that makes it impossible to get any of life's luxuries whatever? Are you tired of the uncertainty of permanence which is always a feature of the average clerical position? Then why not decide to enter the profession where the earnings are high—where the constant demand for good salesmen insure that one may never fear loss of a position and where the work is so fascinating that it is like playing an interesting game and getting paid for it?

Get Free Book on Selling

This amazing new demonstrating method—which gives you years of practical experience in less than 5 months—is all explained in an interesting book called "Modern Salesmanship." It also explains the wonderful opportunities which exist in the selling field and tells all about our free employment service. It should be in the hands of every ambitious man who wishes to insure that his future will be a bright and prosperous one. It will be sent free and without obligation. Mail attached coupon today.

NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASS'N., Dept. 4-M, Chicago, Illinois

National Salesmen's Training Ass'n.
Dept. 4-M, Chicago, Illinois

Send me free book "Modern Salesmanship" which explains the New Demonstration Method and shows how I can become a Master Salesman. This does not obligate me in any way.

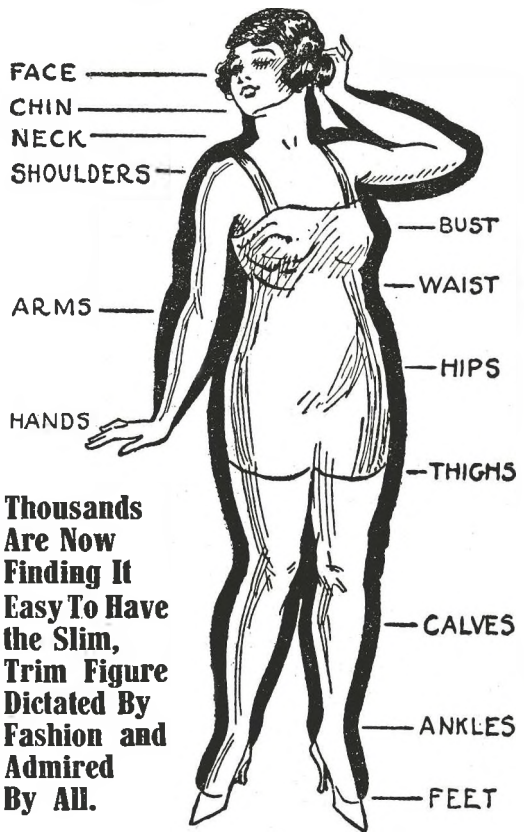
Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

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

Would You Like To Lose a Pound a Day? Then Try This Delightfully Simple Way—



Thousands Are Now Finding It Easy To Have the Slim, Trim Figure Dictated By Fashion and Admired By All.

Science Discloses Method of Quickly Reducing Excess Weight—Many Losing a Pound a Day Without Starvation Dieting or Exercise —Greatly Improves Appearance. Generous Sample Sent Free.

ARE you fat? You shouldn't be. Without rigorous dieting or exercise—by a simple natural process—you should quickly and easily be able to have the slender fashionable figure that is so attractive.

Scientists have discovered that excess fat is often caused by the subnormal action of a small gland. Once this gland is healthy and functioning properly, your weight should reduce naturally and without effort on your part, to the normal amount for your height.

And science has discovered a simple extract which tends to regulate the gland that controls fat. Without lifting a hand in unnecessary and violent exercise, you should find it a delightfully simple matter to have the ideal, slender figure admired by everyone.

The wonderful thing about the scientific formula known as Rid-O-Fat is that in losing your superfluous fat you should gain added vigor, health and energy of mind and body.

Feel Young—Look Young

There is nothing which adds to a person's age so much as fat. A few extra pounds makes any man or woman look from five to ten years older. Not only that, the excess weight and increased heart action saps vitality and energy.

Once the gland which controls your fat is functioning properly your food should be turned into firm, solid flesh and muscle. As your weight comes down to normal you should experience a delightful and amazing improvement in your appearance. You should not only feel and look younger—you should actually be younger. You should also be in better health—a real health of energy—not the fictitious and deceiving health of fat that insurance companies say shortens the life ten years.

Complexion, health and figure are improved at the same time. The result is new vitality, magnetism and personal charm that makes for success. Tasks once hard become easy and life worth while.

Quick Results—No Exercise—No Starvation Dieting. Rid-O-Fat, the scientific compound, comes in convenient tablet form, and is practically tasteless. You simply take one at each meal and bedtime. Results often surprising in their rapidity.

Within a few days you should be conscious of a new feeling of energy and lightness, taking the place of that tired, worn-out feeling.

Quickly as the fat gland resumes normal functioning you should lose weight in a healthy, normal manner. Many fat, ungainly figures are in this scientific manner helped to regain their normal and idealistic proportions, giving that fashionable slenderness and athletic poise.

And all this time you live as you please.

Nature is doing the work. No more irksome exercise—no more denying yourself of all the things you like. Take just one small, pleasant Rid-O-Fat tablet after each meal. Could anything be more simple?

Rid-O-Fat Used By 100,000 People

Since the announcement of the wonderful Rid-O-Fat formula it has been used by more than 100,000 people. Twenty to thirty thousand more people are writing for it every month. The following letters show what users think of the scientific Rid-O-Fat system of fat reduction:

Lost Forty-One Pounds In Thirty Days

"When I wrote for your Rid-O-Fat sample I weighed 245 pounds. Today, which is 30 days later, I weighed only 204 pounds. A reduction of 41 pounds in a month. I am delighted. Please send me another 30-day treatment, as I want to reduce to 145 pounds, which is the correct weight for my height. I am sure that I will realize my ambition with Rid-O-Fat and I feel better than I have in years."

Lost Twenty Pounds In Three Weeks

"According to weight tables I weighed exactly 20 pounds too much. Rid-O-Fat reduced me to normal in just a little more than three weeks. I feel better, don't get tired, and my friends say I look like a new person."

Generous Sample FREE

I want every fat person to have a chance to try Rid-O-Fat in their own homes at my expense. I don't want them to take my word or that of the thousands who have used it. I want them to see for themselves that the results are more pleasing than anything I can say. To introduce Rid-O-Fat in a million more homes I will send a free sample to anyone who will write for it. In fact it is really more than a sample, as it is sufficient to reduce the average person several pounds. I will also send with the sample an interesting booklet that explains the scientific reason for fat, and why Rid-O-Fat meets with the highest approval.

Costs Nothing! Don't send a penny—I will send the sample and the booklet under plain wrapper and fully postpaid. This does not obligate you in any way and is never to cost you a cent. It is simply a limited offer I am making to more generally introduce Rid-O-Fat.

This free offer is good for only a short time, so send me your name and address on the coupon below or a post card, and I will see that the generous sample and booklet are mailed immediately under plain wrapper postpaid. Do not try to get Rid-O-Fat at drug stores as it is distributed only direct from my laboratory to you—remember this is a short time offer and send your name at once. H. C. HAIST, Whinton Laboratories, 1518 Coca Cola Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

H. C. HAIST, Whinton Laboratories,
1518 Coca Cola Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

Without obligation in any way and with the understanding it is not to cost me a cent at any time, please send me your generous free sample of Rid-O-Fat and free booklet under plain wrapper.

Name.....

Address.....

Salesmen Make $100 A DAY With New Fuel!

Amazing Invention Does Away With Dirty Coal and Wood!

Think of the appeal you can make to every man and woman using coal! No more fires to build, bank or watch—no more worries about coal shortages, poor quality or high prices since this wonderful New Invention. No wonder Oliver Salesmen pile up such amazing records. Bentley's $215 profit in a single day, Ames's $279.65 in one day, Slade's $13,500 are only indications of what may be expected.

At last, the device that American Householders have wanted for years has been perfected—a real efficient Oil-Burner for stoves and furnaces at a low price. Oliver salesmen are riding in on the tremendous sweep of sales and profits. $1,000 a month is not an uncommon thing. No wonder—think of what this wonderful device means to every person now operating a coal stove or furnace!

Cheap, Clean, Odorless

They do away forever with coal—ashes—dirt—dust—soot—smoke—building fires—cleaning furnaces—carrying ashes—uneven heat—cold rooms—frozen pipes and plumbers' bills—coal shortages—poor quality and exorbitant prices. Banished!

3 Times the Heat of Coal

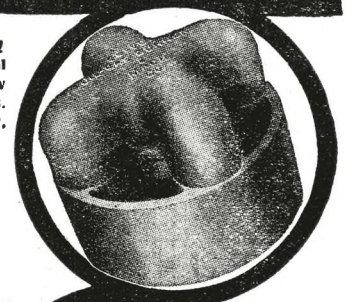
These extraordinary comforts and conveniences are only possible through the wonderful discovery by Mr. Oliver of a way to combine 95% air with 5% oil, the cheapest fuel there is. This forms a gas that burns with an intense, clean flame and gives **3 times the heat** of coal.

58 Regional Managers To Get Established National Business

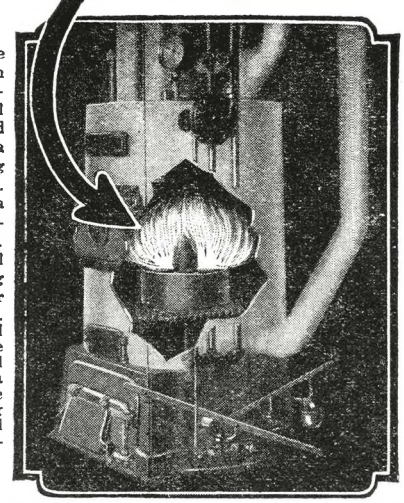
A national Distributing Organization has been made necessary by the enormous growth of Oliver sales. Millions of dollars of established business will be transferred to 58 Regional Managers. In the next few months every home in America will be reached by advertising telling the story of Oliver Furnace and Stove Burners. Selling Organizations or Big Caliber men looking for a position that will net from $10,000 up to $100,000 a year should write or wire immediately to Mr. Oliver personally (address below) for full details of this plan.

Exclusive Territory Offer

You might as well be cashing in on the nation wide sale of this invention. You might as well become an authorized Oliver agent, and have a steady money-making line as long as you live. This is one chance of a life-time. You owe yourself this opportunity. The coupon below will tell you of the amazing features of the Oliver Burner. It will bring Mr. Oliver's liberal commission offer and tell you how you can get an exclusive territory. You must act quickly. Mail the coupon at once. Do not delay a single day. Live salesmen recognize this unequalled opportunity for big profits. Territories are being snatched up. Act quick. Mail coupon immediately.



Slips right into any furnace without change. 3 times the heat of coal. No motors, gas or electricity.



OLIVER OIL-GAS BURNER

OLIVER OIL-GAS BURNER CO.

2412-U Oliver Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Canadian Distributor: 2412-U Webster Bldg., Toronto, Ont.

Oliver burner for ranges ends sweltering Summer kitchen. "Some Summer Seller" says Slade. "$4500 a month profit easy!"

16 types to fit any heater or cook stove

OLIVER OIL-GAS BURNER CO.,
2412-U Oliver Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Send me immediately complete details of your offer to prospective Oliver representatives including your free book "New Kind of Heat" and full details of Exclusive Territory Franchise Offer. I am interested in proposition checked below.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

Spare Time Work Full Time Work Regional Distributor

How Many Men are Fighting for Your Success?

ARE you trying to win single-handed and alone? Then stop—and consider the odds against you.

The battle for promotion, high position, big success, has seldom been won single-handed. Schwab, Woolworth, Ford, Carnegie, Napoleon and everyone of note found out early in life that the way to big success is thru the help of others. Many men of big achievements have told me:

"My success is due to the help others have given me—to the men I have gathered around me."

Carnegie said: "My biggest asset is my organization—I could afford to lose everything else I possess."

How many men are fighting for your success?

Have you a plan and an organization behind your fight for promotion?

Consider Napoleon and his strategy:

"Give me the largest number of men at the point of attack, and I'll win."

On this principle Napoleon defeated armies vastly outnumbering his own troops. He was not so much concerned about the size of the opposing army as he was to know where they would strike the hardest.

Where are the forces of failure striking at you the hardest? Will your defense crumple at that point?

Have you determined upon your move? What is your objective? What is your goal? Have you thought out your campaign? What are you hitting at? What forces do you command—how many men are enlisted and ready to strike for you? Will you drive off the enemy? Will you gain your objective or suffer defeat?

The things you must attack are the things that stand between you and *specialized ability*.

HOME-STUDY
By the LaSalle Problem Method
MAKES THE EXPERIENCE OF SUCCESSFUL MEN YOURS

And do you know that it is easily possible for you to reinforce yourself with an army of 1,750 promotion strategists—generals, colonels, majors, captains, and lieutenants of business, who have smashed to pieces more forces of failure than any other organization of its kind in the world?

LaSalle places such an army at your command. It is lined up ready for action in your behalf—ready to fight for *you*—if *you* are ready and willing to fight for *yourself*.

What are you going to do about it?

J. G. Chapline
President

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY, Dept. 965-R CHICAGO, ILL.
The Largest Business Training Institution in the World

FREE BOOK COUPON

Please send me catalog and full information regarding the course and service I have marked with an X below. Also a copy of your booklet, "Ten Years' Promotion in One," all without obligation to me.

- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Modern Salesmanship
- ☐ Higher Accountancy
- ☐ Law—Degree of LL. B.
- ☐ Traffic Management
- ☐ Railway Station Management
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ Industrial Management Efficiency
- ☐ Banking and Finance
- ☐ Modern Business Correspondence and Practice
- ☐ Modern Foremanship and Production Methods
- ☐ Personnel and Employment Management
- ☐ Expert Bookkeeping
- ☐ Business English
- ☐ Commercial Spanish
- ☐ Effective Speaking
- ☐ C. P. A. Coaching

Name..... *Present Position*.....

Address.....

965-B

What They Say About The POPULAR

THERE WILL BE A TEXAN WASP STORY IN THE NEXT ISSUE.

Editor of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE:

Have been a reader of your magazine since 1905, and at last have to register a kick. I have been eighteen years finding something to call you on, and at last I have the goods on you. Recently you have been running a series: "The Extraordinary Affairs of the Texan Wasp," but in the last two numbers I find these stories missing. I sure was some peeved, as I was very much interested in Robert Henry Blane.

Your complete novels are in a class by themselves, and I have no fault to find with your short stories. The only kick I have to make on the continued stories is that I can hardly wait for the next number of the magazine. Waiting seems to shatter my nerves. I have read almost all the magazines, but find that there is but one POPULAR. Hoping to find my old friend "The Texan Wasp" in the next number. H. C. TREMAIN.

Stockton, California.

FROM ANOTHER VETERAN READER.

Editor of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE:

I have been a subscriber to THE POPULAR MAGAZINE since its birth, and have a complete file of issues, with the exception of one number. My friends and myself have certainly enjoyed the magazine very much. I suppose that such a statement is no surprise to you, as you have a good many POPULAR fans who have stuck all the way through. Yours for continued success of THE POPULAR.

DE LANCY COSSETT.

Wilmington, Illinois.

GETTING BETTER ALL THE TIME

Editor of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE:

I simply had to write to tell you how much I enjoyed "The Garden of God," by H. de Vere Stacpoole. I like all his stories, but this one more than usual. I have been reading the magazine for eight years, although I am only sixteen now, and hope that I will be able to read it for many more years to come. I like it because there are not a whole lot of silly love stories. I like almost all the writers in THE POPULAR, but especially Stacpoole, Marshall, Knibbs, and lots of others. Please give us lots of mystery, detective, and adventure stories. THE POPULAR is getting better all the time. I read a lot and have a library of hundreds of books, but I always read THE POPULAR till it falls to pieces.

ANNA E. BURROWS.

Lyon Park, Virginia.

ONE THING HE DOESN'T LIKE.

Editor of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE:

After reading all the stories in THE POPULAR I turned to one of the back pages to see what other people had to say about your magazine. I find that I am not the only satisfied customer. My only regret is that it doesn't come every week instead of twice a month. Good luck to THE POPULAR. K. W. CASWELL.

Eagle Lake, Minnesota.

ONE WAY OF READING THE POPULAR.

Editor of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE:

I began reading THE POPULAR at the time you published "Ayesha," and have been a steady reader ever since. I have nearly always lived where I could procure a copy, fortunately. It would be hard for me to say just which author I like best, but among those I like to hear of most often are Lynde, Stacpoole, Paine, Norton, and Knibbs. I usually read THE POPULAR backward—that is, I read the "Chat" first, then the shorter stories, leaving the serials and the complete novels until I have plenty of time. Like the man who "always voted for Bryan," I shall always read THE POPULAR, and intend to teach my boys to do the same. CHESTER E. PHILLIPS.

Cleveland, Ohio.

HE CAN'T FIND AN EXCUSE TO STOP READING IT.

Editor of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE:

About five years ago I picked up a POPULAR MAGAZINE in a railroad train to pass away a couple of idle hours. I expected to read perhaps a couple of stories and then throw it away. I found, however, that the stories were so interesting that I kept reading them until it was time to leave the train, and then carried the magazine with me. Then I decided to buy your magazine until I read a story so poor that I could, without hesitancy, discontinue buying it. Months passed and I continued to buy it, and now have reached the point where I cannot hopefully look forward to a poor group of stories so I can stop buying your magazine. I look forward to each issue. The stories you publish are clean, interesting, exciting, and original, and do not fall to the level of claptrap literature. This letter is merely a word of appreciation from one of your many readers, and is written only with the idea of trying to tell you that a magazine such as you publish, with its sweet, clean stories, with not an objectionable feature in the hundreds that I have read, is a magazine that is well worth while to go into homes and be read by the women of the family as well as the men. I know that you are continually striving to improve on what seems to me to be a perfect magazine. H. W. GREGG.

West Orange, New Jersey.

The POPULAR Magazine on the 7th and 20th at all news stands Twenty Cents

Garage foreman at $75.00 a week

Positions like this are waiting for men who can fill them. And bigger jobs ahead. Automobile service-stations everywhere need high grade trained men. They want men who are not only good mechanics, but who know **shop management, repair methods, electrical work.** Get this knowledge in a three months complete course at the Michigan State Automobile School, in Detroit the Auto Center

I can make you a big money man, whether you are now a mechanic or not. Are you mechanically inclined? Then you can succeed in this business. Not necessarily as a mechanic, but as a business man, with a **foundation** of mechanical training. The opportunity is simply unlimited. Over 13 million cars running. 400,000 were made in one month. The service business is enormous.

Write to me today for full information. I can fit you for a good position, or to run a business of your own, as I have thousands of others. Write right now.

A. G. ZELLER, President

MICHIGAN STATE AUTOMOBILE SCHOOL

(Endorsed by the Automobile Industry)

Box 2229, 3729 Woodward Ave., Detroit, Mich.

LEARN Electricity

Great Shops of Coyne —complete in 3½ months. $100,000 worth of electrical equipment.

Free Railroad Fare

Enter anytime. Special limited offer. Drafting and Radio Free. *Send for big free catalog.* Act now!

Coyne Electrical School—Dept. 14-16
1300-1310 West Harrison Street, Chicago, Illinois

MAKE MONEY AT HOME

15 to 50 Dollars a week, for your Spare Time—No Canvassing. Experience Unnecessary. Write to-day. Free Outfit.

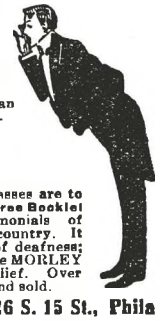
UNITED SHOW CARD STUDIO.
211 Dinan Bldg., Detroit, Mich.

"DON'T SHOUT"

"I can hear you with the MORLEY PHONE." It is invisible, weightless, comfortable, inexpensive. No metal, wires nor rubber. Can be used by anyone, young or old. The Morley Phone for the

DEAF

is to the ears what glasses are to the eyes. **Write for Free Booklet** containing testimonials of users all over the country. It describes causes of deafness; tells how and why the MORLEY PHONE affords relief. Over one hundred thousand sold.



THE MORLEY CO., Dept. 758, 26 S. 15 St., Phila

Save ½

Buy direct from the manufacturers and save one-half. Your choice of either high-grade watch. Octagon or round case. 14 Kt. gold-filled 20 yr. case with 20-yr. gold-filled link bracelet, full jewel. Gold dial. Stem wind and set. Adjusted and regulated. $12 value, our price **ONLY** $5.95 prepaid. Tonneau shape, 14Kt. White gold-filled 25 yr. case. Silk grosgrain ribbon, gold-filled clasp. Beautiful white dial. Sapphire crown, 6 jewels. Regulated adjusted. Fully guaranteed. $18 value. Our special price **ONLY** $7.55, prepaid. Order today. Send no money. Pay on arrival. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded promptly.

SUPREME JEWELRY MFG. CO.,
Dept. 9012 434 Broadway, New York

TO CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL STUDENTS & GRADUATES

Write for Free Book

The Secret Door

It contains a vital message for you. Sent absolutely FREE. No obligation.

NU KAPPA SIGMA
5 Bungalow Court, Newark, New Jersey

UNLUCKY?

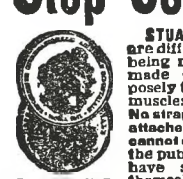
Then wear this Mystic Serpent. Replica of Ancient Hindu charm against evil spirits, sickness, spells, and symbol of **GOOD LUCK** in love, business, games. Heavy, weird and startling. Genuine **14-Karat** gold shell, 3 year guarantee For Men and Women.

Secret "formula for luck" **FREE.** Send measure (string tied around finger.)

AHLI-C. BABA, Box 55, 116 Str. Sta., New York
Pay $2.27 and postage to postman on delivery.

---

21 Jewel Burlington



$1 Down

Adjusted to the Second—Temperature—Isochronism—Positions—21 Ruby and Sapphire Jewels—Cased in a 25 year Gold Strata Case. Only $1 down will bring you this masterpiece. Write today for free book to

Burlington Watch Company
19th Street & Marshall Boulevard Dept. 14-06 Chicago, Ill.

Stop Using a Truss

Reduced Fac-Simile Gold Medal.

STUART'S PLAPAO-PADS are different from the truss, being medicine applicators made **self-adhesive** purposely to hold the distended muscles securely in place. **No straps, buckles or spring attached**—cannot slip, so **cannot** chafe or press against the pubic bone. Thousands have successfully treated themselves at home without hindrance from work—most obstinate cases conquered.

Soft as velvet—easy to apply—inexpensive. Awarded Gold Medal and Grand Prix. Process of recovery is natural, so afterwards no further use for trusses. We prove it by sending Trial of Plapao absolutely **FREE**

Write name on Coupon and send TODAY.

Plapao Co. 633 Stuart Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Name.....

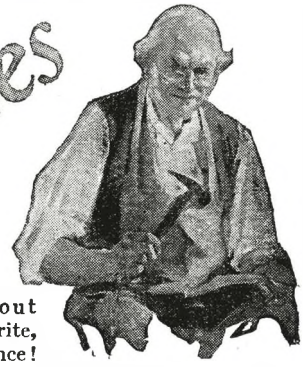
Address.....

Return mail will bring Free Trial Plapao.....

What could you do with $2000?

$5000 in Cash Prizes

Somebody's Letter about Leather will win that much in hard cash. Why don't you write that Letter?



The best Letter about Leather will earn $2000.00.
The next best letter, $500.00.
Third best letter, $200.00.
Five prizes of $100.00.
Ten prizes of $50.00.
Twenty prizes of $25.00.
Eighty consolation prizes of $10.00.
One hundred and eighteen cash prizes, amounting to $5000.00, for Letters about Leather.

WHAT a Letter about Leather you can write, out of your own experience! Those shoes with soles that it seemed would never wear out . . . there is a practical reason back of that wear.

Leather is so tough because the living hide is made of millions on millions of springy fibres, bundled tight together, and tunneled with tiny pores. Tanning makes these fibres even tougher than nature made them.

A leather sole "gives" just enough to make walking easy. Through the pores, the foot's heat escapes. Your skin breathes, your feet stay cool.

Some mother will be sure to seize on such traits of leather to win a prize with a letter on how well it suits her children's foot-needs.

Any business girl, whose limited means must keep her trimly shod, soon learns how only good leather soles keep shoes style-fresh.

Many another merit of leather will furnish themes for cash-winning letters. Leather belts that have driven machinery year after year; old sole-leather trunks, banged around the travel-routes of the world for years.

Leather stands the weather! How many know that—and will write letters to prove it! What is to keep you from winning the $2000 first prize?

Write your Letter about Leather—to-day!

Rules of the Contest

1—Letters must be written in the English language, and on only one side of the paper.
2—The competitor's name and address must be written at the top of the first page of the letter.
3—The letter must be mailed in a sealed, stamped envelope. No post cards will be considered.
4—There shall be no limits to the length a letter may be; and any competitor may send in as many letters as desired.
5—This Contest shall be freely open to anyone, anywhere.
6—The first prize will be awarded to the contestant whose letter on the subject, "Nothing Takes the Place of Leather," is the best in the opinion of the judges.
7—The Contest opens officially June 30, 1923, and closes October 31, 1923.
8—In case of tie, both or all tying contestants will receive the full amount of the prize tied for.

JUDGES

MARTHA E. DODSON, *Associate Editor, The Ladies' Home Journal*
PRESIDENT FREDERICK C. HICKS *of the University of Cincinnati*
PRESIDENT FRASER M. MOFFAT *of the Tanners' Council*

Address your letter to Contest Judges

AMERICAN SOLE *and* BELTING LEATHER TANNERS
17 Battery Place, New York City

Tanning is one of the nation's great industries which touches the life of every citizen. It is unprotected by tariff of any kind. The return upon capital invested in the business of tanning sole and belting leather is less than that of almost any other major industry. In order to place the facts about the industry before the public and awaken a consciousness of the value of good leather, this advertising campaign is undertaken by a group of the principal sole and belting leather tanners.

Good Bye Foot Pains!

—New Invention Ends Them Instantly

No rigid, uncomfortable supports or metal appliances—no ugly, expensive special shoes —no cumbersome braces, straps or bands! Yet every ache and pain disappears at the first step, and your feet are quickly restored to their old time health and vigor.

No matter how painful, weak and tender your feet may be—no matter how long you have suffered with them, or what other methods of treatment you have tried in vain—you can have now glorious foot comfort *instantly*—through a marvelous new invention based on the latest scientific discoveries.

With the first step you take this new discovery gives you the delightful feeling of walking on cushions of air. Thousands have told us it is like getting a pair of new feet!

For this sensational new invention goes direct to the *cause* of the trouble and removes it. It is positively *guaranteed* to relieve every pain and to bring you *lasting* foot happiness—or it costs you nothing.

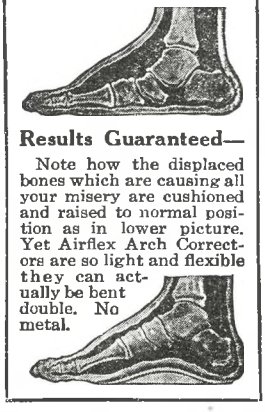
Why It Banishes All Pain

The latest scientific foot discoveries proved that 99 out of every 100 foot pains are caused by faulty arches. Your arches consist of a series of nicely fitted bones which are normally held in place by the foot and leg muscles. But often these muscles become weakened, strained and stretched. As a result the weight of your body forces the unsupported bones out of place. Then the displaced bones grind into each other and into the sensitive flesh, causing excruciating pain. The muscles become torn and twisted and ache all through foot and leg. Besides, as the foot flattens, it naturally spreads in the shoe, causing pressure that brings corns, bunions and blisters.

Yet regardless of how far the muscular weakening has gone or how sore and aching your feet, the whole condition is instantly corrected by this remarkable new invention. For it not only *at once* works the displaced bones back in position, thus relieving all pain and strain—but it *exercises* and *strengthens* the muscles with every step you take, thus making for permanent cure.

How New Invention Works

This amazing new device, which can be slipped into any style shoe, is entirely different from any other. Unlike the old-fashioned hard leather or metal supports, it is not a mere rigid prop which actually weakens the foot muscles. It is in the form of a light and marvelously springy pad of special Russian sponge rubber, scientifically formed to the natural arch of the foot and actually *surcharged with air!* These wonderfully cushiony pads—called Airflex Arch Correctors —are so light and flexible that you don't know you are wearing them.



Results Guaranteed—

Note how the displaced bones which are causing all your misery are cushioned and raised to normal position as in lower picture. Yet Airflex Arch Correctors are so light and flexible they can actually be bent double. No metal.

Yet as you walk on them the resilient rubber at once gently works the sagging arch bones back into their natural positions. This immediately removes pressure and strain, so that pains and aches instantly disappear.

But best of all, as the springy rubber yields to your weight, it reproduces exactly the natural spring of your arch. Thus with every step it exercises and strengthens the foot muscles, and so quickly restores the strength and vigor of the entire foot.

Send No Money

Results are *positively guaranteed!* If you do not find practically instant foot comfort—if you do not experience a wonderful new and *lasting* foot happiness—the trial costs you absolutely nothing.

Simply mail the coupon now without a cent in advance. Give the exact size of your foot as instructed below. Don't hesitate to order by mail, for every day we fit hundreds in this way. Although Airflex Arch Correctors have sold regularly for $3.00, when the postman hands them to you just pay him the special low price of $1.95 (plus few cents postage) in full payment. Then slip them into your shoes and wear them for five days at OUR risk. If after 5 days you are not absolutely delighted and amazed at the wonderful relief and comfort they bring, simply return them, and your money will be instantly refunded.

But don't delay. This special offer is being made for a short time only and may never be made again. So mail the coupon today—now—and say Good-bye to foot pains forever. Thompson-Barlow Co., Inc., Dept. A-469, 43 West 16th Street, New York, N. Y.

LOID PRICE INTRODUCTORY OFFER COUPON

If not sure of shoe size, stand on piece of paper and trace outline of stockinged foot. Hold pencil upright. Enclose this with coupon.

Thompson-Barlow Co., Inc.,
Dept. A-469
43 West 16th St., New York, N. Y.

Send me at your risk the proper pair of your new Airflex Arch Correctors. I will pay the postman only $1.95, plus the few cents postage, in full payment. It is fully understood, however, that if I am not delighted after 5 days' trial, I may return them and you agree to refund my money without question.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

Size of Shoe.....Width..... ☐ Men's ☐ Women's

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LXIX. SEPTEMBER 7, 1923. No. 4

Sea Wrought

By George Hugh Banning

Author of "'Etchin's,'" "Spunyarn," Etc.

Here is a sea story that is well off the beaten track of ocean-going yarns. It is packed with adventure. Its situations are as convincing as they are unusual and dramatic. Its characters are original and living—each with his own arresting peculiarities that make him real. You will not soon forget the sculptor who is not alone an artist but a man after anybody's heart; nor the captain of the *Jane* who is as handy with a page of Vergil as he is with a gun or a belaying pin, and hates a split infinitive as heartily as he does a meddling landlubber. Nor will you easily lose sight of the captain's daughter who is as much at home in four languages—two of them ancient—as she is on the heaving bosom of the Pacific. We commend you a voyage with the *Jane Macfarland* to the Isle of Nick.—THE EDITOR.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

HE swung jauntily with his bamboo stick—a spruce sliver of a man past middle age and with a mustache bristling sparsely, like tiger whiskers. Nearing the top of a cobbled slope, his kittenish grin faded from his face.

It was a very early July morning; and from the Golden Gate of San Francisco a low sweep of fog had closed upon Russian Hill, leaving its conglomerate dwellings—tenements, apartments, hovels and fashionable residences—half submerged.

Here by a studio, brown shingled and jade green, the little personage brought up sharply and clanged upon a knocker. He waited only an instant before pushing open the door; then, with an air that might have been mistaken for one of ownership, marched on, halted and drew up stiffly. It was a vaulted room, yawning from a great window at Mount Tamalpais across the bay; and there, over the foggy drifts, went the gaze of his amber eyes. They came to no positive focus until something moved directly before him and a gruff voice said:

"Francis Barette! Confound it! Come down out of heaven and meet a friend."

"Why—why, Patton! Hello, Patton."

In a twinkle the little creature was back in his shell of composure. Only his head protruded and this was shielded by an almost impenetrable smile and a nose as sharp as a snapping turtle's.

"One might be excused," he said, pulling off his yellow gloves, "for any such demonstration of surprise upon seeing *you*—here—at this hour! Are you waiting for Rupert?"

"Waiting for Rupert! No! I've quit waiting. I'm laying for him now. Why don't you infernal artists have telephones?"

Patton was an elderly gentleman, dark, heavy and with a senatorial chop to his white mustache. He had been reading the morning paper. He started to put it aside, but with a sudden glance at its columns rolled it into something resembling a club and tucked it under his arm. Barette, maintaining a lofty chin, was extending a hand; and, after sufficient delay to denote sufficient contempt, replied:

"We never trouble ourselves with telephones, my dear man."

"And we," replied Patton, "with a little money to spend, don't *have* to trouble ourselves with artists! See here, Barette, I am in Keith's studio this morning on business. I've got a deal to make with him; but it's got to be put over *now*. I sail day after tomorrow. Gone at least five months. Maybe more. My yacht's at Belvedere; and I'm due aboard before ten. I've been here half an hour already. I thought Rupert Keith came to work early!"

Barette made a circular gesture with his hand and puckered his lips.

"His mere absence from his studio, my dear fellow," he explained, dropping into a deep armchair, "would scarcely evince an opposite; although I will confess that Rupert's habits are as changed as Rupert himself. One seldom knows where he is or what he is doing, although recently his early mornings have been spent down on the water front. He seems to have a very unusual model down there. *Very!* A sea captain's daughter. Not the kind, you know, one might feel disposed to ask to one's studio, or even to accost, as it were, without the proper introduction. In fact, Rupert, being very much of an idealist, does not care to speak with the girl. He is afraid of disillusionment; afraid that her beauty might be only skin deep. Strange he should look at it that way—a mere *instrument*, one might term her. She's what we call a snapshot model. She must be taken unawares, so to speak. Therefore he is content to make pencil sketches, bring them home and try them in clay." He nodded toward a covered figure; and, with an air of pity, shook his head. "Rupert Keith," he said, "is a broken man. His triumph and his defeat may be blamed."

"What do you mean?" demanded Patton, removing the newspaper from under his arm and commencing to unroll it.

"I refer, almost obviously, to his triumph in art through his statue, 'Power;' and, since you force me to say it, his defeat in love due to your daughter. Both were very bad for him. He has been unable to accomplish anything since—not even with his new model whom I am sorry to regard as his last hope. In her alone is vested a possible inspiration—opportunity to conceive a work as great as 'Power.' As you may know, it is to be called 'Virtue;' and if in appearance there ever was a paragon of such in this city, Rupert has been fortunate in his choice of models. He does not know that I have had the opportunity of judging her; but she is truly the embodiment of unconscious beauty, with eyes that seem to look not at the world but into wonderland."

As the little man continued with his description he seemed to forget all else. His eyes were half closed, his face screwed into a hard knot and his hand, extended like a claw, stirred the air before him as if he were brewing some sweet concoction.

"There is a rich tint of sun upon her skin," he went on, fairly tasting the phrases as they came, "and there is a tinge of gold and dull copper in her almost auburn hair, making her in herself a living, breathing bronze. When I saw her step out from the vessel's cabin she was an Oriental doll from an ivory box—Chinese costume, gray-blue like the calm of a misty sea; and white with a touch of vermilion were the emboidered gardenias. Ah, Patton, I'm afraid she is too intricate, too delicate, too closely woven with dreams to find reflection in Rupert Keith. Six times he has fallen so short of his ideal that gradually he is being driven to distraction. She could not project her spirit upon a man grown so bitter toward life in general. I tell you he is *through!* Rupert Keith is a broken man."

Patton moved about uneasily. An angry shadow crossed his face. He snapped the newspaper out flat upon his knees, glanced up and his eyes flashed.

"Broken, man," he growled. "I don't wonder. Don't wonder at all. This article! I happened to be reading it when you came in a moment ago. It intimates that *you,* Francis Barette, and not your pupil, Keith, modeled the statue 'Power.' That's enough to break anybody, let alone a man like Rupert. Are you going to let this thing go on?"

Barette raised his eyebrows. "Those stories are unadulterated twaddle. They mean nothing at all. It's all because of Rupert's delay in fulfilling his contract with the city. 'Power' came so easily for him. But the sister piece, 'Virtue!'" He sighed. "Gad, if patience were only that! You know, Patton, there exist in this rotten vicinity certain rumors regarding a financial difference between Rupert and me. Twaddle, of course; but with 'Virtue' delayed and 'Power' modeled by Rupert in no one's presence but my own, people suspect. Reporters, editors even—constantly they come to my studio and ask if it is not true that, because of our difference, I have abandoned all interest in the young man. And it's all so ridiculous that I simply refuse to discuss the matter. Then, what happens but on the following day there appear long stories to the effect that 'Francis Barette, world-famed as the hermit sculptor, did not deny' that this rumor and that were true. Such unbounded audacity these papers have!"

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Oh, something will have to be done, surely. I must right the situation at once."

Patton leaned back, lighting a cigar.

"You're recognized as a great master, Barette. You've made your name, while our friend Keith is barely started. For you it would be a simple twist of the finger to effect a complete retraction, to kill those rumors dead before it's too late. I'm interested in that young man's future and it's no secret that I came very near being his father-in-law not so many months ago. It hasn't been very pleasant for me, all this. Day after to-morrow starts my first voyage aboard the *Pasado Mañana* with Rupert left behind; and now it's—well, to give Eileen a chance to forget him."

He paused thoughtfully while the smoke clouds swirled up before his dark face.

"I consider it a misfortune that she chose to do it," he went on. "She's a little too much of a romanticist. I've noticed it growing in her since she was a child. And Rupert—a bit too wrapped in his work, too uncompromising in his division of interest. Then too, his models! Sculptors need them, I suppose." Blowing forth a heavy cloud, he sat up and waved it away. "But they'll forget. Both, in time. A little trip for Eileen, a change of environment and all that. By the way, Barette, I see by the papers you're taking a little sea voyage yourself. What about this infernal island of yours; this Utopia, or whatever you call it, of art? Where the devil is it?"

Barette raised his chin but did not answer.

"Oh, yes, I've read all about it! Where you were a hermit for ten or twelve years. A kind of a magic statue factory in the South Seas. Mystery, and all. Good publicity anyhow; but where is it?"

"Allow me to flatter you, Patton, by believing that you can't be serious in asking me such a question."

"And allow me to flatter you by replying that it's not curiosity but real interest that prompts me to repeat my question. As I understand it, you're about to go down there to pick up what remains of your work and bring it back immediately. What will you care then for the island? You don't intend being a hermit there again, do you? My daughter and I are out with some friends on a little spree. We want to make it interesting; are planning to call in at every weird place on the ocean. I have a friend in the hydrographic office in Washington who sent me information—as much as is known—on every island marked 'position' or 'existence doubtful' that's listed. When I get home there'll be a grand revision of Pacific Ocean charts; and you can bet your pretty spats on that!"

This time "the hermit sculptor's" face achieved a perfect sneer. "Many brave hearts lie asleep in the deep, Patton; fools as well. Doubtless, since you seem to be a devotee of our newspapers, you read three days ago of the *Ventana* disaster only one hundred miles from The Gate. Take warning from that and remain ashore. And I might suggest that if you are as you say, taking your daughter with you to enable her

to forget her affair with Rupert, Pacific Ocean charts are better left alone."

"You infer then, that Keith is sailing with you?"

"What I infer, my dear fellow, I generally leave for normal intelligence to decide."

Patton grinned. "Well, you don't have to be so damned smooty about it! By thunder, I'm going to put my intelligence to the test and find your old island. You've given me an idea. If we meet Rupert Keith there, so much the better. Here's a young man, for example, whose engagement to a certain young lady was broken because of the fact that she would marry no one whose—how was it now?—no one 'whose heart was sold to clay.' That's how she figures it, anyhow. Thought him a recluse. Didn't like him putting in so much time at the studio. Wanted him to do something more romantic. And here she is pining away because of her own decision. Something wrong there, surely. Well, now suppose she met him way down somewhere on a cannibal island. We just happen to call, say. If an island of that nature wouldn't make romance enough for the girl she'd be the most beautiful prospect for an old maid imaginable. Are there cannibals on your island?"

Barette said nothing.

"I leave Monday. When do you plan sailing?"

Barette said nothing. He removed a carved ivory cigarette holder from its case and sauntered to the window. Patton beamed after him over the top of his cigar.

"Oh, well," he sighed at last, rising, "I'm afraid I can't wait any longer. But seriously, please don't forget to tell Keith that I was here on very important business. I've got about ten thousand dollars, payable now or later, for an option with fair limits on his output, to commence the day he finishes 'Virtue' and is done with the city. If he wants to see me about it I'll be in Belvedere till Monday noon. Give my love to the little cannibal girls if you get there first."

The other bowed. He lighted a cigarette and his yellowy eyes gleamed through the smoke. Then the door slammed and he was alone. Casually he strolled to the table where lay the discarded newspaper. He picked it up and his gaze fairly feasted upon one particular column. A few minutes later the journal lay burning upon the hearth, and "the hermit sculptor," a smile tucked up beneath his parrot nose, stood warming his hands on the flame.

CHAPTER II.

As surely as the statue "Power" had been converted from soft clay into bronze, so had its conceiver been transposed from flaccid youth into tempered manhood, until the modest strength vested in his stature ceased to contradict its substance and the whimsical delicacy of his features stood out like a challenge in defense of itself. This expression, perhaps, was not altogether justifiable; for fame had come overnight; and of course there is such a thing as taking a fool's chance and being rewarded by a fool's luck.

But Rupert Keith was seldom taken for a fool. The worst that could be said of him was that he had learned the best too young; and already the day of realization had come. As the "youngest master sculptor of the world" he had been awarded the laurel taken from Dardé of France; but this wreath the victor was about to lay upon the grave of his youth where "Power" alone stood as the monument. To this statue he had given the spirit of his earlier years, leaving him now only as a commonplace young man, with an immature profession, to face the world alone.

To have seen him as he emerged from the fog to the steep pavement that fringed the cobblestones might have been to look again and to wonder whether such dejection were the result of last night's excesses or of continued blackmail. The suggested sag beneath his eyes, the corrugation of his forehead, his dropping gaze and somewhat faltering step could not have been the stamp of time, nor any inborn waywardness; for there was a direct flash—an almost desperate fierceness in his eyes and an expression of firm decision to his jaw and tense lips. Clad in creaseless tweeds of mottled gray, and with orange tie somewhat askew, he trudged on up the hill, his shoes almost too heavy to lift one after the other. Once he lighted a cigarette, but hurled it immediately into the gutter; once, coming upon a weather-browned newspaper, he kicked it moodily before him. And when he reached the little building that was brown shingled and jade green, he hesitated, and turned away as if awaiting the necessary courage to walk in.

Indeed there was need of courage. The studio of Rupert Keith had become a chamber of horrors where hope had already grown colder than the dead clay it nursed, and where dead clay could take the shape only of scurvy monstrosities, lifeless, corpse-like and with spirits that mocked their creator even after he had obliterated their pitiable forms.

So when Keith passed over the threshold a chill draft seemed to greet him. He knew that he had only to take up his modeling tools to feel the hindering pressure of other hands upon his and to imagine dead things laughing. He couldn't work to-day. It would be impossible. His sketching on the water front had been more hopeless than ever before. To-morrow—God, how the days were dragging!—to-morrow he would try again. And with this resignation he noticed another reason for postponing further attempts. He noticed the presence of Francis Barette who, with a matter-of-fact nod, was balancing meditatively along a thin black streak of the carpet design, his ivory cigarette holder squarely in the center of his mouth.

"Well, Rupert my boy. Have you decided?"

Apparently this question was addressed to the model's platform. The little man had paused to lift his eyes only for a moment, then resumed his balancing. Keith pursed his lips without reply. He lighted another cigarette, hurled the match into the fireplace, might have hurled Barette after it had he not chosen to vent his intolerance on the thick July weather. Then there came a short silence in which the young sculptor paced off seconds on the floor, his hands locked and jerking impulsively behind him.

"Was Rolland Patton here this morning?" he asked at last.

Barette ceased his imaginary tight-rope walking and cocked his head.

"If he was he must have come earlier than I. Why? Did you expect him?"

"Oh, no. I just happened to see his machine driving down Taylor Street and wondered what he was doing around here. He didn't see me. Probably he didn't want to."

Keith fell limply back between the cushions of a davenport with a desire to sink out of sight, out of existence; to be effaced that his ghost might meet the hovering furies and fight. Fight!

Barette had drawn up a chair.

"Let us come back to the point," he said. "The time has come, Rupert my boy, to talk of many things: ships, for example, and islands. Think, Rupert—think of your future; think what treasure, what fame may be lying there in store for you. To call forth the greatest in a man of your talent there is no greater appeal than solitude. Here you are breathing poisoned air. Stagnating. You must get away from this—from yourself. Yesterday I succeeded in chartering a ship. To-morrow night she sails for my island, a true Utopia of art. You are my pupil, Rupert; and you must come with me. I asked you a moment ago for your decision."

"And I gave it to you a month ago. Hang it, Frank, I believe you think I have nothing to do but sit here pondering over your hobbies. No! I—will—not—go! Sink or swim I stay here. I'm not afraid of myself nor of this—damnable gloom, fog, this endlessness. And I repeat it for the hundredth time: I am not your pupil! I never was. I never expect to be. I agree with none of your theories. I refuse to give up my contract. And to tell you the truth I think you're a confounded humbug!"

He spoke rapidly and his deep eyes flashed the despair of his mind; but there was a faint shadow of a smile as he concluded—a smile that Barette caught and worked into a cold laugh.

"By Jove, you amuse me," he exclaimed. "Dear boy, you have emptied yourself. You are the squalid open shell from which the butterfly has flown; flown, yes, and been trapped, stuck on a pin that the world may behold its beauty. That much of you is dead; and all that remains for you now is a complete, let us say, reincarnation. Our lives are nearly parallel—yours and mine; although when I met my reverses I attempted to escape. I was then attending school in Paris, you remember, and from there I went to Tahiti. In my case, it was going from bad to worse. I went blindly and it was only the winds of chance that brought me the rejuvenation I now offer to you. Let me give you a picture, if I can, of the nadir of my career, the time when the wires feeding the brightest hopes of my life were suddenly cut—by a woman—leaving me with a will only to grope my way to forgetfulness, to join the lotus eaters and sink from existence."

Keith did not move. Barette drew closer.

With eyes half shut, he described a circle in the air before him with an extended finger.

"Try to imagine," he said, in a voice that became deep and sonorous, "try to imagine an atmosphere fairly reeking with stale smoke, reverberating with the snores of drunkards—figures livid, ghastly in the flicker of a dying lamp. Imagine one in tattered pajamas, filthy with the dust from the street, stretched across the table where stand two empty gin flasks, like candlesticks at the head of a corpse. Imagine another, fat as Bacchus, lying upon a bench, his bald head wreathed with flowers and his dead squint stark upon a thick-lipped Tahitian girl. Playing cards are strewn like fallen leaves over her body and her fibrous black hair is flaked with cigarette ashes. These are the lotus eaters of Tahiti—beach combers, whiling away the night in Shin Lo's coffee house where smoke of tobacco drifts beneath the stifling thatch and smoke of opium hovers on the floor. But there is one present who has abstained from the sweet narcotic, and despite his mind which is saturated with 'square-face,' he *sees*. And he remembers. He is only a youth, younger than you. And his name is Francis Barette."

The little man leaned back and smiled.

"You know the rest. Threatened by the French authorities, I stowed away. And then there was the wreck, leaving me a sole survivor upon an uncharted island. That was my reincarnation. Many years I spent there; and save for a few scattered natives I was in solitude. There I was esteemed by the savages as 'The Maker of Gods;' for it was then that my old aims came to my new life. Out of the mountains I cut the limestone and out of the limestone I carved my immortality: statues, half of which still await their début."

He paused, dreamily, until his hand like a stiff claw went out again and gradually closed itself as he continued.

"This morning, when all the gloom of the world seems centered here, I have only to close my eyes to sail where the reefs froth white under the fading stars. In a little while morning will sift in through a flutter of leaves; the outline of crumbled atolls will loom from the sea—a gray sea, tinted like pearl. And there will come the titter and chop-phrased jargon of native girls, or fragments of primitive song; while strolling down the pillared vista of banana fronds they come toward the sea. They are waiting still for their Maker of Gods whose empty throne, Rupert, is none too small for you."

Keith smiled and slapped his pockets.

"Give me a cigarette," he said. "When you go on that way you make me nervous. Do you think you can talk romance into an empty cocoon—since you choose to regard me as such—and expect miracles to happen? You couldn't chase me away to your Garden of Eden with all the adjectives in your vocabulary. And there's no danger of my becoming a beach comber. When a man fails in love, what good does it do to attempt a failure in everything else? If you'd thought very much of that girl you wouldn't have done it. As far as I'm concerned I'm going to get myself together and make a go. My model is here in San Francisco. So am I."

"But, my dear fellow!" protested the other. "Speaking of models, how long do you expect your seagoing paragon to last? Ships, you understand, have a way of sailing."

"Yes, but this particular ship seems to have a way of being delayed. She's short a cargo, the watchman said, and there's no prospect. She may be here a year with the present shipping slump."

"Indeed? But suppose, now, she *did* get a cargo—or—or a commission, say. Then what?"

Keith raised his head. "Then, I suppose, I'd have to consider myself extremely unfortunate." He paused with careful scrutiny but the expression on Barette's face was impenetrable. "Frank, did you charter the *Jane Macfarland?*"

"*Jane Mac*—— Why! Bless my soul! Is *she* aboard that vessel?"

Keith's eyes flared. He sprang to his feet, seized the other by his lapels and shook him. "Did you?" he cried. "Did you? You know this isn't the first time I've told you her name!"

"My memory, dear boy—my memory is unfortunately very limited. It may be that——" He took some papers from his pocket. "Sorry. I'm sorry. It was the *Jane Macfarland* that I chartered."

Keith tossed an agonized glance and walked away. Barette followed.

"Of course if I had remembered—been aware of the fact that the girl was aboard that——"

Keith whirled sharply.

"Oh, I understand! Good Lord, don't I know you well enough for that?"

"But I am sorry, my poor fellow. Really. Let me think. What can we do? I could afford no other vessel and—no, there's only one alternative. Rupert, you'll have to make the voyage. It's a matter only of five or six months at the most. You can come back with me."

"I couldn't afford half the time. You know that! Oh, it doesn't make any difference. Nothing does. Nobody's fault." Again he started to pace but stopped short in a volley of curses. "Sometimes I think I'm losing my mind. And sometimes I don't care if I do. When a man begins to suspect things it's a sign——"

"Whom do you suspect, Rupert?"

"Nobody. But if you don't keep still for a minute I'll be a raving lunatic. I'll be thinking the whole world is plotting against me—and you. If I didn't hang on I'd fly into a million pieces!"

Falling back again in his seat he stooped and moved his hands convulsively through his hair. He did not know how long he remained in that position. It seemed hours and years; and the intermittent sound of Barette's voice was meaningless—a string of words. He had asked something about the Patton yacht. When did she sail—or something of the sort; and how far out to sea did the fog zone extend; and would the course of a sailing vessel bound for Guam not lie approximately in the course of a steamboat when bound for Honolulu—or something even more irrelevant. Keith shook his head to every question until, hounded to the crumbling brink of his patience, he rose with a look of despair and started for the door.

"Wait! Wait! My dear fellow!" cried Barette. "There is something I feel you should know. Rolland Patton——"

If a meteor had fallen directly in Keith's path he could not have stopped more suddenly than with the mention of this name; for not only was it closely allied to causes which for him had capsized a universe but there lingered still in the darker recesses of his mind a remembrance of the Patton automobile on Taylor Street—no every-day matter.

"Rolland Patton," repeated Barette, "as you may have noticed, has never been on intimate terms with me; nor I with him, to be more accurate. However, he chanced upon me at the Bohemian Club the other day, and insisted that I dine with him. So much for that. We dined, and talked; or, rather, he did the talking; and although he informed me that his words were in strict confidence there is reason to believe that I should never have been his confidant unless I had been regarded as a likely medium of communication with one whom he seems still to desire as a son-in-law."

Slowly and with a puzzled frown Keith retraced his steps.

"All this," went on the other, "leads, as you may soon discern, to an idea which occurred to me only a moment ago—an idea, I might say, which through its rather odd nature, stakes its success on our friendship. I mean this in the truest sense of the word, and it must imply your trust not only in my personal regard for you but in my discretion as a man of substantial experience. So, despite my unwitting action in regard to the chartered ship I must take such a friendship for granted before I reveal my plan. These premises, Rupert, are open now for your revision."

Keith smiled. "Go ahead, Frank. I think we understand each other."

"Precisely. No more is necessary. Now, to make a long story short, I offer you, on a silver platter, Eileen Patton's confession to her father. I am sailing soon, Rupert, and since I cannot take you with me I must leave the next best solution in your own hands; and you must know, first of all, that the girl has the same, if not a deeper, regard for you than became her three months ago when she wore your ring. In short, she loves you. Sit down."

Keith sat down. He could not speak. After a long silence Barette went on:

"What Patton expected me to do about the affair I don't know; and what is to become of it, seems now to rest entirely with you. However, due to the nature of the young woman—her pride, perhaps, and her temperament—no reconciliation can be affected by a simple word or commonplace act. It must be something quite extraordinary; something that will bring you together as if by fate on the field of actual romance. No premeditation on your part, of course no intrigue. Indeed it is to take place quite behind your back. Can you spare two weeks?"

"Can I spare two weeks for what?"

"For whatever I may choose to ordain. Fate is working through me, you understand. We settled the matter of trust, I believe."

"Certainly; but you can't expect me to make blind promises. As far as two weeks are concerned, they make no difference now."

"My dear boy, I'm not asking for blind promises. Your actions are to be your own; mine, *my* own. Everything possible aboveboard. Nothing for which you or the girl will ever be sorry. I alone am the loser, for my hope was in your future; and your future, as I regard it, is not here. However, I look now to the next best solution; and I promise you this: full details shall be in your possession before you leap."

Keith nodded. "I see nothing wrong in that. I have the right to take or reject whatever comes my way? I can do as I like, in other words?"

"Precisely. And I can do as I like—a friendly game of cards, as it were. That's the agreement. We'll shake hands."

They shook; and Barette seized his hat and stick, waved his yellow gloves and vanished. The door slammed. Then silence. Keith walked to the window and gazed over toward Belvedere, where the fog was banked in swirls of white.

CHAPTER III.

On the following morning Rupert Keith sketched for the last time by the dock of the *Jane Macfarland,* but with shabby results; and a long day dragged to a close. There had been no sign nor word of "the hermit sculptor." That strange little man seemed to have been swept away by the fog.

During it all, and despite a somewhat cynical attitude toward Barette's "plan," Keith had taken a new lease on hope. In his desperation he was willing to consider anything consistent with integrity and normal discretion. What had been told him of Eileen's continued affection did seem plausible; and although he seldom nursed the presumption, it had lingered. The fact that the trouble had culminated with the unveiling of "Power" and during his early efforts with "Virtue" when his enthusiasm for work was at its zenith seemed to evince an embryonic state of jealousy. The girl could marry no man "whose heart was sold to clay." Jealousy! And that implied love. So perhaps after all he had resigned himself too readily to face-value conditions. Might he not have pointed to a corresponding division of heart in Eileen? It seemed to hold a larger space for romance than for him who had stood in its light; and romance was no more than a jack-o'-lantern whose entrancing rays were likely to fall most anywhere.

But the experience perhaps had given place to a more sober attitude. Possibly she had begun to realize that work in clay was essentially no different than any other work where failure meant poverty. She had never known poverty and therefore could never understand the dread of it; and she had never sought fame and therefore could never sympathize with the passion for it. He could not be far wrong in these theories; for she had confessed to her father; her father had told Barette, and Barette had told him. Why then should he not take a hand in the matter? As it was, life held no meaning; and a fair consideration of the "plan" —whatever it was—could do no harm.

With these thoughts turning in his mind Keith moved restlessly about his workshop until at last, when the shadows stretched themselves to fading points along the drab streets of Russian Hill, there came a rude banging on the knocker and a white envelope appeared under the door. Through the glass, just above, Keith caught sight of a slouch hat and a scarred ear. That was all; for although he hurried out to question the man there was no trace of him. Keith smiled and picked up the note. It contained but little enlightenment.

> Don't lose a minute, Rupert. Ask for Jake at Peterson's Wharf. He'll give you another missive, explaining everything. Hurriedly,
>
> FRANK.

Keith paused for a moment; then took his hat and was off. At Peterson's Wharf he asked for Jake. "Yake? Oo, he vos dot chonky fal-ah svobbin' in the veel hoose." And accordingly the young adventurer, now conscious of his part, proceeded down a narrow plank to a float alongside of which lay a black tug. The evening already had grown dark. The water, tossing dim reflections here and there, was inky black and resonant with the warning blasts of ferries. The side lights of the tug gleamed green and crimson; and the "chonky fal-ah" was

plainly visible in the rays of a yellow lantern.

Keith hailed him, but without response; and not until he had stepped over the gunwale and hailed again did Jake turn from his ill-timed occupation and look up. He was a jovial brute of a sailor with round, red and unshaven face bristling like magnetized iron filings. Surveying Keith with frank amusement he reached into his dungarees and produced a second note. It read:

> This is not the explanatory letter I mentioned. That comes later, for reasons you could not understand now. I write this only to let you know I am still with you in spirit; and to inform you besides that, if Jake carries out my instruction, at the very time you read this there will be more than a jumping distance between you and San Francisco.

The signature was there but Keith did not take the time to read it. Two bells had sounded from below. There were heavy vibrations. The tug was gaining sternway. He might easily have leaped to the float, but the impulse was sufficiently tardy to make swimming the more feasible plan, and then the black water seemed less inviting than a friendly discussion of the affair.

"What's it all about?" demanded Keith.

Jake leaned against the wheel to retard its spinning. "Damn if I know, mate; but all I'm sayin' is, if it's dirty work, here's one man ain't in on it." One gong sounded in the engine room. The vibrations ceased. "I'm standin' by, understand?" Another gong. Vibrations again—heavy ones; and a great churning of water astern. "The gentleman told me to give you another letter soon as——" Jingle! Deep pulsations and a creaking of timbers—"Soon as we clear the fog t'-morrow mornin'." The vapor grew thicker. Reaching for the whistle cord the fellow sounded a long blast. "But if you don't get all you want outa that letter —well, then it's up to you. I got a repitation to think of and I ain't out for murder, nohow."

At that moment everything but Jake and his immediate surroundings disappeared. The vessel plowed into an almost solid bank of fog. The tugboat skipper sounded another blast and opened his compass box. Keith drew a long breath and shook his head.

"You say I don't get that letter until tomorrow morning? Where do you expect to go in the meantime?"

"Sou'west by west, clearin' the Farallons."

"That means very little to me."

"Don't mean much t' me neither."

"Suppose I ask you to take me back at once."

Jake, who was reaching for the whistle cord, lowered his hand and turned.

"Gallopin' whales, mate! Don't get it foul yer runnin' gear I'm shanghain' yeh! Sure I'll take yeh back. All yeh got t' do is sing out."

He gave the cord such a jerk that it parted. Keith laughed. There seemed to be nothing wrong in this. He might just as well go on with it and learn the content of the other note. After offering Jake a cigarette he walked away. To him life was a put-up job, after all, and he felt now for the first time since Eileen had returned his ring, that he was actually living again. On the broad after expanse of deck he wedged himself within the toils of a great hawser, leaned against a life raft and composed himself with a smoke. There was certain refreshment in the surrounding uncertainties.

A heavy drowsiness fell over him. He closed his eyes. Sleep came but was snatched and blown away by Jake's infernal whistle, while in reply there resounded, like the roar of a wounded monster, the plaintive deep-mouthed bellowing of a foghorn. Louder and louder it grew. There was a flying of spume, and a sudden pitching. All at once the vessel seemed to rise upon four long legs, like a camel, and slowly—very slowly—sink down again. Dappled waves, barely visible, raced boiling past the gunwale, the guard rails sloshing and trickling, while with steady pulsations the nervous craft bucked over the higher crests, trembled and fairly squirmed down into the trough. Jake appeared at last with two blankets and an extra suit of dungarees.

"Might be best," he suggested, "t' sleep in these here. Them togs o' yourn ain't seagoin'."

Keith accepted the advice, exchanging his tweeds for blue cotton breeches and a hickory shirt, and intrusting his own garments to the care of the tugboat skipper.

A long night passed through a torment of cluttered dreams in which the blasts of the whistle, the contortions of the tug, the sudden dashes of spray and the discomforts of a life raft used as a bed combined to make him miserable.

In the morning he arose with the feeling that he had been jammed into a large funnel and squeezed through the small end. When he reached the wheelhouse, however, he found relief. Jake was chatting with a lean-faced individual in a black cap all glazed with grit and oil. He held a quart bottle of whisky which he offered to the passenger.

"Here!" he shouted. "Meet m' old pal, Chief McGuire. Best ever! Have a drink! 'Tain't going, to blind you no more'n this here fog, eh, Mac? Should have busted clear of it this far out."

Keith, on accepting the bottle, felt somewhat in need of it. He did not stop at a swallow, and as he drank he heard the voice of McGuire.

"Take your fill, matie. Looks like you'll need ut, eh, Jake? Well, we'll batten down on the drink and get some breakfast up, eh?"

He strode from the wheelhouse with an unsteady gait.

"He's a damn fool," observed Jake. "Don't know no more about nothin' than a seagoin' weevil. Right about here's where the *Ventana* went down. Him tendin' boilers, I don't see no reason why we don't join 'em down with the little green devilfishes."

When McGuire returned Keith was vexed by the same problem. The chief, although he managed to bring two plates of ham and eggs and two cups of coffee into the wheelhouse, spilling only a portion, was staggering drunk. He slapped Keith upon the back and smeared his grimy hands over the white paint.

"Bless me if you don't look seagoin' in them togs o' mine," he cried; and taking hold of the door, began to sing:

"He-ee looked-at thee wat-ter . . . that unluck key-devil
And thee wat-ter it was down clean b'low sea levil,
So he turn-loose the ocean with his boilers red hot
And he made a record passage inta heaven. *By Got!*"

Not until the tug poked her nose out into clear weather did he go below to look at the water gauge of his own boilers. Beyond the fog area there was a chop and a light breeze; and the sun came in warm welcome to whatever disclosure was forthcoming with the note.

By now Keith, quite naturally, had little confidence in Barette's plan. The very surroundings seemed to indicate that any scheme would be out of the question. As to its probable nature, he had made conjectures, the most likely of which was impossible. He thought there might be some island in the vicinity where he was to maroon himself!—an island, perhaps, where the *Pasado Mañana* with the necessary "romance" aboard, would call. It was ridiculous even to consider such a thing. Barette should have known better. However, Jake had already drawn a large envelope from his hip pocket and was glancing astern at the haze fringing the fog banks.

"Well," he said at last, with a slight inflection of doubt, "it's about time, eh?"

Keith nodded and took the note. Unlike the others, it was sealed; and although the handwriting was the same it was addressed in decorative flourishes of India ink. With some derision he stared for a moment, and had just torn it open when there came a low rushing sound of steam from the engine room. Jake had already snatched the speaking tube from its bracket.

"What the devil's the matter down there?" he bellowed.

The answer did not come from the tube. It was an ear-splitting shriek that reverberated from under the decks and was drowned instantly by a hissing, horrible burst, as from a broken steam pipe. The tugboat skipper cursed. He tumbled out the door to the companionway where red flames, half smothered in the gases that fed them, lapped at the coaming and rose higher. Jake turned, waved Keith back, and bellowing something about the life raft dropped down out of sight into a flaming hell hole where the shrieks of McGuire mingled at intervals with the rush of hot vapor.

Keith, pausing only for an instant, crumpled Barette's note into his pocket and followed on. He had taken the first step down the ladder when a black hand shot up and bowled him over backward.

"Get out of here! Look out! Get back! Good God!" was all he heard until a hot crushing pressure fairly lifted him from where he had fallen, and tumbled him down again. Why he continued to live he did not know. He had only a dim impression of resisting two men who persisted in dragging him by the feet across the deck as if he were a corpse. He had managed to kick

one of them aside and to seize the other by the collar when suddenly he received a shove from behind that toppled him over the life line, head over heels into the water. He had a dim recollection of loud laughter; but this may have been only the chaos of bubbles and froth churning him about in the wake, for it was some time before he managed to struggle to the surface and find his bearings. The first thing he saw was another splash, a short distance before him. The tug was headed full speed toward the fog; and there was scarcely a suggestion of fire anywhere about her. Two men stood on the after deck; one of them, waving his arm, was half doubled over with mirth, the other pointed to a drifting object some fifty feet away.

It was the life raft.

CHAPTER IV.

The tug had vanished into the fog; while, perched upon a raft less than a mile beyond the fringing haze, drifted Rupert Keith; and on his knees rested the letter, water soaked and disheveled but still legible, thanks to the waterproof nature of the script. It began, patronizingly enough, with:

MY POOR, DEAR RUPERT: I am sorry if the water was cold, and especially if, for lack of consideration, you blamed me for breach of faith. But if our friend Jake has followed instruction you were tendered, as I promised, full detail of our little intrigue before you made "the leap." That you were given insufficient time in which to digest it all was a matter quite consistent with the fact that this adventure was to be real.

You must realize now that you are taking a vital part in a certain drama wherein Eileen Patton plays opposite. Being a very sensitive little actress, she lives her rôle; and it is essential therefore that you grasp the spirit of your own part and act it well. Yesterday morning I had a short chat with the girl. Rupert, she *eats* romance. And indeed I am convinced that you have been starving her. My plan is based, as it were, on resuscitation. She is to be fed. She is to eat out of your hand!

During our conversation I was asked where you were and what you were doing.

"Poor Rupert," I replied, "has not been himself for several months. His career—and you recall its remarkable start—is at an end. He is done. He has gone away and I can't say for how long—perhaps forever. In a frail craft he put to sea, intending, it would seem, that no one should hear of him again."

I shall not arouse your pity by describing her reception of this news. However, I attempted to console her by saying that you still cherished her memory above all else in the world; and that despite your broken life you viewed the shattered affiance in the manner of a philosopher.

I then left her and went to her father. Rolland, you may know, is always ready for a little fun and nurses still the desire of a son-in-law named Rupert Keith; so you may imagine with what enthusiasm he has enlisted his support. Therefore, according to my directions, his yacht is to bear southwest by west to the edge of the fog where she is to look for a castaway on a raft. After your rescue Eileen shall be made to feel that the helmsman of her ship was Destiny, whose will it is to rejoin what foolish pride has held apart! You should have about seven days in which to lend Destiny a helping hand. The yacht calls at Honolulu, where you may secure transportation home.

So be prepared. Give the girl a vivid description of your ill-fated adventure. Throw yourself into the story. Lovesick and alone in your meager craft you were brought face to face with death! But that's trite. Tell her exactly what death looked like. Make her see it. See it yourself. Look about you. Fog! Hammer on that. Fog and calm. The fog was so heavy, say, it seemed to press the wrinkles from the long swells, leaving them gray and glassy as death—something like that.

You can do it, Rupert. Give her what she wants. Act your part. Make it your part; and make it a part of you. Go through with it, and regard me as ever, your friend,

FRANK.

The reader smiled, but it was the smile of a mood which no sooner showed itself than it was obliterated by fury. Rising to his feet Keith twisted the letter in the manner of wringing some creature's neck, dropped the remains and kicked them overboard. So much for that. It was no more than an insult to normal intelligence. What sort of man was Rolland Patton to countenance such a thing? His own daughter implicated! Her life's happiness at stake. Drama! Romance! All that be damned! It wasn't even good farce! It was horrible!

By this time Keith was pacing the lath deck of his raft like a captive panther. He ranted to and fro, pausing only to glower beyond his narrow confines with a longing to break away and tear things to pieces. Now and again he smiled derisively or let loose a hot breath of contempt. What nonsense! He slapped his pockets for cigarettes but shook his head in despair.

Then came the thought of himself; an unmitigated sucker on a raft, like a wet kitten waiting to be picked up! Had the *Pasado Mañana* appeared at that moment he would have been tempted to dive into the water and drown himself. He fancied him-

self standing before a half dozen white-flanneled laughing devils who were as ready, no doubt, for "a little fun" as Patton himself; and he pictured—but it was impossible to picture that! He was thinking of Eileen.

If Keith had ever wanted to hide, it was now. He felt like a victim of sport, a lone object of interest in the center of an arena where all his countrymen, his acquaintances and friends, were gathering to witness his public disgrace.

And this was only the start of a long succession of blood-sizzling thoughts that came marching down with the long swells during the next hour; until finally, in a moment of darkest depression, he received a fright that brought the cold perspiration to his forehead. A shadow crept out from the fog into the fringe of mist. He would have dropped and sprawled out flat upon the laths had his wits been within hailing distance. But they were not. He only stood and stared. Then he began to wonder if he were not given to optical delusions. The shadowy object vanished. There was nothing—nothing at all; and, frowning, he paced the raft again.

A cool light breeze continued but the sun near the meridian brought comfort. For the first time he managed to bring his mind to a focus. No doubt he was doomed to face the company of the *Pasado Mañana*. In this there were two alternatives: act the "drama"—and this was past considering—or make a clean breast of it; explain the dilemma exactly as it stood to the girl's father and ask to be returned aboard the tug or taken back to San Francisco. Patton could explain what he liked to his daughter. That was his affair.

Keith looked up to discover that his final decision had come none too soon. The shadow appeared again in the haze. It became more distinct. He recognized it. The tug! She was coming to get him—to take him back! She——

But hope foundered. The miserable Jake was swinging her about. A moment later she was gone. Evidently her conscientious skipper was taking no chances. He was standing by, waiting for "the rescue." He had already shown some patience in this; and as time proved he had more to show. To judge from the diminishing altitude of the sun the better part of an afternoon had dragged away before anything significant occurred. Meanwhile the castaway had spied the vessel four times. His own patience was nearing its limit; for he had long since solved his problem and resigned himself to the pending calamity.

As a general rule those who await calamity wait not in vain. It comes. But not the one expected. Another was waiting for him—coming right after him, in fact. And it was not the *Pasado Mañana*—not the white, shining Diesel yacht. It was a low, ordinary tramp schooner.

CHAPTER V.

It had happened just as the tug had vanished for the fourth time and it had happened so suddenly that all resolution and resignation were jammed into a cocked hat. There had been a flaw in the proposed intrigue. Some one had overlooked a very obvious trick. It was not improbable that more than one vessel would be sailing southwest by west from The Gate in a single day.

Standing upon the raft, his hands upon his hips and his neck craned forward, Keith was staring fixedly toward a sheen of vapor about two miles northward from where the tug had disappeared. There, nuzzling out of the dense drifts like a phantom in black and white, emerged a three-masted schooner, all canvas set but her topsails and a sluggish froth alee. She presented her entire length until, standing out into clear weather, her sails began lapping one over the other. She was squaring away, skirting so close to the fog that it was not long before she became nearly lost in it again.

Keith's wits ran in spirals and were brought up with a quick jolt. To be "rescued" by that thing meant months at sea, a diet of salt horse, "lobscouse" and bumboat pan, a plank berth and all the little things that went with it. He thought of his contract with the city of San Francisco. He had to get back!

But the schooner bore down, closer and closer. Keith watched. Perhaps she had not sighted him. Holding his breath he sprawled flat upon the deck, his hopes rising. Surely the yacht had missed him entirely; maybe the schooner would pass; probably she couldn't see him from the haze surrounding her; and perhaps Jake's next appearance would be to rescue his passenger and take him back to San Francisco.

He smiled in the feeble light of his prospect; but, of course, sailing vessels have

their own methods of approaching any given point. This one, scudding down through the thin mist, stood off a short distance to leeward, hauled up sharply to her former tack and in another moment was in stays.

Keith was in no mood for whys and wherefores. His wits ran riot, leaving him in such a temper that when two men put off in the boat and with steady stroke came tossing into the sunlight he waved them back, cursing them.

The oarsman, a dark thistle-faced monster, almost a giant, leaned forward on his sweeps and flashed a quizzical eye. The boat came on with her own momentum while the man at the rudder yoke—the most grotesque character Keith had ever seen—rose to his feet, cocked his head and glared wonderingly from under his chalky eyebrows. Apparently he was about to make some reply to the expostulations of the castaway, but appeared at length to change his mind. He only turned toward the other, nodded significantly and tapped the side of his head. He was such a solid chunk that his neck would have defied any hangman. It seemed not to end until his chin began; and when he laughed it was as if his entire face had cracked open. He carried his stumplike head with a marked list, for his eyes, it seemed, had shifted considerably off center. Unlike his mate he was bareheaded; but a heavy bramble of flaxen hair, bleached nearly white at the crown, served as a covering even for the tops of his ears. He reminded Keith of a knotted log buoy, all whitewashed on top.

"Wonder wha's been feedin' on 'im," came his gentle voice as the boat drifted nearer. "Pull away, Teague." And he grumbled something which the castaway could not hear.

Teague pivoted on the thwart and gave way with a tug that made the dinghy show her teeth. She snapped at the waves and shattered them, rose up and swashed down in the broad, green trough while his deep voice came down on the breeze:

"An' they laid 'im low—me lay, me lads,
  Is little of laughing lore.
'Cause they laid 'im low. So low 'e lay
  'E never come up no more.
Then it's high an' dry; an' shatter me eye
  If tain't best bunkin' ashore.
Or 's low we lay with the lubber low
  What never come up no more."

He concluded with a swirl that brought the boat up within a few feet of the raft.

"How yeh like that?" he bellowed. "Off the *Ventana*, are yeh. How yeh farin', ol' shipwreck?"

"Aw-ah he's a' right," remarked the other, his cross eyes attempting to focus with an air of apology. "Now, like a bully boy, lay aboard."

But the "bully boy" replied only with a stony flash of dissent and began pacing the deck of his raft.

"What d'yeh say, Barney? Maybe he needs fetchin'," remarked Teague, rising from his seat and displaying more than a fathom of brawn. "He won't play none of his nonsense on *me*. That you won't, ol' shipwreck!"

Keith stopped short.

"Lay foot on this raft," he threatened; "and I'll make fish fodder out of you. This is my vessel and I intend to remain aboard."

There was substance behind his words, for he was no slight man himself. Teague slapped both hands upon his stomach and shook with loud snorts of mirth.

"Ever hear the likes o' that?" he cried. "A shipwreck lubber, driftin' three days on a raft all hos-tile when we're savin' his life. Hold 'er off, bos'n. I'll show 'im."

"Naw! Aw-ah, naw!" drawled the boatswain with a severe frown. "Tha's no way to treat him. Best to humor him a bit. Now then, m' hearty; here you come. Right aboard!"

"I told you no!" returned the castaway. "Don't you understand English? I'm staying *here!*"

Teague laughed uproariously. "Wait'll I tell 'em all about this! *Ho!* Wouldn't it put kelp in yer crows' nest! Tell yeh, Barney, I recall the time I was shipwrecked down off South Trap. When they picked me up I couldn't 'a' told the wife from a swordfish. Didn't know nothin' till they filled me up on rum; and when it come time——"

"Time later for all that," put in Barney. "Jus' you lay over an' coax him a bit. Careful you don' hurt him."

Keith stood waiting, his eyes fixed upon Teague. The huge sailor stepped clumsily upon a thwart, estimating the distance for a jump. His trunk bent forward, his long arms swung back. Keith's only thought was that he was a free agent, possessed of certain well-defined rights. He was justified in remaining aboard his raft as long as it became his purpose; and it was no one's place to order him off. His reasons for in-

trusting his life to such a craft were strictly his own. He intended to keep them so.

"You put foot on this raft," he repeated, "and I'll——"

He did not have to repeat his threat. Teague already was offering the opportunity for its exaction. With a loud grunt he sprang through the air, all but capsizing the dinghy, nearly swamping the raft, which went down with such impetus that a surge broke from every quarter. He waved his arms to gain equilibrium; but Keith, thrown forward, straight-armed him just above the belt, sending him crashing into the water. Barney peered coquettishly from under his white eyebrows. The giant broke surface with a loud snort and made for the raft.

"Blitherin' lunatic!" he spluttered. "I'll show 'im!"

He showed nothing but a change of mind. A threatening move of Keith's foot diverted his purpose and he turned again for the boat.

"Tha's no way to treat a crazy man," remonstrated Barney, oggling an apology toward the castaway. "You're too big. You'd kill him." He paused to help his shipmate over the gunwale; then, taking an oar, sculled closer to the raft. "He don' wan' to fight. Do you, matie?" grinned the little monstrosity. "Naw-aw, he's a gen'leman, Teague. Didn' you know we're ol'-time shipmates?" He scrutinized as if to observe the effect of these soothing words. "Ol'-time shipmates, so bless me!" he went on. "You think not?" He flashed a wink at Teague. "He don' b'lieve it. Well, that bein' as she lays, I'll jus' have to take an' get to work an' prove it. Keep 'er off a safe dis'ance till I sing out. We're about to have a sociable little round together."

And Barney the bos'n, despite his dwarfed proportions, hopped nimbly aboard the raft and was on his guard before he had gained footing. In height he measured fully six inches less than his antagonist and his weight fell short of covering the difference. From all appearances Keith was not flattering himself in feeling that it was a shame to attack a man thus handicapped.

But while he hesitated the little freak came dancing up and slapped him smartly across the face. Before it was possible to meet the playful attack, slap number two followed, then another from an opposite quarter. Barney the bos'n had skipped lightly aside and now was bouncing to and fro on his toes, the motion of the raft seeming to have no effect upon his balance. He assumed the attitude of a professional boxer and, besides displaying a positive skill, he had been endowed with crossed eyes, a condition somewhat disconcerting to Keith, who was a novice in pugilism. Fending a blow aimed, as he supposed, at his chest, he was struck squarely on the jaw. Fending a blow aimed, as he supposed, at his jaw, he was struck squarely on the chest. At first it was confusing; then maddening, especially when Teague, a short distance away, roared with laughter, shouting:

"At 'im, bos'n! At 'im! Don't get foul o' them fists! Connect and you're gone!"

But the little boatswain could care for himself. There was scarcely a swing that missed its mark; and after each he oggled a silent apology. It was as if he were thinking: "Naw-aw, that's no way t' treat a crazy man." And *bam!* would come his fist. "Not right!" And *bam!* again. "Shouldn't do it!" *Bam! Bam!* And, "Aw, now. That was too bad. Didn' mean to hit you like that!" *Bam! Smack!* "It's a shame, matie."

So it continued; and although Barney's blows were only playful taps Keith could find no opening and was gradually succumbing to exhaustion. Then too, even had the boatswain offered the opportunity for a grand finale, it would have seemed unfair to take full advantage of it. It would have been like replying to a "beg pardon" with a cuff in the face.

"Sing out, matie," cried Barney. "Le' me know when you had eh—eh—'nough!"

He punctuated this with his fist. It sent Keith reeling. Evidently the boatswain had decided that an admission of defeat was timely, and as the castaway squared off for his last stand the little sailor's fists swung like lightning. Keith, who had held his ground during it all save twice when he was knocked down, felt his remaining energy flutter and die. He staggered forward. His fist shot out for the final attack but the cross-eyed victor, with every opportunity to deliver the knock-out, caught him in his arms and gently patted him on the back.

"Here you come," he said in a tone of the deepest sympathy. "Stan' up! There now. Stan' up! Come on. There's a man. Stan' up, now."

Keith tried but his knees gave way, his head swirled, he fell to the deck while Barney kneeled beside him.

"Lowes' thing I ever did: beat up a shipwreck sailorman! Here you come, matie. This'll fix you."

He applied salt water to the other's forehead. Keith smiled from his bleeding lips. He had forgotten the purpose of the fight and had developed a genuine respect for his antagonist.

"You've been mistaken," he said at last. "I'm *not* a shipwrecked sailor."

Barney cocked his head again.

"Course not, matie. You're no shipwrecked sailor. You're all right. You jus' come along peaceablelike with us, an' a li'l' drink'll put you right. You're no shipwreck at all. Anybody can see that. Jus' out takin' a li'l' summer cruise on a raff, sort o' for your healthlike. Tha's all. Now, stan' up." He helped Keith to his feet and beckoned to Teague. "Look sharp now, or the ol' man'll be bellerin' his sides out for the delay."

Keith made a last plea.

"Listen," he said. "I'll explain this thing if I have to. I'm not off the *Ventana*. I'm here because I want to be; and a yacht is due any minute to pick me up. The skipper of the yacht knows I'm here and he's coming after me; and besides——"

"Sure! Sure, matie!" smiled Barney. "We understan' that. And blowed if there isn't your yacht." He pointed toward the schooner. "Aren't she a daisy? Trimmest little motor boat you ever have seen. A pitcher of beauty. Owner's been waiting on you all morning. Champagne on ice, an' everythin'."

Keith shook his head. Anything he could say would be held against him. There was nothing to do but obey; so he remained silent while Teague pulled back for the schooner with his: "They laid 'im low—me lay, me lads," and so on until he seemed to have been reminded suddenly of his yarn which Barney had not allowed him to finish. When he was shipwrecked, he repeated, he couldn't think of his own name until they had filled him up on gin.

"Then," said he, "right away I told 'em everythin'. Give 'em my name. Give 'em the name o' my sweethearts. Even give 'em their addresses. So, mate, you get your whack hooks on some o' th' ol' man's grog. D' you know your name?"

Keith told him.

Barney winked at the oarsman.

"Rupert Keith! Well, now aren't that funny. His name's Rupert Keith. Papers said this morning before sailing, Rupert Keith ran away when he got foun' out."

"Found out!" echoed the sculptor with a puzzled frown. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing much, only Rupert Keith aren't your name. You're a better man. Let's see, now. Who the devil are you? Oh, sure! Pres'dent Harding! How's that? An' I wan' you to have the pleasure of meeting me ol' shipmate, Cap'n Kidd."

Teague bowed in veneration. "Glad t' make the acquaintance, president."

Keith whirled in his seat. "What *is* all this? What about Rupert Keith?"

"There, there, now, matie. That's a'right. We knew you were him minute we got our slush lamps on you. He is, aren't he, Teague?" The boatswain winked again. "Aren't he Rupert Keith? Sure. An' listen, don' let that big lubber bully you."

Keith sighed. "Yes, but what the devil did the papers find out?"

"Jes' foun' out, tha's all. Wasn't you foun' out? Didn' we find you out? Sure we did. Foun' you out there on a raff!"

Teague let loose more of his thunder. Keith rested his head in his hands and although the boat had entered the bordering mist of the fog banks and was bringing up close to the wallowing hulk he paid no attention. He was wondering if he were not actually losing his mind.

"Brace up now, matie," advised the boatswain. "Swab some o' that blood off your face. You'll be laying aboard your pretty little yacht in a shake."

Keith raised his head. His eyes coasted along the bulwarks from stem to stern. He did not notice the skipper with his red goatee, watching calm-eyed from the poop, nor the long rows of dark staring faces peering over the bulwarks. It was something else that caught his attention—caught and held it as if confronted suddenly by some object of an almost forgotten dream. Slowly he rose, glaring as if to take his eyes from it only for an instant would be to lose sight of it forever.

"Is—what the devil? What vessel is this?" he cried.

"This here?" replied Barney. "I jus' tol' you. She's that yacht I been jawing about. She's the *Jane Macfarland.*"

CHAPTER VI.

Jane Macfarland's home was her father's schooner. Of course, there was a port of call every month or so, but no such a thing as "home again." Her home comprised much less than half the poop of a tramp schooner; and her world lay within the bulwarks.

Beyond stretched a vast region of unrealities where people, if they really existed, were more or less temporary entities, useful in so far as they enabled her father to sell one cargo and load another. In every port she had seen these shadow people—black, white, yellow and brown. Some she knew by name, just as she knew the names of everything pertaining to ships and shipping, but they were all the same—men, just men.

Jane, who was seated in her own cabin before a built-in dresser, smiled indifferently. Tear drops came but were promptly touched away and crushed in the folds of a fresh handkerchief. She was lonely. She had been lonely for so long that it had become a part of her. And why? Foolishness! Plain foolishness. She could confide in Hollis, her older brother. She could confide in the captain, her father. She could tell them—no, she couldn't. There were certain things——

Pausing, she watched the play of light on a cascade of brown-gold locks as she passed them through the comb, while a shaft of sun, reaching from an open port, swung slowly across the white panels. It was late in the afternoon. She could hear Pebbles, the putty-faced steward, clattering his pots and pans in preparation for dinner. The vessel, in stays now for more than half an hour, beat an accompaniment with slatting canvas and a hull that groaned its protest to the long delay.

Foolish vessel! She was too much a sailor. Docked safely at San Francisco, the seafarer's paradise, she had chafed her guard half through, pleading for the warm pressure of tropical winds and the roll of an open sea. And now, her wish granted and only light ballast to hold, she was complaining again—moaning her troubles to every wave, writhing, tossing her head and frothing like a champing mare reined in. No wonder! Her name also was *Jane Macfarland.* She too was doomed to watch, but take no part in the great land of shadow things beyond. She was sailed from port to port. So was Jane. She was commanded by a merchant skipper. So was Jane. She was tired of it all. So was Jane. Oh, it wasn't quite as bad as it seemed. For instance there were certain things—but that was nobody's business. All over now too. Best to forget.

Yet Jane was not forgetting. She wondered if, at the termination of the voyage, the schooner would put back to San Francisco. She wondered if "somebody" with his pencil and pad would come again to the dock. She pictured him sitting upon an upturned barrel, his soft white collar half lopped over his tweed lapel and his discarded necktie dangling from one foot. She pictured his dark hair combed back, with two prominent locks, one on either side of his forehead, rakishly curved, like the horns of Pan. She thought of the strength that lay behind the flashing blue of his eyes, the firm silence of his lips; and she fancied him thinking always: "I could be master of that schooner. I could be king of the world. But I won't!"

In dock, watching him from the poop in the early mornings—and there had been seven—she had discovered herself unembarrassed before his deliberate gaze; and stranger still, she could give him her undivided attention without calling for mutual recognition of personalities. It was as if his vision, as well as his very existence, occupied a medium remote from her own; and, of all the men she had seen in the outer world he was the first whose life she could regard as independent of hers. He could go right on living, making his sketches and doing everything artists do, whether she actually saw him or not! He was not a shadow. He was real.

Four bells sounded, announcing the second dogwatch and dinner. The schooner had steadied herself and was squaring away on her proper course. Jane rose; and wondering vaguely what had been the cause of the delay whirled before the mirror, hurried into the cuddy, stopped short.

There were only two at the table: her father and the new mate, Mr. Duff. But in order to strike a rousing discord there was need of no one else. Not that Captain Macfarland was the brusque, irascible kind of master who attempts to smother his shortcomings by a blanket intolerance for other men's failures, but there were certain deep-rooted hobbies which, like chronic ailments, were nurtured by his declining years.

At present he was suffering from another stroke of rhetoric! His magnificent head throbbed eternally with imperative and hypothetical moods, coördinate independent clauses, syntax, ellipses and a general grudge again any one who would dare to purposely split an infinitive! And to Jane, his pedantic, roange goatee was a bristling hotbed of entangled punctuations.

"Ain't! Ain't! Ain't!" he was crying. "You say *ain't* to me! Let it be understood, Mr. Duff, that any man sitting at the same table with my family is expected at least to honor the king's English!"

Jane proceeded to her place at the table. Mr. Duff grinned, leaned back and crossed his legs. He was a bulbous, loose-lipped individual with shifty piglike eyes and a network of purple veins laid like a spiderweb over his cheeks.

"As I've sailed the seven seas, sir," he protested, "nobuddy's ever found fault before with the way I talk."

"Hardly pertinent, Mr. Duff. We think of talk more often in the quantitative sense; as, for example: you talk too much! But I referred a moment ago to your manner of speaking—your address. You speak our language more like a dock-jumping cabin boy than a ship's officer. I intend to correct this fault; and I expect you to take no offense." He paused for a moment, strumming the table with his fingers. "And while I'm about it," he continued; "you have another fault—a very serious one which must be mended immediately. As we cleared the Farallons I gave you the course, sou'west b' south. I was busy after that and did not notice that you'd made the bearing sou'west b' west. What reason for doing that?"

"Orders."

"Orders! What orders? Who can order you but the ship's master?"

"You forget, sir, that the man who chartered this vessel is aboard."

The skipper rose halfway from his chair.

"You mean to tell me that he is navigating this ship?"

Mr. Duff shrugged his shoulders.

"And *you!* with all your sailing of the seven seas," pursued the old man, "are in the habit of taking orders from any landlubber who happens to come along? Are you? Hereafter you'll take orders from me—no one else. The time will come, Mr. Duff, when such negligence will mean Davy's locker for all hands."

"As it happened, though, cap'n, it saved one poor duffer, didn't it? We'd never 'a' seen that raft if we'd made it sou'west b' south."

All this was news to Jane and she turned questioningly to her father.

"What happened?" she asked.

"Poor devil off the *Ventana* found drifting back there. Shipwrecked. And, Mr. Duff, if you think that excuses your disobedience you are mistaken. That just happened. We might have come on half a dozen more rafts farther south. How do you know? And how do you know that it wouldn't have been better to have missed that fellow? He's crazy, you say. He'd rather be dead than that, I warrant—poor devil."

The old man stroked his goatee while Jane anxiously awaited the particulars. It was the first time in her experience that she had been aboard a vessel to pick up a castaway.

"Poor devil," repeated the old man. "He certainly didn't look unbalanced to me. Tell the steward to bring his dinner in here. I'll have a chat with him."

"He says he ain't—er, *isn't* hungry, sir."

The skipper smiled. "Makes no difference, Mr. Duff, what he says. He must be hungry. He is. Send him in."

Mr. Duff rose and left by way of the galley. There was no argument. As a general rule in such cases, there never was—not since Captain Macfarland, upon the death of his wife twenty years before had abandoned his practice of law, and for solace returned to his first beloved, the sea. But the exception was forthcoming. And it came.

It walked in through the door of the cuddy—Rupert Keith.

CHAPTER VII.

As there is salt of the earth, there is salt of the sea; and the master of the *Jane Macfarland* could boast a fair portion of both. As a young attorney he believed he had earned his salt; and, as son of the late Sir Hollis Macfarland, a baronet and one of England's foremost explorers, he had inherited more. In these days, perhaps, there is only superficial dignity in the name of merchant skipper. But to Captain Macfarland, who had forfeited his heritage for certain conveniences of American citizen-

ship, and whose return to the sea was more a matter of spiritual loyalty to the memory of his wife than of material choice, dignity with a deeper meaning could have manifested itself on no man. He had never forgotten his wife's dying words: "Ian, you will marry again, won't you?—if only for the sake of my children." And Ian, in his own way, had fulfilled her wish.

The sea had rocked the cradle of his children. It consoled them in their childish sorrow and laughed with them in their play. From the bellowing throats of typhoons and the quiet of a starlit calm it brought them their realization of God. The sea was their mother. For Hollis she had built a wonder world of adventure filled with the deeds of strong men; and for Jane, a fairyland to which the girl had grown so accustomed that only those certain things made from and out of herself held any true meaning.

So now when she saw her creation—for indeed he was a conception of her own imagination—standing there before her, she regarded the incident simply as a matter of course; for it had seemed incredible that she had left him behind, perhaps never to see again. And despite the shabby condition of his clothing she could identify him only vaguely with the "castaway" who was brewing such hubbub aboard ship. The fact that he was regarded as mentally unbalanced had left her mind.

Entering, he seemed to absorb everything at a glance; and for one brief instant his eyes, calm and sparkling as the fires of driftwood, fell warmly upon her. They were comforting. His gaze seemed to cover her, like a soft velvet coat with fur, and she cherished it as her dearest possession. It was not as if she were admired by some one for the first time; for, indeed, she had become used to men's glances. She smiled, and not until then did a troubled shadow cross his face; he spoke, and not until then did there appear anything extraordinary in his sudden appearance aboard the *Jane*. Her father was ordering him now to sit down and to eat his dinner.

"We'll discuss matters later," he said.

"I prefer to remain standing," replied the other. "I don't want any dinner, thank you; and, time being limited, we must discuss matters now."

Jane moved slowly back in her seat and her white little fingers closed tightly on a water glass. He was actually talking! Not only that but he was dictating to the "throne." He preferred doing this; he refused doing that; and, time being limited, he could not postpone the other! It had to be done now! And during a short silence she grew uneasy. She had commenced to feel a certain responsibility for the young man's demeanor. It was as if she had put words into his mouth—words which, however decorous, seemed indiscreet and hardly what might bring him the favor of the reigning power. She felt that if she had regarded him in a different light he would have employed correspondingly a different address. But now that he had come down from his barrel on the quay and entered into active life aboard the *Jane* he was gradually passing beyond her control, although the thoughts she had once given him were stamped permanently on his expression. He seemed still to be thinking: "I could be master of this schooner; king of the world. But I won't!"

During the suspense of the moment she managed to steal a glance at her father and was surprised to apprehend growing interest—admiration almost, wrinkling up from his tendrilled eyebrows and quaking beneath the trim foliage of his mouth. With a calm X-ray scrutiny he regarded the castaway and said:

"You *are* an odd sort. Here you've been drifting since the devil knows when; I send a rescue party for you; you fight them off, and now when you are offered a dinner at the captain's table, you decline. Not hungry? What? You must be!"

"I'm not!"

That was the argument and that was where it ended.

"There's scarcely time for explanations," he went on; "and before I start, you must answer a question. I understand that Francis Barette has chartered this vessel. Is he aboard?"

"He is," said the skipper. "Is there anything wrong in that?"

"Indirectly, yes. It accounts for everything—anything! Captain, I want you to understand, if you don't understand it already, that I was brought aboard this ship by strategy and force. I was brought aboard against my will—shanghaied, if you like. Not only that, but to be technical, my vessel was boarded on the high seas by your men. I was taken prisoner. In short, I am a victim of piracy. Now under circum-

stances, more or less personal, I really wouldn't care if it were not for certain binding obligations in San Francisco. Therefore, if you'd rather not be accomplice to Barette in his law-breaking pranks, I tell you now, while there is yet time, I expect you to right this situation; put me back where you found me. I was not shipwrecked. It was to have been a practical joke. I was dropped off a tug for the purpose of being picked up by a yacht—one supposed to have been bound my way with an eye peeled for my raft. Had she failed to find me the tug standing by in the fog, would have called. You can put me aboard the tug or the raft or maybe the yacht. It makes no difference, as long as we start now."

The skipper burst out laughing.

"What kind of a game were you playing out there?"

"Your game, apparently. If not, ask Barette. He can give you more of the facts than I."

"Do you know Mr. Barette?"

"I know him intimately, sir."

Continuing in minute scrutiny the captain's face grew serious. He stroked his red chop, nodding in thoughtful review of the discourse.

"You can rest assured," he said at last, "that, if what you say is true, I had no knowledge of it. The circumstances are odd, to say the least. Delays at sea are costly, especially here where winds are fickle. However, all I want, before taking you back, is reasonable identification to assure me of you—your——"

"Sanity!" supplied Keith. "Say it. I wouldn't blame you."

The old man nodded again.

"How am I to know?" he said. "I've run foul of so many strange things it's hard sometimes to trust my five senses. But I'll do all I can for you."

A door opened; and a means to settle the difficulty sauntered through. It came in the form of Francis Barette. It raised its chin, and on one side of its feline mouth a sneer muscle contracted and twisted.

"Very glad," it remarked, "that your unfortunate man is safely aboard. Can you relate the particulars of the disaster?"

Keith, whose hand had rested on the back of a chair, gripped it so firmly that it was lifted from the carpet. Could he relate the particulars of the disaster! Could he shake hands, sit up, speak and jump over a stick? Jane wondered if he would hurl the chair at Barette's head; but suddenly she saw his lips tighten over a smile; and for another brief moment his eyes rested upon her.

"Frank," he said at last, "what do you want me to infer from *this* attitude. You don't know me, I suppose! Never heard of me before!"

"Why—why, my dear boy, I'd be *glad* to know you, and indeed I look forward to the excellent opportunity the voyage will offer."

The captain's eyes moved slowly from Barette to Keith; then back again.

"Do you think you'd know Rupert Keith if you saw him?" he asked.

"Rupert Keith!" exclaimed the other. "Why of course!"

The old man frowned.

"This gentleman claims to be Rupert Keith."

"H'm-mm! Well-ll! *Does* he? That is interesting! Very! Why, my poor fellow, I—I don't like to disillusion you, of course; but—eh, you know one could hardly expect Francis Barette to err in the identification of his own disciple, his pupil—eh, indeed, his most promising protégé!"

Keith became livid. He dashed the chair aside, capsized another and seized the hermit sculptor by the collar.

"I'll say it on my dying bed," he cried, shaking the little man to the bulkhead and bumping him against the panels, "I'm *not* your pupil. Do you hear?" And with a tremendous boost he sent him sprawling over the table. "I'd sooner be the devil's bootblack," he growled, and keeping several obstacles between himself and the skipper brushed his hands together and strolled from the cuddy.

Barette gathered himself from a débris of broken tumblers and plates.

"Come, come, come! My dear man!" he exclaimed, whirling in search of the foe. "I declare! I'd rather *see* you as the devil's bootblack than my protégé." But to his surprise his man was gone. "Captain!" he cried. "This fellow is crazy. He's dangerous! If you can't make him behave I want him put in irons!" And with a contemptuous sweep of his hand he swaggered to his chair.

"It's very strange," mused the skipper, finding his place, "strange how disaster of one kind or another sometimes affects the

mind. By the Lord, I'd have sworn him sane if he hadn't attacked you; and for no reason at all. I wonder how he learned your name."

"I should naturally presume that the men told him," replied Barette.

The skipper shook his head. "By George, I've never known anything like it before. He certainly doesn't look crazy."

"If he doesn't, I should like to know who does!" observed Barette. "You forget, my dear captain, he tried to murder his rescuers, too."

"He may have had grounds for that. Too bad. And he has the stamp of a gentleman. I wonder—I'm going to investigate this thing. I'll take him back, stand by and see what happens."

"Rather presumptuous, don't you think?" observed the other. "I refuse to allow it. Do you think I can tolerate this dillydally for the sake of a lunatic?"

"Mr. Barette, I am of the opinion that you can tolerate whatever my judgment dictates," returned Captain Macfarland, his Scotch blood coming to a boil. "You've meddled enough. And we're putting back!"

"You do and the trip ends there. I'll charter another vessel."

"Charter and be damned to you! I'll stand no more of your nonsense. We're past the three-mile limit where landlubbers do well to keep their hatches shut. If you want to put clear back, then clear back we put; but there's going to be a definite understanding between us now."

"But—but, my dear captain! We mustn't be childish, you know!"

But his "dear captain" had already slammed the door of the cuddy behind him.

During all this Jane could scarcely realize what was happening. He was Rupert Keith! She was certain. Miracles had happened. Dreams had come true and were about to be shattered again.

She smiled to herself. Even she could not believe all of his yarn! That he'd put out aboard a raft to be picked up by another vessel seemed plausible enough. He could not have been a victim of the *Ventana* disaster because she had seen him in San Francisco the day before. But the yacht part of it! That was myth! What interests had he aboard a yacht? No, she was certain he'd put himself in the way of the *Jane Macfarland!* And Barette had helped him. He'd changed the course of the vessel in order to overhaul the raft. The fight was not genuine. They were both play acting. But then, why had Keith asked to be taken back? More play acting, no doubt! He could be sure that the captain would not leave him helpless on the open sea without first sighting a means of rescue; and probably there were no such means. Probably the tug had stood in for the harbor long ago. The insane part of it was absurd. The whole thing was an organized scheme made necessary because of the law which forbade the carrying of passengers aboard the schooner. No doubt Rupert Keith would explain it all to her.

Ten minutes later she joined her father on deck. The sun was sending its last rays across the water, and over its rose-gold path the whitecaps shattered and flew like silvery liquid glass. Hollis, in the capacity of third mate, was with Mr. Duff on the forecastle head. With a pair of binoculars to his eyes he leaned forward against the wind, his fiery hair blown back and his blue hickory shirt puffed out behind like a balloon. On the main deck two men and a boatswain were trimming sails. The schooner, now full and by, in search of the raft. The skipper paced the deck, pausing now and again at the taffrail to survey the offing. Keith stopped him once with the remark that he feared it was too late now to catch the tug. She would have come for the last time, he explained. But Scotch blood continued to speak and the schooner continued on her tack.

Keith walked to the companion hatch and rested there. He was an accomplished actor, Jane thought. If she had not seen him in San Francisco such a short time ago and so often, she would have been of the same mind as her father, scarcely knowing what to believe. From time to time she glanced at the young man and in nearly every instance found his eyes fixed upon her with such obvious deliberation that she might as well have been some object devoid of consciousness—a figurehead. It was not a stare. It held no searching qualities, yet it embraced an emotion so positive that it resembled a passion—a passion not for her but for something intangible and visionary; something conjured by her presence. Yes, she understood everything now. It was obvious. There would be no tug. His intention from the start had been to board the *Jane* and to remain aboard.

Darkness came. They had sighted not even the raft; and later in the very shadow of the great fog banks where the misty white drift sped over the topmasts the vessel veered off to her old course and the skipper went below. Evidently he was satisfied that the tug was only a delusion of a foundered mind. Barette too must have been satisfied; for despite his threat the schooner proceeded on her voyage.

Jane went to her deck chair where she could see the profile of the castaway silhouetted against the sky. For the sake of her father's pride she was glad the search had been made. It would never have done for Barette to override the captain's authority. But she knew, regardless of everything and everybody, that Rupert Keith did not want to leave the *Jane Macfarland;* and that Jane Macfarland deep in her heart did not want to leave him. He was, after all, dependent upon her for something, and whatever that was she wanted him to succeed. It was an obligation.

The water hissed and splashed along the sides; and a thousand stars swung down with the ghost disk of a moon set in a golden crescent. So low they seemed that the lofty sails would brush them off the sky and bring them clattering to the deck. Jane's heart was laughing. She wondered if he could laugh. Why didn't he come down and say "How do you do?"

Then, as if her thought had struck him down, he sprang from the companion hatch and paced hurriedly aft.

Jane rose, but her heart did not. There were lights—red and white, dim but growing brighter.

Perhaps, after all, he did not want to remain aboard the *Jane.* Wondering if he cared to call the captain, she started to ask; but no sooner had she spoken three words than he drew up sharply and turned upon her with an expression of pain.

"Yes, yes!" he interrupted. "I—I understand what you want to say. Wait a moment. Please."

Jane, puzzled and slightly piqued, said nothing; but followed his gaze toward a red and a white light, these trailed by a long succession of round, dim glows which appeared and vanished in the swell. The girl was about to remark that those lights could belong to no tug when she heard something like a gasp from Keith.

"Pasado Mañana!" he exclaimed. "The Patton yacht! There's no other vessel her size with portholes as large as those."

Jane could not reply. She scrutinized for a brief moment but turned away and heard him pacing behind. Then he stopped and she asked:

"Do you know her so——" She was going to say "so well," when he whirled upon her again.

"Yes, I know her," he said. "And you want to know if you hadn't better call your father. No, please don't. I have an idea that they don't want me aboard that yacht. I have an idea that I was mistaken in my belief that they were looking for me. I have an idea——" He shot her a quick glance. "Oh, but then I suppose you also think me insane."

And before she could politely, or even sincerely deny it, he was walking rapidly toward the opposite quarter where he stood gazing toward the lights of the *Pasado Mañana.* The red and white rays grew dim and suddenly vanished. The world was a million stars, a sea, a ship and two people who had yet to understand each other—and themselves.

CHAPTER VIII.

Circumstances bringing Rupert Keith aboard the schooner were, obviously enough, not the pranks of coincidence. He might have regarded them as such had the vessel been other than the *Jane Macfarland* and had there not been a certain rather queer personage aboard named Francis Barette. The ultimate object of his chicanery was not easily guessed, but Barney the bos'n had offered some clew through his allusions to one whom the papers had "foun' out." Doubtless more evidence pointing to the "true author of 'Power'" had been scraped from the gutters of Russian Hill and applied with some force to the name of the younger sculptor who, "it was rumored," "it was believed," or "not denied" had fled to escape the consequences of his charlatanism. And yet it seemed impossible that such extravagant means of stealing the work of a minor artist could have been found worth while. It seemed more likely that the unwarranted suspicion of the press was due largely to Barette's natural disregard for newspapers. He never read them.

But while Keith watched the lights of the *Pasado Mañana* twinkle and grow dim he could not rid himself of suspicion. He

had objected to the signaling of the yacht because he believed that Eileen's father had never been invited to share the secrets of Barette's plan and that the note tendered him aboard the tug was fiction.

"What brought you here—truly?" asked the girl.

She had been standing close beside him; and when she spoke, even had he been blind, his artist mind would have struggled subconsciously to hold the impression for transposition into clay. Had she seen her delicate figure so exposed to the ultra rays of his sixth sense she would have turned upon her heels and fled, but her gaze only rested upon him with expectancy, holding him to the question.

"*That* brought me," he answered, nodding toward the skylight through which could be seen in the glow of an oil lamp Francis Barette, engaged in a game of solitaire. "I can't afford to be here," he concluded, and, raising one shoulder, edged away.

Why did the girl persist in speaking to him? Why couldn't she be content solely in her visible charm without betraying the personality such environment as hers would produce? Nature's greatest mistake was that it gave commonplace expression to divine beauty. This young thing should have been born as a figure in bronze. Not that there had been any disillusionment in her voice. Musical voices are characteristic of feminine grace, but a harmonious diction in such cases is rare.

He thought of several models employed during his earlier attempts at 'Virtue.' One, despite her charm, had completely destroyed her value by a pert remark. Her speech had finally absorbed every natural attribute of loveliness. Another, although he had paid her extra to refrain from tongue wagging, refused to pose for any length of time without chewing gum. "Us girls" had to chew if "us" couldn't smoke. Then he had found Jane Macfarland whom now he regarded as the only woman on earth who could touch the ideal. If only she would abstain from further discourse.

"Please don't think me ungrateful for your interest," he said, noticing that her back was turned, and wondering if he had not offended her. He had spoken without realization and immediately there came a dread that she might answer him.

She did not. Nor did she turn her head; but slowly walked to the companionway and vanished. Keith stood thinking for a moment, then strolled to the opposite hatch while from the deepest haunts of his imagination the vision of his ideal in bronze struggled for form.

He glanced about him; saw the shadowy sails tremble and fill while slantwise through a swarm of stars a meteor fell. He felt the gentle lift of a following sea; and heard the murmur of a toiling ship and the hushing sound of waves upon her stern.

Out of the sea sprang new ideas—answers, perhaps, to the strange actions of the hermit sculptor. Keith was aboard the *Jane Macfarland* because Francis Barette was more far-sighted than himself; because Francis Barette had chosen to make him his pupil, drag him to success—to something genuine, something uncompromised by squalid opinion or moved by aspersive publicity in newspapers; because Francis Barette was his friend.

He, Rupert Keith—what had he done so far with his life? Made one recognized contribution to art. One! And for another he had been granted a contract which he could not fill. What did it amount to? And yet, after its award, he could scarcely walk down Market Street without becoming stage-struck!

No wonder Barette had refused to recognize him! Being shorn a name, being only one's self—that was enough to weed the conceit from anybody! That and other things. For example, the skipper came on deck just then; and in the presence of Keith and the second mate announced that the two men were to share quarters. There was an extra bunk in Mr. Mathsen's stateroom, he explained. But Mr. Mathsen, taking the captain aside, protested and the order was revoked. Very well then, Mr. Keith—that name would suffice for the time—was to find a berth, the upper one in a tier of three, in the cook's quarters. No, the fo'c's'le would not do at present. Later on, perhaps, all right; but the forem'st hands would probably object to the presence of a "nonunion man."

So Mr. Keith decided to make the best of it. He walked again to the companion hatch and, while debating whether or not there would be any objections to sleeping on deck, he was nudged sharply from behind. He turned. A shadowy face with sunken cheeks was staring at him.

"Wan'ad b'low-ow," it said with the drawl of a deaf man. It glared for a moment. Then vanished down the companion-way.

Keith had seen that face on deck when he had first come aboard and his recollections were not pleasant ones. It was owned by the cabin boy—*boy,* although he must have been at least forty. He belonged, no doubt, to some sapless twig of Ishmael—aquiline nose, expanded nostrils and heavily contracted muscles of the upper lip. His eyes protruded from red sockets like two glassy bubbles; and these, together with a bird's-nest condition of the hair, gave the impression that he had just risen from bed. Keith, with the prospects of such a bunkie was glad to postpone the act of turning in and to proceed "b'low."

In the cuddy, seated in a swirl of cigarette smoke just beneath the swing of a palsied lamp, sat Francis Barette. He was shuffling a deck of cards.

"Close the door," he whispered, placing a hush finger to his lip and raising his eyebrows. "Gently, *John.*" He emphasized the new appellation and waited, composing himself with a catlike grace while the other took a chair. "It has been very painful to me, John," he began; "your lack of trust, I mean. See, here are my cards on the table." He paused to spread them out. "And you will notice that the joker is on top. You forgot, didn't you, that such a card was in the pack?"

Keith smiled, lighted a cigarette and leaned comfortably back in his seat.

"It wasn't in the pack," he observed. "You must have carried it in your boot."

"John, my boy, be careful. I'm afraid you've been thinking! This joker, you notice, is a king on a bicycle. It should be Rupert Keith on a raft." He puckered his mouth, glanced down for a moment, meditatively toying with the deck. "I've been playing solitaire," he said at last; "and I've won."

Keith shook his head. "A man who cheats at solitaire——"

"Harms no one," supplied Barette. "John, you would have stagnated. I had to get you away—away from yourself. You refused to come under my terms; so I brought you under what terms I could."

"You brought me, yes; but what the devil did you do with Rupert Keith?"

"I hope I killed him. He was becoming a nuisance to us both. You are an artist, not a city plaster monger. The last time I saw Keith at work he was modeling his own tombstone and he didn't know it. Now John, my boy, remember this: you are not Rupert Keith. You came aboard this vessel by chance! Call *me* Chance, if you like; but chance could not be so extravagant as to bring a Rupert Keith and a Francis Barette in such fateful manner aboard the same ship. Things like that don't happen. Why, if you were you, as it were, this whole game would be recognized as some sort of plot between us. I understand that the men are already suspecting things. Under the circumstances it is well not to complicate matters. Of course you can call yourself what you like. I don't care. But as far as I'm concerned I've never seen you before. You are not Rupert Keith."

The other fell limply back in his chair.

"You have a supreme nerve," he observed quietly. "However, I seem not to be Rupert Keith. I found that out some time ago. As far as I am able to judge, my name is——" And when he told, he did not realize how that name would stick. His name, he said, was *"Mud."*

"Mud," echoed Barette. "John Mud! Splendid! I see I've at last tapped your memory. John Mud, my boy, I'm glad to meet you; and to hear the good news that our mutual acquaintance, Rupert Keith, is buried."

But "John Mud" did not express such enthusiasm. Rupert Keith was not buried, he held. And he wouldn't be. He leaned forward, watching for an expression of alarm which he dimly suspected as forthcoming.

"If his ghost has been reading the San Francisco newspapers to-night," he said, "that ghost is probably very surprised to learn that it was you, and not Keith, who modeled 'Power!'"

There was no reaction whatever, save one of light amusement. Barette simply shrugged his shoulders and waved his hand like a goldfish fin.

"If the ghost doesn't care I have no objections. It takes more than newspapers, John, dear fellow, to harm my reputation."

The other folded his arms.

"Very well, Frank. If you don't care; neither do I—not as long as Keith remains dead. But he's coming to life again some day; and if you don't deny certain rumors outright by a written statement with your

name tagged on he's going to take particular delight in proving a mistake. And, in fact, he's not at all satisfied with the way you handled the affair while you had the chance. To have his first taste of success fall into your ample basket probably meant something to him. You could have prevented it. As a gentleman if not as a friend it was your place, not mine, to demand retraction. I expected it; and I still expect it, whether you are in the habit of bothering with newspapers or not."

"John, your I's and he's are becoming confused. You had better forget *him!* He's dead and doesn't care a tinker's dam about anything. If he comes back to life it will be time enough to right the affair. There's no place in my basket, so to speak, for his success. Surely, you couldn't accuse me of plagiarism!"

"I'm afraid I couldn't, Frank; or I would." Keith's eyes flashed and dimmed again. "That's done. What happens now?"

Barette smiled, removing his ivory cigarette holder.

"Your resignation is wonderful," he said. "Are you not glad, John, that things have happened as they have? Do you not realize now that it was all for your own good that I brought you with me?"

Keith did not answer. In his mind there clashed renewed suspicions against a fortress of stubborn loyalty. He was waiting, wondering which would be the victor, when suddenly he realized that his lips were already giving their decision; and in self-defense he came to their support.

"For my own good," he mused bitterly; and his eyes fixed themselves coldly upon the hermit. "Frank," he continued, withholding a painful conviction, "even a child abhores what is perpetrated upon him for his own good. The act is cowardly, incombatable. It is a dagger thrust to a defenseless pride, leaving the victim only to bandage his wounds and forgive." Keith paused, as gradually Barette's smile died away. "You say that my presence aboard this vessel is for my own good. A moment ago, on deck, I was beginning to believe it. I felt the stimulus of new environment and realized the hopelessness of my former existence. In this light I could forgive your extravagant act; but in this light also there falls the shadow of a broken faith, rendering the very ground upon which we stand sterile—save for the roots of doubt. And these," he exclaimed, "are sufficient to seep every atom of gratitude and respect from any friendship. You say your cards are on the table. I doubt it. I don't understand your game; and I wouldn't believe you if you told me. I'll find it out for myself."

Barette smiled with a trace of sadness and a trace of scorn. Then, taking the cards, he laid them out in neat rows before him.

CHAPTER IX.

There was a time when Rupert Keith, groping in the dark, had been all but deaf to his own life's calling. So faint had been the whisper that it seemed at first only the breath of a dream thing; and youth, he knew, was the toy of many dreams. His father—or one whom he called by that name, for in fact Keith was an orphan—prided himself on being a very practical man; and like many practical men he could brook no code of life other than his own. Success, as may be supposed, he measured in weight of gold and regarded himself accordingly quite successful. Keith the younger, considering his environment, might have been the same. But he was not. He had followed vague whispers into fields of art, thus relieving his foster father of all further parental responsibility and staking his own life on a possible manifest force behind a dream.

His real father and his real mother had no place even in his most faded memories; and it was only through a chancing stroke of temper on the part of his supposed parent that he had been given any inkling whatever of his true nativity. Thereafter, although even their names had been withheld from him, he bore the new knowledge as a sacred mystery; and this knowledge was not without its effect. Immediately he regarded himself as an isolated personality with undiscovered resources. Dreams became the expressions of past realities, spirit forces, blood of an unknown ancestry concentrated and working alone in him. There came new responsibilities, new life and a new creed; and, at the age of seventeen, he shouldered his own future and went his own way.

Three years of struggle, involving everything from menial labor to an intensive study of anatomy and of masters of the renaissance, tossed him one rainy afternoon into a lecture room where he was to listen for the first time to the carefully tasted

phrases of Francis Barette. Of course Keith had heard of him. He had read of him. He had studied his work; and more, of all sculptural endeavor of the modern school, that of "the hermit" he esteemed the highest—admired it even to the point of worship.

Barette came on this particular occasion by special request of the class; and as he took the rostrum, despite his appearance of shadowy insignificance, the lecture hall following an applause fell tensely silent. It was a silence that even the speaker seemed not to break, for his voice floated over its surface like crisp leaves on a mill pond. And although the topic was grossly *"I,"* it involved the feeling of drifting away as on the waves of music, while the long hypnotic finger of the strange little man moved in slow circles before him, stirring the quiet into a stillness almost uncanny. At intervals between the light-spoken phrases one might have heard the pur of a kitten or the barest flutter of a moth's wings, until at last the spell was murdered by a loud clapping of hands; and Francis Barette sauntered from the platform.

Later in the modeling room he appeared again. At the invitation of the instructor he was inspecting the efforts of the students. Twice he passed Keith's work, but paid no attention whatever. Then there was a brief conversation in a far corner of the room during which the pupil was tremblingly conscious of several direct glances. Once he heard his name spoken by Francis Barette, who followed his inscrutable smile directly to Keith's table and for many minutes stood there in silence.

"Your name?" were his first words.

Keith told him.

"You have definite promise," were his second words.

And Keith thanked him. That was all until with emphasis came the comment:

"Positive ability. Positive!" And a long conversation ensued, culminating with what Keith regarded as the greatest opportunity of his life. The instructor was no less amazed than the pupil; for the latter, whose work even in the school of fine arts was considered mediocre, had been offered the use of Barette's studio.

That was how the acquaintance started; but its progress was none so dazzling. The great artist's studio was not his workshop; nor was it for display purposes. It became the modeling room for "the pupil" and the lounging den for the master. Not once during that period did Barette touch his fingers to clay, nor impart as much as a word of practical advice. The young sculptor was obliged to listen to strange tales concerning "The Island," theories relating to the value of solitude for the highest achievement in art; and *"I"* and *"I"* and *"I,"* until he could tolerate the ex-hermit's haunting ubiquity no longer and was obliged to move, as tactfully as possible, into the sanctuary of a studio of his own.

All this Keith reviewed while Barette took this card and laid it there, turned over that card and placed it here with all the quiet repose of a sophisticated Tabby. The act of severing friendly relations with the great master was no less an epoch in his career than that of forming the original acquaintance, and the pain no less acute than the former elation. He assured himself, however, that it could be no otherwise. To suspect a friend was, in honor, to lose him. A broken trust was irreparable.

Suspicions toward Barette had led so far to no direct accusations. The recent newspaper chatter, of course, suggested itself many times; but was as often dismissed. Stolen credit for a single work, like "Power," could not have been worth such effort, say nothing of the risk. And the idea of one sculptor shanghaiing another "for his own good" was an absurdity. The hermit was generally regarded as queer, but he wasn't that queer. There was some underground motive behind all this and Keith was resolved to exhume it. For this task he caught sight of the first implement almost immediately through the entrance of the mate, who upon noticing Keith grunted and cleared his throat.

"Didn't know you was here," he apologized.

"Did you want to see me, Mr. Duff?" inquired Barette, continuing with his game.

"No hurry. No hurry. Guess I'll be turning in now."

And he vanished. But on turning to go, Keith had noticed something that might have been a perfectly normal ear had not half of it been chewed away. At once there flashed through his mind the impression of a dark slouch hat seen through the glass of his studio door. Duff was a man to be carefully watched.

CHAPTER X.

Shortly before when Jane went below she met her father in the outer saloon of the sanctum. He was comfortably docked in a great armchair, puffing his pipe and straining "Logic and Jurisprudence" up through his bushy eyebrows. He tossed her a reluctant glance, frowned; then lowered the volume, for Jane had encompassed his broad shoulders and was attempting to smother a tear drop in the radiance of his beard. With quick resignation he closed the book, sent it spinning to the table and took the girl upon his knees.

"Moods," he observed, and his face wrinkled with patronizing amusement. "Jane, lass, what's the matter?"

But she knew he expected no answer. "Moods" had none. So she submitted while he joggled her up and down as he had done in such moments since her infancy. It was a means, no doubt, of shaking back foolish tears.

"Belay, now!" he barked, "or we'll have to man the pumps!" He laughed, adding a quick kiss. "No use being lonesome for Hollis before he goes! Why! It'll be a whole eight months yet. And in only three years he'll have finished his law school. Not long. Then we'll open a practice together —admiralty law—all three of us! You'll be the secretary. How's that? And it's sell the old hulk and live ashore! You can have a car—a whole train of cars; and house. Any kind you like."

Jane smiled, a little sadly, a little ashamed of her tears.

"I have no right to be unhappy," she said. "Oh, I'm not unhappy! I couldn't be even if—if Hollis were gone and I had only you."

"It's a frame of mind, happiness," mused the skipper. "Think about your lessons. Knowledge is true satisfaction. And remember; we start in earnest to-morrow. Do you realize that your studies now are equivalent to those of my last year in Trinity College? That's an achievement—for a girl. Oh, your mother would be proud of you. I believe she is proud of you, Jane, lass; and proud of Hollis too."

"And of you—a little bit—perhaps," smiled the girl.

The gaze of the skipper swung slowly toward a quaint photograph set in a panel between two large bookcases. It was a photograph of a young girl not unlike Jane.

"I hope she is," he said quietly. "Whatever I plan to do I look for a smile on that old picture. No, it hasn't always smiled; and I've known then that I was wrong." He puffed his pipe. "There's religion in some recollections." Pausing with a sudden twist of his shoulders, he sat erect. "Turn in! Off with you, now! Hollis starts on this book to-morrow; and I don't know anything about it myself, yet."

Gently he forced his daughter aside, gave her an impatient pat on the shoulder and in another instant was frowning into the pages of "Logic and Jurisprudence."

Jane went to her stateroom thinking of the mother she had never known. She wondered if women would understand. She disliked women—what she'd seen of them. They regarded her as a curio. Women, like most men, were not people at all, except in books. There was George Eliot's *Maggie Tulliver,* and there was *Hester Prynne* of the "Scarlet Letter" for example. They were real, like her brother and her father and—some one whom she had no right to think about. No! she wouldn't think about him. She'd forget that she'd ever seen him before; that she'd tried to help him, that he'd been anything in her life but a passing shadow, like all the rest of innate humanity.

Yet she could not. Forgetfulness cares only for those things not worth forgetting. She had given life to a shadow man. That life was his. And if she had given more—if she had given love, then that love was his. Life—her life; love—her love, these could not be forgotten.

By the open porthole she gazed out over the dark water and imagined again the lights of the *Pasado Mañana.* What was his interest there? Why had he wanted *her.* She listened to the murmur of waves and the breath of an eddying breeze; and she did not know that the same waves were offering solace to a heart that throbbed like her own; that the same shattered dreams, the same broken hopes, lay burning in the flames of a corresponding pride, and of a corresponding desire—desire to forget, to remember, to crush, to love.

There came a familiar tapping at the door. Hurriedly touching a handkerchief to her eyes Jane opened it with a smile especially prepared for her brother, Hollis. He beamed upon her with light scrutiny from his sparkling blue eyes; and his hair, all

fiery and blown by the wind, his quick breathing, and his sinewy bulk conveyed the impression of a bounding Newfoundland dog overjoyed at meeting after all these long minutes of separation. With a sudden backward spring he alighted on her bunk.

"We'll hit the trades in no time," he said. "Fresh breeze, logging seven. Got the tops'ls on her. Should have been set long ago, only that squint-eyed mate, Mr. Stuff or Duff or whatever his name is, doesn't belong aboard this ship. Always hobnobbing with the men. Don't like his looks. Fact, don't like the looks of lots of things. Ever see such a crew in your life?"

Jane shook her head. She seated herself by the dresser, thankful for the opportunity of conversing with her brother.

"Queer bunch aboard. And that clam-faced sculptor, Barette!" he went on. "I wonder if he's going to give us an exhibition of how he does it—modeling, I mean. While I was checking over the supplies I ran across three boxes of clay. I thought he always did his work on that island of his. Think of the fame and money wasted on a bleached little shrimp like him. He probably has more sense, though, than you'd give him credit for. Funny, but the mate seems to know him. Calls him 'gov'ner.' There's something strange in all this. Here's the situation." He raised his eyebrows, leaned back to fill his pipe, frowning his father's frown so that his eyebrows all but took the place of his eyes. "Planned to lay the vessel up in San Francisco, you remember, so discharged all hands—all but Barney and the cook. And no sooner that, than along came Barette to negotiate his charter. Might have happened, yes; but then only two hours after along came Guff or Duff aboard looking for a berth. Got it. Also picked his crew. Now I think, from the looks of it, Duff's sold to Barette, and with a few exceptions, all hands are sold to Duff. In short, who's master of this ship?

"Captain doesn't notice these things. I wouldn't either if I held my nose to books like he does all the time. Some of them, you'd think, take it for a pleasure excursion; and for some, before this little voyage is over, it may be just that! Big bruiser called Teague has whole gang under his thumb. They don't listen to the bos'n. Barney'll land on one of them some day. Won't stop at Teague or old Puff either—comes to a show-down. Then there 's that cabin boy! Of all the pierhead jumpers I ever saw! Sneaking! Snooping! Dirty! And who the thunder is this young chap found on the raft? Poor devil! Hear he doesn't know himself. Oh, he's off the *Ventana* all right. She went down just a jump north of where we picked him up. Something ought to be done for that fellow. Cook's quarters with a half-wit for a side kick! No fun." Hollis paused a moment to puff his pipe. "Weird coincidence, don't you think, that chap thinking he's Rupert Keith when we've got one sculptor aboard already?"

Jane shifted uneasily; then looking Hollis in the eyes, took his hand.

"You don't believe that story, do you? I mean about Keith's accepting the credit for some statue supposed to be Barette's."

Hollis frowned; but Jane felt the return pressure of his hand, an old telegraphic communication of confidence.

"Didn't read that article through," he commented; "but now that I've seen Barette I think he's a wise owl."

"And now," Jane faltered, "now that you've seen Rupert Keith——"

"What do you mean? He's not Rupert Keith! He only thinks he is."

"But he is. He's not off the *Ventana!* He wasn't shipwrecked! And he's as sane as you or I." Jane spoke rapidly, almost in an undertone, and gazed out at vacancy. "On the day that the liner went down," she said, "I saw him in San Francisco. I saw him the day after and the day after that." She caught her breath and turned abruptly. "Don't speak of it to anybody. It was—it was in the early mornings before you and father turned to. And—but it's terrible! I don't understand how I allowed it."

She broke off while Hollis, holding her hands in both of his, stared wonderingly.

"You mean you know him; you've talked with him, you've——"

But Jane cut him off. "He needed me. I wanted to help him. He tried so hard. I—I posed for him. I——"

Hollis had risen to his feet and was holding her in his arms.

"You left the ship to do that?"

"No."

"He came aboard, then?"

"No."

"Well, I don't see anything so terrible in that. How did you happen to meet him?"

"I didn't. I believe he doesn't know my name—even now."

Still clinging to her brother's hand during a short spell of silence, they sat together on the bunk, Hollis drawing upon his pipe and gazing thoughtfully through the smoke.

"You think," he observed at last, "he purposely got in the way of this vessel for —you?"

"I thought so—at first. But I don't know. I don't understand. He scarcely speaks to me now that he's aboard. He said Mr. Barette was responsible for his being here."

"Maybe he is responsible," the other remarked. "I don't understand this thing at all."

Jane was not listening. Gradually her face became pale and one hand rose to her throat. A sudden gust of cool air fanned through the porthole and sent the smoke curling toward the door. Hollis, regarding his sister anxiously, smiled.

"You're nervous about something, Jane. What is it?"

"Nothing. Only—only I wish I were a man. If I were I could tell you and you'd understand. Such a helpless, passive, pretending creature a woman has to be—especially in the things that will make or break her whole life. I was thinking to-night that if stars were hopes you'd see them fade and die when there were no clouds to hide them. Stars *are* hopes, I think, for a woman; only they stay and shine always beyond her reach. What men hope for they can fight for. I'd rather be a man."

CHAPTER XI.

For Keith, on the following morning, there was no place at the captain's table, nor with the hands. Unable to find sleep in the close quarters assigned him where the only ventilation came from the officer's bath and where Pebbles, the cook, and Lester, the cabin boy, joined in a snoring duet, he had come on deck shortly after the termination of the midwatch with a heart that seemed to have sunk to the level of his stomach. Both, at least, were empty; and his face felt as though it had been given a coat of spar varnish. For hours he had paced the main deck wondering whether it were best to attempt to identify himself or to assume the psuedonym thrust upon him by the hermit. The girl, he believed, would be the only one aboard who would be willing to accept his word; and even she might have her doubts. Although she had seen him many times before she had never spoken to him until he had come aboard; and all personal effects, bearing his name, were in the hands of Tugboat Jake. But after all, it made little difference. He could be John Mud easier than he could be himself; and perhaps under this name he would be recognized as sane. It was maddening to be considered mad. Better by far to be "Mud;" so Mud he became before dawn.

A fresh breeze, veering steadily to the northward, spray lashed the schooner's sides and whipped the crests into flying scud. It sprang with the first glitter of morning and bore down on the *Jane* until every stitch and stick, shroud and backstay was vibrating with a new and colossal life. Not a cloud swam in the sky; and when the misty gray of the west had burned away it was blazened with a glare of silver blue. Mr. Duff stood alongside the binnacle glowering forward. All others but the wheel man were at breakfast; and the aroma of coffee and a spluttering griddle, wafted on the quartering breeze from the galley vent, caused alias John Mud to feel as he appeared—a half-starved castaway. An appeal to the steward brought relief but not satisfaction. Pebbles had served him some coffee and was about to whip an egg for scrambling when Lester interrupted.

"Ol-l-l man wanns you-u!" he drawled. "Now-ow!"

Keith, nodding, drained his cup and a moment later was knocking at the skipper's door. Some one said, "Come in." He came but was obliged to wait several minutes for audience. Captain Macfarland, seated cross-legged beside the table, while his son stood scowling near by, had glanced up for only an instant and now was fumbling thoughtfully through the pages of a small black volume.

"Read carefully the introduction," he was saying; "skim through this part—'the distinction between positive and instituted morality.' Then"—he paused, turning several more pages—"then see what you can learn of this: 'positive and instituted jurisprudence, and positive and instituted law, distinguished.'"

Keith looked on wonderingly, shifting from his right foot to his left and from time to time attempting to smooth his scraggly

hair. The skipper surrendered the volume to his somewhat reluctant son, asking:

"Where is our Jane lass this morning? Time she were here."

Oh, she was at breakfast. Would be ready soon. And Hollis, tossing Keith a quick "good morning," left the cabin.

The skipper turned in his chair with a superior but still a pleasant smile. Alias John Mud was beginning to feel like a schoolboy called up before the principal rather than a castaway before the ship's master; and he wondered what "positive and instituted morality," "jurisprudence" and "law" had to do with the sailing of the *Jane Macfarland.*

"Now," observed the old man, rubbing the palms of his hands together and stretching his short legs, "I suppose I have you to overhaul, have I? Take a chair. This is simply a means of acquaintance; and it's always well, you understand, for a ship's master to know his men—especially when they come aboard as you did."

Keith returned the skipper's smile; but then, with a sudden thought, scowled heavily and passed his hand over his forehead.

"How in the world did I get aboard, captain?" he asked, as if a casual curiosity alone had given cue to the query.

But there was no answer. For several stressed moments he faced a sharp scrutiny. Keith was a wretched actor; and he knew it; but he did not know that, in the light of his supposed mental turmoil, his growing nervousness was an asset to his part and that it was interest rather than suspicion which lighted the old man's eyes. In fact, Keith did not know Captain Macfarland, although a somewhat clouded impression was about to be elaborated upon. The door from the cuddy swung open and Jane entered, drew up slightly on sight of the unkempt prisoner, then turned toward her father.

"This will never do, Jane, lass," growled the latter with a meaning nod toward the clock. "Remember I said we should begin in earnest this morning. To-day starts your translation of Hippolytus. I want you to proceed as far as the dialogue between Phædra and the nurse: 'Oh, sick and sore are the days of men!' it begins. When you have done that I want you to show me the influence of Socrates on Euripides, relative to philosophical ideals—his purposed impiety and domestic infelicity, perhaps, offering a motive for his withdrawal from Athens to Magnesia and later to the court of Archelaus."

"And all in writing?" cried Jane.

"Written, of course. And be careful in your composition. You have developed a habit recently of employing French expression where English fails you. Don't do that. In writing English, use English; French, French; Latin, Latin, and Greek, Greek! Modification of this rule may come later; but now they are no less stunting to your vocabulary than would be the use of slang."

Keith stared while Jane went to a built-in secretary, removed a book, drew up a chair and sat down. He watched her as she opened her "Euripides" and smoothed a large sheet of paper beside it. In contrast to her ponderous undertaking was the light gayety of her Chinese costume—the blended vermilion against the frosted blue, the trim high collar, the straight cut of the jacket, the freshness and the coolness and the modest suggestion of greater charm in her sculptural figure.

Keith shifted uneasily; and began to sympathize with Alice in Wonderland. Often he had dreamed of school days; and he was speculating now on whether he would be assigned to Blackstone's "Commentaries" or "The Furies of Æschylus" in punishment for his attack on the hermit. Several times during the conversation that followed he glanced toward the girl, smiling inwardly but with self-rebuke. He felt as if he owed her an apology. He had shrunk from the probability of disillusionment through her use of English; but now came the discovery that she was versed not only in that language, but in three others as well.

"First of all," the skipper was saying, with a sharp focus upon his prisoner; "I want to know your name, if you can remember it now."

"My name is John Mud," replied the other.

Jane glanced up but plunged immediately into "Euripides" while Keith, with frozen serenity, looked stark before him.

"Mud!" queried the skipper, craning his neck and squinting curiously. "Yesterday you said something very different. Are you quite certain?"

"Very certain. I can always tell. Whenever I wake up and don't know where I am I know immediately that my name is Mud; and I know too that very likely I was Ru-

pert Keith the day before." He paused, toying with his hands and gazing nonchalantly at his finger nails. "It's a very strange thing," he went on; "but I seem to be given to these spells every now and then; and when they come I actually believe myself the artist, Rupert Keith. It's the old case, I suppose, of a dual personality. But there's this about it: during the period of reversion from Keith to Mud I am generally a dangerous person to have around. When it's over I'm safe enough; and the past is only a vague remembrance at its best."

He was interrupted at that moment by a knocking at the door of the companionway; and Francis Barette was admitted into the sanctum. His gaze coasted about from the girl to her father, then settled upon Keith. The skipper looked up and nodded gravely to the newcomer.

"Sit down, Mr. Barette," he said. "You may be able to help us. The young man holds now to be other than he was yesterday. Claims dual personality, you understand."

The hermit smiled, stepping lightly to a chair.

"Don't you remember anything, my dear boy, of your actions yesterday?"

"As if it were a dream," came the reply with more sincerity than he intended. "I remember an explosion. I remember swimming to a raft and later trying to fight off several men."

"Do you remember anything about the *Ventana?*" pursued the skipper.

"No, sir."

"Do you remember telling me something about a tug and a yacht?"

Keith nodded. "And I suspected you and Mr. Barette of having shanghaied me. As Rupert Keith I am always suspecting things."

The old man stroked his beard. Being reasonably assured by Mr. Mud that the spells came only at long intervals he granted him his freedom. His case was an interesting one. They might discuss it again some time. And there were togs in the slop chest to which he was welcome.

Keith thanked him and left the sanctum. Barette engaged his "dear captain" in conversation; and Jane, totally forgotten by every one, carried her neglected "Euripides" into her stateroom and gently closed the door.

CHAPTER XII.

Pebbles and Lester were given to snoring and their quarters shared by Keith were poorly ventilated, so that he had found sleep impossible. Therefore on the following night he chose to sleep elsewhere, and this purely fortuitous choice led to the turning point of his life. There was a whaleboat on the main deck resting on the waterway and lashed to the bulwark. He crept beneath her thwarts that night and, rolling himself in a blanket, fell asleep.

Whether it was the hardness of the floor boards or the sound of voices that awakened him he did not know, but he sat up and looked about him. The moon had long since dipped behind the world; and, from the black boundlessness of space a thousand stars were suspended as if from invisible spider webs, and swinging in one accord over the topsails. On the forecastle head a lookout moved, the sparks from his pipe darting out on the wind. In the wheelhouse aft, the glow from the compass box fell upon the broad chest of the helmsman, but there was no one else on the poop. The officer of the watch seemed to have deserted his post.

Keith listened. Although the voices that he heard were indistinct he recognized those of Barette and Duff. The two men were seated, he discovered, in the lee of the mainmast, the mate's cigar casting a faint gleam over his morose features. Alias John Mud, now wide awake, lost no time, but with a glance fore and aft slipped down to the waterway and crept hurriedly athwart deck to the opposite side of the mast.

"For what purpose did you think I employed you?" Barette was saying. "From all outward appearances, as it were, there is nothing so very mysterious about this enterprise. To all the world but you, I *am* the hermit sculptor, I *am* Francis Barette; and I defy you to rob me of the name. You were there when I assumed it, and were it not for your lack of normal culture you might have assumed it yourself. It was nothing then; but I *made* it—established it, so to speak, in the hall of fame. You can't blackmail me. No one can. I have become the master. I am the master. For you to attempt to disprove it would be to make a fool of yourself; and for you to succeed in disproving it—and that is impossible—would be to find yourself in the same boat, my dear fellow, with me."

"That may be," growled the other, "but do you think for three squirts of a swab hose I'm here to satisfy your whims? Not me. I'm out for what's in it. Cash. And I don't make bones about it. I ain't got any grudge on the boy's dead father; nor the boy neither unless he starts fouling my chances. Then, I tell you, it's eight bells whether you want to save him or not. I couldn't see your idea in the first place and I don't get it now. Revenge, is all it is; and what do I care about somebody else's stolen woman? She's dead anyhow; and so is the hermit. What's the use takin' it out on the boy?"

Keith could not have budged even had the mood been prompting. The words lashed him there, sinking deeper and deeper as facts revealed themselves. For a moment there was no reply. The *Jane* listed before a fresh gust; and deep within her something cracked, evoking a low groan.

"Don't be an ass," responded Barette at last. "I tell you there's no revenge to it. I'll admit that there was a time when, with my happiness purloined and my career broken, my youth was so embittered that it was revenge itself. Over his grave with his infant son in my arms I vowed that the boy should suffer as I had suffered and that if ghosts had eyes there would be one that would long for blindness. But after taking him back and arranging for his adoption I nearly forgot him and heard later that he had run away to become a sculptor. It must have been in his blood; and I knew then that he was to become a great artist. I admit too that it was for that reason that I took him under my wing; but I grew to admire instead of hate him, though not to the extent that I forgot the debt incurred by his father—a debt which he must still assume. My career is first; for had it not been for me Keith would have been raised by the native nurse and lived perhaps his entire lifetime on Agrigan. I took him away from there. I have the right to take him back; and I should not be unwilling to hazard my reputation on the fact that the boy, as you call him, possesses an intrinsic value which *you* cannot afford to overlook, and which I have not overlooked. His work is a dead ringer, provincially speaking, for that of the hermit. Place him in his father's environment, leave him the necessary tools and other equipment and observe the consequences."

"Observe and be blowed to you," exclaimed the other. "Do you think he'll lay to your pranks? Not him. He ain't nobody's fool. And as for the consequences" —he spat—"I know the consequences. He'll mix with the natives and do nothing."

"You don't know him, my dear fellow. He is not your kind. Did you at any time while we were on the island hear of the hermit doing anything like that?"

"The hermit! Huh! He had a woman —a wife. Nobody knows that better'n you. You hounded him ten years; and now because all you found was two graves on a hillside, now you want to take it out on his son—at my risk!" He laughed bitterly. "Intrinsic value, me eye! It's a case of squarin' the odds. And what will I get out of it?"

"You'll get your share of the returns from this cargo," returned Barette; "and that's something you wouldn't get if I hadn't allowed you and your cutthroat men to join me. This trip, notwithstanding the prospects of another eight or ten years from now, is destined to be five or ten times more remunerative than our first. My name counts now, where it didn't then. That's exactly why I left half of it behind—something your dwarfed intelligence could not grasp. You say that the hermit had a woman. Yes, he did; and she was his inspiration as she might have been mine. I can see her nature and her beauty in all his work. He could have done nothing without her. The same may apply to the son. I have made provisions for him. I have chartered the ship with his model aboard. He will forget his old affair—one that lent him the inspiration for the statue 'Power;' and there will be a new one that will inspire him to great work. He will surpass his father."

Duff burst out laughing. "You mean to say you expect me to maroon the girl too?"

"I do, precisely—if you expect your share of this cargo money."

"I suppose you want me to pirate the ship, eh?"

"Yes; if there were no other solution. However there is another solution by which we shall be able to return with the captain still in command, and with his daughter and Keith left behind. I'll explain it to you later. I agree that above all we must incur no suspicion—make any sacrifice to preserve peace. The marooning task is only secondary but do not for a minute belittle

its importance. I intend to live the latter years of my life in comfort and fame; and to die as Francis Barette, the master; but I am not an old man yet. We must be careful."

"You're right, gov'ner," mumbled Duff. "That's why I'm satisfied to let good enough alone. But I'm no soft-shell. Not me. I mean business this time. I ain't letting you down on any ten-per-cent rake-off. I want fifty per cent! Savvy! Fifty per cent; and another fifty, if it's really coming, on your *new* hermit's work. You, with the whole world groveling at your toes, calling you what you ain't; and not even knowing I'm alive. And what could you 'a' done without me, the first time? You cleared sixty thousand on that cargo, you say. It's a lie. You got more. We was shipmates last time nineteen year ago; and you ain't been living on no three thousand a year. Not you!"

"But you forget, my dear Duff, that besides the mere commercial value of this statuary there happens also to be a commercial value to the knowledge of art. I possess that knowledge. I came very near being an artist myself. You know nothing."

"Don't know nothing, don't I? As I've sailed the seven seas, I know this much. Money for your chatter and scribbling is money for a name. And you stole that name, just like you're stealing the stachoos. By all the rights they belong to the boy. S'pose I'd tell him, eh? Francis Barette—nice sounding, ain't it? Call yourself Jimmy Todd, why don't you—the beach-combing, rum-guzzling Jimmy Todd and see how much money your high-sounding art bunkum will bring you."

There followed a silence broken only by the chop wash of short seas astern and the occasional chuckle of a sheet block on the forecastle head. A vagabond cloud, all tattered and dark, drifted past the trucks and a thick heavy gloom descended, becoming coldly pervasive in Keith himself. The light fanning of the breeze touched him as spirit fingers from an unknown past and whispered something into his ear, like an impatient warning, then sped away. A sail leech trembled and the mast whereon his cheek was resting became vibrant as from the tingling of his own blood.

"No, sir," resumed the mate, "on this job I ain't going to be soft on you. As I drove eleven times around Cape Stiff, I ain't. When I think of me in that hell-sizzling sun, shoveling up the whole island looking for buried pearls; and you fanning yourself under a banana tree, knowing all along them stachoos was the only treasure there was, it gets me."

Barette laughed softly. "You remember the final couplets of the hermit's epitaph, my dear Duff:

'Seek whosoever may come to find.
Riches await him who is not *stone blind.*'

There are many kinds of stones, are there not?"

"Funny enough then. Good joke, say I. But I'm tired of it; and this time we break middling well even; and you can lay to it."

"You think we shall?"

"Yes—I—do! It happens as how this crew is mine; and as how I've got 'em to pay. They ain't the kind to be shuffled off light. Not them. I ain't told 'em what we're up to at all; but they know we're up to something. Every hand of 'em. What we don't get out of you's coming out of your hide. I'm asking you for your note on fifty per cent of this cargo; and here's what you can take a four-point bearing on: Just suppose one of those lubbers should up and kill you. It ain't above the tamest of 'em, neither. Well, then, if them stachoos is worth ten times what they was before you was known, how much would they be worth if you was dead? How much, eh? I'll just put that little problem up to the men and if they can't fathom it I'll learn 'em. Don't know nothing, don't I? Seems to me my little game would make this ship well worth pirating. Yes, and we'll pull your little marooning stunt too. If the boy can counterfeit for you he can keep right on after you're dead. Fifty per cent, Toddy old salt, or there'll be a plain everyday man named Duff owning half the work of the late Francis Barette."

Keith heard no reply. He had decided that it would be no less discreet than timely to retrace his steps to the bulwarks when he heard:

"Come, come, we shan't be childish in this matter. I intend to do the fair thing; and to-morrow, perhaps, would not be too late for a thorough understanding. We can't afford to shed blood, nor even to quarrel. We agree on that at any rate. The captain must be in command when we return, and suspecting nothing."

And with this a frail shadow figure rose

and stumbled slightly to one side. Keith flattened himself against the mast and heard something like a growl from the mate as he dragged himself to his feet and stretched his arms.

"Now or to-morrow makes no difference," he said. "But if the understanding ain't what I want it to be I'll have to edgicate my men about stachoo values before and after the sculpcher's death."

And at that moment Keith saw something very much like death staring directly into his eyes. He had been discovered by Barette; but the little man betrayed no alarm. He simply raised his chin and sauntered casually as you please toward the waterway. If Keith had only expected this he might have remained as he stood, thus saving himself from what was now inevitable. But he had already stepped out into the open; and the gimlet eyes of the mate commenced their drilling.

"Spying, eh?"

Barette turned with a somewhat lifeless: "Heavens! I do declare!" But Keith had no time to notice him further. The mate was crouching as if to spring, both arms hanging vertically, nearly touching the deck, and his black slouch hat listing over one ear.

"Spying!" he repeated. "Going to spoil the game, eh?"

"If I can," replied Keith, moving up a pace. "Sorry to cause you the embarrassment of discovering the fact."

"Don't let *that* bother you—*now.*"

His cigar fell from his lips and his long arms commenced to swing. Keith waited.

"Heavens!" cried Barette. "Don't! Don't! Mr. Duff! *Remember!*"

Duff paused instinctively.

"Remember my intrinsic value," supplied Keith with sarcasm.

"You've lost it!" cried Duff. "If you ever had any."

The other was on his guard none too soon to miss a sudden upward swoop of a naked sheath knife. He had sprung back and the blade ripped upward the front of his shirt, all but ripping his chin. He closed in; and the weapon came down, but failed to touch. His shoulder had acted the guard; and his fist, the attack. Duff went doubling back with a sinking blow in his abdomen. Keith would have provided a heavy follow up, but the knife blade flashed again. He fell upon the arm, twisted it, reached for the weapon but received the full upward swing of a knee. From then on his mind was void of thought. The movement of every limb and muscle was the reaction only of impulse. With the knife locked behind his forearm he seized the other at the throat and whirled with him to the deck, his eyes fixed upon the blade as if to lose sight of it for a single moment were to have it plunged into his back. He felt the hot breath of his adversary who, struggling, freed himself from the other's grip and sank his ugly fangs into Keith's shoulder.

Keith tore free. The knife did likewise. He leaped back, stumbling to his feet; while Duff, rising, crouched again with swinging arms and moved through the segment of a circle like a wrestler seeking a hold. Again Keith waited. The dark figure towered up before him. An arm went back. There was an impulse for a quick withdrawal which a loss of footing, aided by a lurching of the vessel, turned to an opposite. Keith sprang forward just as a silvery streak whirled in the air; and it was the hilt, not the blade that impeded his involuntary advance. Duff, thrown off guard on hurling the weapon, stepped back but received a blow that bowled him over, while the other, with both knees foremost, landed on top of him.

That was all. The fight ended. If there had been a single breath left in the mate's body during that attack the last jump had spent it. Duff was unconscious.

Keith rose and moved exhausted to the hatch cover. Thinking of Barette he looked about, but the little creature was gone. All had happened at first so quietly and then so speedily that neither the second mate nor the lookout had reached that section of the deck. But they came now; and while Keith stood back to admit an examination of the prostrate man three more figures emerged from the captain's companionway. One was the captain himself, one was his son, and the other was Francis Barette.

"I warned you," the latter was saying as the three drew closer. "This man is not the kind one may presume to let run loose."

There was no reply. The skipper, armed with an electric flash light, already was searching the scene of battle. He picked up the knife; and the light went out.

"I just happened along, my dear captain," Barette went on. "I should doubtless have snatched the weapon from him had I not

seen that apparently its work was done. That's what comes of letting a crazy man run——"

"*Will* you ever learn to keep your hatch closed!" cried his dear captain; and the light flashed on, this time directly in Keith's eyes. "Is this knife yours?'

"No, sir."

The light went out almost immediately. Captain Macfarland said no more but turned to the fallen Duff. The latter had begun to groan.

"Not stabbed," came a low comment.

"Winded," came another.

Several men laughed. The mate groaned again and sat up, then in low growling tones attempted to swear, but his inwards would not permit. The skipper questioned him regarding the knife, but he shook his head emphatically, several times drawled "No."

"I'll keep it myself," mused the skipper. "Mr. Mathsen, search the young man there." He whirled with his light and focused it upon Barette. "Do you mean to say you saw this knife in the young man's hand?"

"Why, my dear captain, you know I told you that once." Barette smiled in his usual patronizing manner and fixed a cigarette in the ivory holder. "It requires only a slight spurring of a normal intelligence to deduce that it was the good mate's fortune to disarm the lunatic. Darkness, as one might rightly suppose, concealed the weapon afterward."

"I'm not asking for your infernal suppositions!" And again the light snapped off. "Come with me, Mr. Mud. You are under arrest for assaulting a ship's officer."

Keith felt something cold and metallic close upon one wrist. To avoid further ado under circumstances rather complex, he offered the other.

CHAPTER XIII.

In the brig, a prison built in the forepeak abaft the chain locker, Keith told his story—all of it. He had been doing some rapid thinking and, as it appeared now, if he continued to remain unidentified there were others besides himself destined to the consequences. Even if the disclosure were to lead immediately to a mutiny he thought it better that the captain know the true nature of the voyage and the dangers imposed by it upon his daughter.

"So, you see, my name is not Mud," he concluded. "I am Keith, and I have been Keith as long as I can remember. Strictly speaking, of course, I am Barette—possibly Francis Barette, Jr., my father being the real hermit sculptor. However, I'm known as Keith, and Keith I intend to remain."

Unable to observe the skipper's expression in the deep shadows the prisoner had found repose and continuity of speech impossible. He was speculating with no few misgivings as to the skepticism of his auditor who, after a patient fifteen minutes' listening, put Keith in his "proper place" with:

"That's right. I'd choose some one name and stick to it, if I were you. I believe you are Keith; and it's best to stay here until you get over it. Not safe having you on deck——" He broke off adding: "By that I mean, not safe for you while all hands continue in their dark and dangerous plotting against you. You needn't worry about my daughter though. In fact I should strongly advise that you forget her. They won't meddle there. You see, Mr. Keith, they're all so busy plotting against you that they really haven't time to bother with my affairs. That's why you'll have to stay here. I have the only key to this place so that none of them can get you. You don't mind my son, the third mate, I hope. He'll look after you."

Keith groaned, then in a fit of temper exploded with:

"You'll *have* me crazy, if you keep on. Do I have to lie to make anybody believe me aboard this ship? You're going to find that everything I'm telling you is true; and if you don't investigate now you'll discover it too late. I invented that dual personality yarn because I didn't think you'd listen to anything else and because it didn't make any difference to you then who I was. I didn't expect you to believe me this time, but I made the attempt in behalf of your daughter. Naturally—my duty."

"Naturally. Quite naturally."

That was all. The skipper closed the door gently but locked it firmly, leaving the prisoner to brood alone in the dark. Resting on a broken chair, he lowered his head and passed his fettered hands through his hair. He wondered if the girl would believe him; but no, she had been present in the sanctum when he had concocted the yarn of "Mud." She too would conclude that he was hopelessly insane.

He smiled bitterly and relaxed while his mind drifted back to Barette, formerly known as Jimmy Todd, formerly an aspirant to the hand of Keith's own mother! Then came the realization of things that might have been—*things!* A thing like *Todd* might have been his father! James Todd, Jr.! He shuddered; but then an imaginary portrait of his mother turned his mind to musing. No, she never could have chosen such a creature. In fact, she had not. Her choice was the true master, the real Francis Barette. He fancied her smiling; pictured her as she must have been when she had kindled the inspiration for the works of the true hermit. Brown hair she must have had, and large hazel eyes—bright eyes with a charming tendency to close themselves halfway, so that only some far-off subtle dream, floating on the warm glow of passion, could reveal itself. Her complexion was olive touched with rose so that even the fragrance was there; her voice, low, soft and sonorous, and——

He paused, staring into the gloom. A feeling of sudden despair bent him down. The girl that he pictured was not a spirit—not his mother. He had seen her image a day before in the will-o'-the-wisp lights of the *Pasado Mañana.* She was Eileen Patton.

He rose, jerking at the cold irons that bound his wrists and groping for his pipe-framed bunk. Worn by two of the longest days in his life he climbed in and after a short time fell asleep. The night passed, and another day, making very little difference in the brig where all light came by way of an iron ventilator opening into the forecastle some nine or ten feet above his head. Hollis, accompanied by the cabin boy, brought the prisoner his meals and thoughtfully enough removed the handcuffs. Keith said nothing save in answer to trivial questions. What was the use?

That night, some time before eight bells announced the midwatch, a flicker of lamplight, coming through the grating overhead, grew brighter and Keith heard the sound of voices. He wondered if he could climb to the opening so as to see into the forecastle. Not more than a yard from the grille work was a huge square upright. At first it seemed too symmetrical and splintery to be inviting, but there were rope pendents to his bunk. With these he could make two nooses, a bight in each, thus providing stirrups for his hands and feet. Fixing them to the upright and hanging to the upper one, he could slide up the lower, and bearing upon the lower, slip the upper higher, and so on. On trial it proved no simple matter, but he had learned several tricks of seamanship aboard the *Pasado Mañana* and it was not long before he was situated somewhat uncomfortably high above the deck of the brig, gazing calmly into the forecastle.

Lighted by an oil lamp that rocked leisurely in its gimbals at the far extremity of the inclosure were six men; and in appearance they should have lived a century ago and been resting now with the pirate bones at the bottom of the Caribbean Sea. One, balancing lightly on his toes between two tiers of bunks, stood out in contrast. He was the kind that might have been hanged to a yardarm for duplicity in brigandage.

"I warn you, my good men, that you would be taking a step as foolish as it is desperate," he was saying as he removed an ivory cigarette holder from the center of his mouth. "I tell you it is far, far too early to resort to such methods, and despite our friend Mr. Duff, whose opinion is good but whose temper is hasty, I am still confident that you would be killing a goose still very capable of laying the golden egg. You, Mr. Duff, accuse me of a weakness based on personal feelings. There may be a personal feeling but there is no weakness. My reputation in the world of art I esteem more than any of you would a fortune in gold; and in this light some weight is due my judgment. The captain, supposing him to be mentally disordered, will never believe; unless you yourselves arouse that suspicion."

He smiled, stepping along like a kitten with wet feet. One wiry young man, slouching over a redwood table, looked on with open mouth and wondering eyes, his upper lip quaking over his yellow teeth.

"Here's one man," he said; "think's the gov'ner's right. What d'yeh say, Teague?"

Teague, standing by the mate on the opposite side of the table from "the gov'ner," lifted his shoulders and dropped them heavily. With the tip of his tongue he tucked a quid of snuff under his lower lip, then nodded.

"Good enough, Hud." He spat and rubbed his huge foot over the stain. "What's on your mind, Phil? Sing out!"

"T'row 'im in! Ober wid 'im! What's de odds?" snarled Phil, a very young man with iron-gray hair and lips that curled like an angry dog's. "If he's on t'd'gag—whateber it is—get rid ob 'im. Eberybuddy knows he's off 'is nut. D'ol'man'll t'ink he jumped ober his own seff. An' all dis goose business and de gold egg—I don't get it. An' it's about time we was put on to dis here game. Is it treasure or what?"

"My dear fellow," protested Barette, "Mr. Duff is guarding your interests. The details of this enterprise cannot be divulged to you at present. Sailors talk and men such as the cook and the bos'n are apt to listen."

"Well, I wants t' know yer gag, dat's all! I ain't no tame tom-kitty t' set waitin' t' be fed."

"Belay!" bellowed Teague. "You know the agreement. We obey orders and take our pay. I stand by Duff and if there's a man among you what don't"—he glowered about, doubling two huge fists—"sing out!"

"Here's one man," said Hud, "thinks you're right."

"But here's sump'n" t' sharp yer teet' wid!" exclaimed Phil. "If we turn soft now dere'll be a woman figgerin'. I ain't fer takin' chances and already I seen 'er talkin' to 'im. She'll fall fer 'is chatter and put de ol' man wise. De t'ing t' do is break in and make it look like he broke out. Ol' Aleck, if he wasn't at d'wheel, would say d'same."

He turned to the mate for an opinion. Duff put forth a foot, raised one hand and hooked it under a suspender strap.

"We don't want to take risks for no gold eggs, nor gold bricks neither," he said, glancing sharply at Barette. "We don't want to risk what we can get for what we might. And just like the gov'ner says; now ain't the time for trouble. So, say I, if ever they let him out of the brig and he shows signs of making trouble—blowing off steam to the girl what might believe him, we'll have to get rid of him. But now best to lay low and keep a weather eye on the old man. Ain't I right, Mat?"

"Mat"—Mr. Mathsen, the second mate—seemed a very thoughtful man. He frowned, moved his golden, walrus mustache from port to starboard, steadied it amidships, and stroked it on either quarter. His mouth opened for the reply. It came halfway in a kind of a chopped-off drawl. Then, after further deliberation, he said:

"Sure."

With a troubled frown, Barette lowered his head.

"It is agreed then," he said, "that unless he starts trouble you will let him alone. I'll have a chat with the captain to-morrow and let you know how he acts, but let me warn you, my dear men, under a very few circumstances shall I tolerate bloodshed—only in case of absolute necessity, with our entire enterprise at stake. If this seems to be jeopardized by the young man we shall, I admit, have to weed him, as it were, from our company; but I have thought of this and have evolved a means of my own to bring it about in a very quiet manner, leaving no suspicion behind for the captain."

And drooping his eyelids complacently he turned away, closing the door behind him.

"The holding ground is here," grinned Duff, when the hermit was gone. "We're going to do as we please. I got my grappling hooks on the gov'ner middling well and solid; but it's best to humor him a bit for a while."

At this point Keith was obliged to withdraw. Some one was knocking very gently upon his door; some one was slipping a key into a lock, and some one was saying in a soft frightened tone: "Mr. Keith, may I come in?"

CHAPTER XIV.

The master of the *Jane Macfarland* regarded the little set-to on deck as a mere difference of opinion between a man of subordinate culture and another of critical mentality; but in it all he found no cause to worry. Hollis, of course, perceived hidden meanings. Hollis could detect something of that nature in anything. He was young. His anxiety for adventure had always led him to seek the unusual, Captain Macfarland reflected.

"No, Jane, lass," he was saying on the morning after his talk with the prisoner; "the longer you live the less you will credit what you hear. Think of that poor devil in the brig telling me that Barette was an impostor, that he himself was Barette, although he chose to be known as Rupert Keith, and although he'd told me some hours before that he was John Mud! He said that his father was the real hermit sculptor and that he would be obliged to lay claim to all the remaining statuary on the island—that and so much more I can't

recall it. But the worst of it was he believed it himself. All hands plotting against him—that's one of the first symptoms of a foundered mind. I'll have to turn him over to the authorities in Guam."

It was Sunday; and as usual on such days the Macfarland family dined privately in the sanctum, Jane preparing breakfast and supper and serving it by tray. The skipper, according to his custom, gave much of his time to open and free conference with his son and daughter, the subject of discussion being, as a rule, books—whatever had interested them in literature during the week. Reading, according to him, was for the purpose of stimulating ideas. It was not simply a pastime amusement. But today Jane's stimulator of ideas was not in the library. It, or rather he, was in the brig.

She believed with her brother that the castaway had not been the aggressor and that it was not in his nature to attack with a knife an unarmed man; nor could she share the captain's opinion that he was insane. She believed, despite everything, that he was Rupert Keith; and that the same mysterious motive bringing him aboard now governed his strange actions.

"I'm sure you are making a mistake, keeping him locked up that way," she said.

Hollis, leaning back in a comfortable chair, added:

"Think so too. May have a stay loose, but looks harmless. Old Ruff, Puff—whatever his name is—responsible there. Ten to one he started that brawl!"

"Have you any reason for that notion?" challenged the captain. "I have a witness—a prejudiced one, no doubt; but *I* was a witness to the prisoner's act causing that prejudice. This is his third offense in assault and battery since he first came in contact with my men. He's not safe, I tell you."

"I saw his second offense," put in Jane. "It was nothing. And from a technical standpoint, as he said, the first was justifiable."

"But it all goes to show that he is out of his head, does it not?"

"No. He's not out of his head any more than I."

The old man glowered at her.

"No more than you, eh?" he reflected; and his eyes flashed back. "Don't let me suspect that you are *right,* Jane, lass."

"I am right. Regardless of anything he told you, he is Rupert Keith. I know he is. And he's an artist because—*he is.*"

The skipper glowered at her again.

"Jane, why are you so interested in this affair?"

Jane did not answer.

"And what reason is there to: 'he is because he is?' I started you with the study of logic when you were twelve years old to prevent such remarks as that. He is an artist, you say. Very well, produce your evidence."

Jane made no reply and as the day progressed became mildly apprehensive, believing that there actually was a plot and that the prisoner's life was in constant danger. That night she could not sleep. She had all but retired, then dressed herself again; and now with a volume novel before her she was reading the words and turning the pages although these were as far removed from her mind as if the book had been tucked away somewhere in the shelves. Her father had told her to produce the evidence; and although he had not really meant it she was wondering now if it could not be done; if she could not do it, and if now was not as favorable a time as any.

It was only half after eleven o'clock. Hollis would not be on watch for thirty minutes; and while she waited to join him the monotony was winding a tension of restlessness almost unbearable. The air seemed charged with an oppression, growing heavier and heavier, until unable to stand it longer she closed the book, rose and went to the porthole.

The breeze was the same but clouds were gathering; and beyond the immediate wash of seas an all-absorbing blackness seemed to be bearing down as if the sky and ocean were congealing into a dingy crust. The ship's master had drifted away to dreams of the categorical imperative and the fourth dimension; Hollis had long since turned in; Barney the bos'n and Pebbles the cook—they too were asleep. The *Jane Macfarland,* with all aboard, was wholly in the hands of Mr. Duff. Jane felt hemmed in and alone. She became alarmed. She would not wait for Hollis. She could stand this no longer. And she left.

In the outer saloon she paused, expecting to hear Mr. Mathsen's footfalls on the deck above; but she heard only a heavy breathing from the captain's stateroom and

a sighing of waves beyond. Hurriedly she took a lantern and a hammer from the galley, slipped noiselessly into the lazarette, quietly as possible pried open a box, took out many handfuls of its content and rolled it into paper. Returning again to her father's quarters she took a key from the drawer and crept up the companionway.

At the opening to the deck she paused, glancing toward the forecastle head. It was quite dark. The moon had set and the stars were tarnished by sweeping wisps of cloud that trailed in a mackerel sky. The green glow from the starboard light shone ghastly against the fore-staysail; but she could discern no lookout. Peeping cautiously aft she discovered too that there was no Mr. Mathsen on watch. An old hollow-chested and almost toothless Norwegian, standing wheel, was alone on the poop and apparently half asleep. She paused, growing more and more uneasy, noticing now that the forecastle door was closed. Besides the wheelman there was not a sign of life—only the gray sails and the clouds and the gloom, and a breeze blowing so steadily, so softly that there was not even a light chafing of a sheet block nor the barest trembling of a leech.

She moved on, springing lightly down to the main deck and keeping well within the black shadow of the bulwarks as she made her way forward. Under the forecastle head, passing by the door to the boatswain's quarters, she stepped down through the scuttle and into the forepeak. It was at this point that Keith heard her voice and the sound of a key turning in the lock. He welcomed her in.

"I can stay only a few minutes," she whispered, opening the door. By the indirect light from the grating overhead might have been discerned an uncertain smile trembling upon her lips while her eyes, straining themselves in the gloom, met his and lingered with evident emotions of doubt. A dark wrap was drawn snugly under her chin where one little hand clung like an ivory clasp. "I brought you a lantern," she said. "Have you a match?"

"Good Lord! I couldn't have hoped for anything like this!" exclaimed the prisoner. He stared for a moment, then struck a light and applied it to the wick. "We mustn't talk too loud." He shot a significant glance toward the iron grille work. "All hands are up there."

Jane lowered her voice to a whisper.

"It's hardly conventional, calling on you this way and at this hour," she apologized. "But I'm worried about things in general. I have to prove your identity."

"You are undertaking a great deal," observed the other, with a glance at the bundle under her arm. "Which one of the three of me are you going to identify?"

"That depends on which one of you you are!" she returned crisply. "Personally, I suspect you as being Rupert Keith. I know you are, or I shouldn't have come."

"Then there is some one to believe me at last," sighed the other.

"Some one trusts you, at any rate," she modified. "When you said your name was John Mud I did not believe you and I don't know whether to believe your new yarn or not. Certainly the captain doesn't take any stock in it!"

Keith motioned her to the chair.

"I'll leave it all to you," he said. "It's a long story, involving among other things, the history of my life; and if it won't bore you——"

He paused, then leaning back against the pipe berth, began. In a voice modulated only a trifle above a whisper he explained everything to the best of his knowledge, saving only that part of his own life given and taken away by the girl of the *Pasado Mañana*. His adventures aboard the raft he said were part of a practical joke which was to have been perpetrated on certain members of the yacht's company but which Barette had diverted into another channel. He, Keith, had taken the name of Mud, he told her, only because the truth in this case seemed stranger than fiction and because he wanted to be regarded as sane. Then had come the enlightenment through a controversy between Barette and Duff. He quoted what he had overheard and in it all Jane learned much more than she had through her father. When at last he concluded there was a long silence. Then said Jane:

"I believe you and I understand now what the modeling clay is for. Do you work in clay?"

Keith nodded and laughed. "Are you going to prove my identity that way?"

"Exactly," smiled Jane, unwrapping the material. "You're going to make something with this clay that will show your ability as an artist and throw the burden of proof to Barette. Failing to demonstrate his abil-

ity, the captain will be more willing to listen to you. He appreciates art."

"He'll have to appreciate something a little more than that," laughed the prisoner, "if I am to work in this place. Without the rest of the equipment I could make nothing more than a caricature. Are there modeling tools aft?"

"There must be. I'll bring them to-morrow."

"Your plan is splendid," observed Keith; "but I've thought it over; and it seems that because of me, you are all taking great risks —especially you. If I could suddenly disappear from this ship the matter would be settled automatically. You believe my story, you say. Very well. When you leave me to-night forget to lock the door. I may be able to get away in the boat."

Jane smiled.

"That would be impossible. In the first place you couldn't do it without being seen by the officer on watch or the wheelman; and in the second place it would take an experienced sailor to launch that dinghy while we are under way. She'd come down broadside to the direction of motion as well as to the seaway. It has been done; but you could never do it, and I won't let you try. Besides I want to right this thing if I can. You've got to prove yourself an artist."

"Would you pose for me?"

Jane's eyes widened. She considered for a moment, then:

"Anything to bring it about in the quickest possible manner."

"Good. I'll make a resemblance, anyway. And if that doesn't work, then some day very soon you'll find me absent without leave."

"But it *will* work; and I'll be here tomorrow," Jane whispered, "if I can without any one's seeing me. What shall I call you? I think it will be Mr. Mud until you prove yourself to be Mr. Keith."

"At this end of the ship," observed the prisoner, "there are no *misters*. You'd better make it 'John.'"

"And in this end of the ship," furthered Jane, "they address me as 'ma'am!' You wouldn't do that, so I am 'Jane.'" She paused, while a sadness came into her eyes. "While you were talking to the captain the other day I was wishing that your name *was* 'John Mud;' and I believe now that actually you *have* a dual personality! You seem to have changed so since you first spoke to me—when the yacht overhauled us."

"I was hoping you hadn't noticed that," responded Keith. "If you refer to my short-spoken manner, please let me apologize. This affair has tipped me upside down. I wish that I could change into somebody else."

Jane, smiling, bade him good night, feeling for the first time the pressure of his hand and turning for the first time from the warmth of his gaze. Stepping quietly from the door she heard, "Good-by, Jane," and the sound of her name on his lips, like the grasp of his hand, was a sip of wine with the glass snatched away.

CHAPTER XV.

As love to a woman is the beginning and the end of all Jane could no more govern her thoughts than these could govern her heart. The mind that counsels heart is like the slave that counsels king; for love in the end is law, and, like the king, it can do no wrong. But kings have been dethroned as hearts have been broken; and behind the proud cloak of sovereignty lurks the fear of insurrection. This fear was Jane's; for her love was decked with the proud cloak of womanhood and to this she would cling regardless of all the precious life that throbbed beneath it.

The next ten days, in which the girl found many occasions to visit the brig, brought the cold realization that the sculptor's regard for her came solely from the artist, not from the man—from Rupert Keith, not from "John." His absorbing gaze, once covering her like a soft velvet coat with fur, was threadbare now and faded, like some cherished garment worn too often. She wondered what gave her the implicit trust which, leading her always against her better judgment, brought forth invariably her promise to call again. Although the captain had told her to produce the evidence, and although her means toward this end were for the welfare of the vessel, she was not unconscious of the deception involved in her secret acts. She had dared to tell not even Hollis, who expected her confidences; and she dreaded the time when standing before her father she would display the work of the prisoner and explain its conception.

The work was now all but completed;

and the bold assurance with which the sculptor went about his task became manifest in the creation, leaving little room for doubt of his positive talent. During the girl's long sittings, however, she had found herself assuming an attitude of cool rigidity which revealed itself in the model. Keith was working now through no inspiration. There was nothing of himself in his work. It was Jane. It was painfully Jane, whose pride clawed at her now like sharp finger nails digging for her heart with a passion to crush and to leave it dying forlornly in her breast.

She was thankful that she had only to call for a few more sittings before taking the finished product aft and facing the storm. Keith had kept it hidden under his blanket when Hollis called; and, as far as she knew, no one had seen it. However, there happened to be a ventilator opening between the brig and the forecastle, and several times on a very recent occasion both she and the sculptor had seen shadows pass across it. There might have been eyes, staring down.

Taking her leave, on that particular night, she heard his, "Good-by, Jane;" and she did not dream that aboard the schooner this was the last time he would speak to her.

On the following morning she plodded wearily on through the lines of "Hippolytus" as far as: "Sad, sad and evil-starred is woman's fate. What spell to loose the iron knot of fate?" And wondering if her own life were to leave this question unanswered, she submitted her efforts to the red-bearded savant; and the monotony of another day dragged through.

During all this time, other than an answer or to evade a passing question, she spoke seldom to any one. Hollis had remarked of it to his father who labeled it "mood—her mother had them too"—and passed it lightly by.

The schooner had been gybed many days before, and was now scudding rapidly, with more than fifteen hundred miles to her credit, through the best of the northeast trades. Mr. Duff was proving a very capable mate, having besides a substantial knowledge of seamanship and navigation a "remarkable control of his men," so that the skipper felt justified in reviewing his old study of jurisprudence and imparting the full benefit of his learning to his son. Hollis was to be no shyster. He was to handle the interests of the largest shipping concerns of the world.

The old man glanced at the photograph on the bulkhead and saw it smiling. Jane would be like her—exactly like her, only with the added happiness brought by learning. He looked toward the door of his daughter's stateroom; and he did not know that the girl was gone. Absorbed in his books he had not seen her pass by and up into the darkness of the companionway. When he glanced again at the photograph, however, he only cursed his imagination, for the expression he sought was not there.

Four bells sounded from the wheelhouse. It was ten o'clock; and the first watch was half over. Uneasily he flicked the ashes from his cigar, picked up a large yellow volume and attempted to peruse its pages; but slowly his gaze wandered back to the photograph; and then, as if something had shaken him forcefully by the shoulder, he started, glowering through his bushy beard, and tossed the book aside. Humph! Something wrong. He puffed a dense cloud about his head; his eyes flashed. He put the cigar aside, took a blue pencil from his pocket and Jane's translation of "Hippolytus" from the drawer; then with an air of satisfaction shuffled through the pages.

The girl chanced to witness the last of this proceeding as she strolled past the skylight; and a warmth of feeling went down to him. She was proud of her father and old enough now to appreciate the value of his efforts; yet often she too had studied the small photograph and wondered if she might not have found a more sympathetic understanding in her whom it portrayed—some deep sense perhaps that could read her feelings.

She had come on deck for the purpose of going forward to the brig for what she hoped might be a last sitting; but no sooner had she peeped from the companionway than the eyes of the wheelman were upon her. It was almost as if he had been watching, expecting her. He was a wiry young brigand whom the men called Phil and whose eyes were like flames in two beds of living coals. They seemed so when he glanced at Jane; they seemed so when he glanced at the compass, at the horizon or at Mr. Mathsen, who was on watch. Jane realized that with Phil at the wheel it would be impossible to go forward without being followed by those eyes; so she passed casually to the taffrail while the comforting

breeze of the higher tropics, cooled by the night, fanned her cheeks. To her it was gentle and caressing, yet it bore forth upon the great sails with such force that the *Jane,* running directly before, held down when she rolled and scurried in a rush of froth like a surfboard on the face of a breaking crest. Glancing forward she perceived another reason why it would have been inadvisable to attempt a visit to the brig. There were several men on deck, apparently battening down the fore hatch; and yet, to her knowledge, all cargo hatches had been secured ever since leaving port.

Watching and vaguely wondering she heard the voice of the wheelman and the reply of the second mate. When she turned the latter was steaming toward her with all the clumsy determination of a heavy-laden tanker. Mr. Mathsen had never frightened her. His ever-moving mustache of spun gold gave him a certain peace-loving serenity, making him seem always a slave to his better judgment. Whether or not he was possessed of any judgment at all was difficult to say; but if still waters run deep he was the man to know it although he might have known nothing else. She nodded a "good evening" when he brought up alongside but in reply to this she heard only a grunt. Jane, slightly nervous, glanced again toward the fore hatch when, almost instantly his huge hulk warped itself into her line of vision.

"Will we haul up to the eastward very soon?" she asked.

This question, although the girl cared little for the answer, seemed to exercise him greatly; but at last, after giving his mustache fair play in its maneuvering, and a sufficient number of strokes on either side, he answered:

"Don't know, m'm."

Jane, attempting to withhold a smile, walked away; and at that moment noticed Mr. Duff and the hermit stepping up to the poop. At this hour it was no common occurrence for the mate to be on deck. She moved back to the taffrail to observe.

"What was that noise?" growled Duff; and it seemed to Jane that although he was addressing Mr. Mathsen his words were directed toward her. "Did you hear anything?"

A long pause, then: "No."

"You heard something, didn't you, Mr. Barette?"

"Most assuredly, my dear Duff."

"No uncommonly suspicious noise, eh, Mr. Barette?"

"Indeed not. It seemed to come from the after part of the ship. About ten minutes ago, did it not?"

"Ten minutes to the dot," replied the mate.

To have heard this discourse one might have believed all three men deaf. Standing not more than ten feet apart they fairly bellowed at one another so that the girl caught every word. Ten minutes ago she had been in her stateroom. She had heard no strange noises whatever. Again she glanced forward and saw that the several men had retired into the forecastle. There was only the lookout. She thought of Keith, deciding that with all this ado about nothing she would have to postpone her visit. The captain himself would be on deck if they continued. However, Mathsen resumed his heavy-duty meandering of the poop while the mate, taking his stand abaft the binnacle, squinted down at the compass. The hermit sauntered lightly over toward Jane.

"Beautiful night," he observed. "Ah, there is always a smile in the trade winds for those who go down to the sea in ships —a smile, as it were, to give faith even to the agnostic. The moon will be setting soon, but while it lasts let us harmonize with the coolness, the serene splendor and, I might say, crystalline complacency of its harlequin reflection." And so on.

Jane was forced to listen. She caught the odor of alcohol upon his breath but gave no outward signs of uneasiness. Where there might have been contempt, were two searching blue eyes trying vainly to read the thoughts behind his amber gaze. Her smile bore the shadow of amusement, but at last, as his untiring flow of words continued, she found herself strolling the deck with him, her thoughts taking flight with her own muse while that of Barette chimed in harmonious accompaniment.

Finally they paused at the after quarter. Jane gazed astern into a cloudless sky while her hand, resting on the brass of the taffrail log, throbbed steadily with its steady pulsations. Then suddenly an unaccountable sensation came over her. It was the feeling that might come to any one on entering some familiar room from which the hangings, or a picture, or perhaps some piece

of furniture had been removed. Barette had ceased his talking; and while the quiet lasted, her eyes traced upward along a davit where dangled an idle fall. The boat generally suspended there—the same dinghy that had brought Rupert Keith aboard—was gone.

CHAPTER XVI.

Mr. Duff and Barette went through all the motions of making the discovery simultaneously with Jane; and news that the boat was missing was carried below to the skipper. He came on deck immediately. Hollis, aroused from his dreams by the commotion, followed shortly after in his sleeping togs.

"What are you doing on deck at this hour?" growled the old man as he swung past his daughter toward the taffrail.

Luckily for the girl he did not wait for the reply. His mind was as preoccupied as that of Jane; and a glance at the after davits turned him in a tirade upon Mr. Mathsen and the wheelman. How was it possible for any one to get away in the boat with two men on watch aft and the helmsman not more than fifteen feet away? Moonlight, too! What kind of eyes did they have? Were they deaf? Why didn't they answer him? What was the matter? Were they dumb too? Confounded landlubbers they were! The boat probably had capsized before the release hooks went adrift. There must have been a terrific noise. Terrific! Did they mean to say that they had noticed nothing? Did they? The *Jane* would have to beat all over the confounded ocean now for that lunatic. He'd caused enough trouble as it was. Good for him if he drowned! How could he have got out anyway? Ready about now!

"Ready about!" echoed the second mate.

The old man swung on his heels, meeting Hollis just as he emerged from the companionway.

"Key to the brig," demanded the skipper. "Get it and lay farard! Sharp!"

"Key to the brig—get it." These words struck Jane as if they had been fired from a pistol. Her hand took sudden refuge in her pocket and closed itself tremblingly about the article in question. Suddenly she glanced up to where Hollis had been standing; but he was gone. She sprang toward the companionway just as the voice of her father rang out: "Jane!"

She turned.

"I asked you what you were doing on deck at this hour."

"Taking the air. Walking. Talking with Mr. Barette."

"We were just saying, my dear captain," chimed in the odd little man, striding toward them, "that there is a certain serenity in the fragrant breath of the trades which is in itself akin, one might say, to poetry, music pageantry and——"

"Drunk," observed the skipper. his eyes flashing down upon his daughter. "Jane, lay below."

The girl had started to obey just as Hollis appeared again on deck. He announced that the key was gone. Jane, wishing at that moment that a submarine volcano would whirl them up into eternity, caught him firmly by the hand, pressing the "lost" article into his palm. He glared at her, then turning coolly away, sauntered in a thoughtful manner toward the captain.

"Gone! What!"

"Eh—yes. Not there. That is, you didn't take it, did you?" faltered the other. "Frankly, sir, I don't recall having put it back. Oh, yes—I—— Why, here it is in my pocket!"

Something like a typhoon followed. It was negligence—rank negligence! How many times did Hollis have to be told to put things back where he found them? Fine fix for a prisoner in case of trouble! He'd drown like a rat.

"Lay farard, now," he went on. "See how he escaped. Turn the bos'n to. All hands on deck, tell him. Hard alee, Mr. Mathsen."

"Hard alee, sir. Hard down! Le' go jib sheets; fore-stays'l!"

And amid a slatting of canvas the schooner brought up into the wind, and paid off, full and by on the opposite tack.

Hearing her brother reprimanded Jane had started toward the captain to confess, but stopped on thought of the prisoner. Perhaps he had not escaped after all; and in that event there was still a mission to complete in behalf not only of him but of the ship herself. She would wait. She stood now in the shadows of the companionway while all hands, after trimming sails, gathered on the main deck just below the poop. Mr. Duff and the skipper strode over to the break, counting noses. The girl watched anxiously for the appearance of Hollis, and when at last he emerged from

under the forecastle head, some one followed.

"There!" exclaimed the skipper. "He's not gone after all." He waited a moment, then: "That you, Mr. Mud?"

"Keith," came the reply.

"Use *sir!*" bellowed Duff, "next time you pipe up to a ship's officer."

"That's all right, Mr. Bluff—or Duff," put in Hollis. "Not a regular hand."

"As I've put eleven times around Cape Stiff! he won't pipe up to me that way. Not him! He ain't no better than the rest."

"He isn't any better—than the rest," corrected the old man. "Now, let's see. Who's missing here?"

"Who's missing b'low, there?" followed the mate. "Sing out!"

"If the cook's help were here, Mr. Gruff —or, I mean, Tuff—I'm sure he'd confess like the good sailor that he was."

There were loud guffaws. Hollis was ordered to return the prisoner to the brig. Mr. Duff shouted several times the name of the cabin boy, but without response. Pebbles held that he had not seen him since eight bells and it was believed later that he would never see him again. With the setting of the moon further search seemed futile and the *Jane* fell off again on her old course.

What had led Lester to this foolhardy act the skipper could not guess, although the "boy" did not seem overintelligent. There were, however, others aboard who understood and who congratulated themselves on the first strategic move of a carefully planned campaign.

On the following morning it was Pebbles instead of Lester and Barney the bos'n instead of Hollis, to bring Keith's breakfast to the brig.

"Maybe he don' remember we're ol'-time shipmates," said Barney with a sidewise nod of his thatched head as the other bumped the tray on the door jamb and stumbled in. "Old-time shipmates, we are, Peb, me'n' him. We used to spen' our summer vacations down aroun' Palm Beach, setting out on raffs and waiting for yachts to blow along an' pick us up! Morning, bully boy!"

Keith nodded. "You didn't find the cabin boy last night, did you?"

Pebbles shook his head, tossing blasphemy.

"Fine mess he left me in, feedin' the whole ship's company single-handed. Tell you what I'm gona do for you, Mr. John Mud, as you're called; I'm gona put in a good word to th' ol' man and get you out o' this place so's you can lend a hand in the galley. You ain't crazy. Least you ain't as crazy as Lester was."

Keith, leaning back against a tumble of blankets under which was hidden the likeness of Jane, rolled a cigarette.

"He had sense enough to knock half a gale and a hail storm out of Duff, anyway —didn't you, matie? I must 'a' learned you something about swinging your whack hooks when we had that frien'ly little roun' back there on the raff. A game battling devil you are, matie, an' there's those of us minded they put the wrong man in the brig. Tell you what. You put it up to us you ar'n't Rupert Keith, an' you jus' foun' out you was Mud af'er all. Ol' man's reasonable, you know—'specially now, being shorthanded in the galley."

"You leave that to me," replied Keith, "and don't you tell the skipper anything."

Barney and the cook left shortly after and Keith spent the day in a mood of growing anxiety. Although he could not link the disappearance of the boat and the cabin boy with Barette's plotting, the act, seeming unwarranted, gave room for conjectures as vague and numerous as they were vexing. They haunted him through half the night while he waited for Jane, whose failure to call added to his worries. If she would come only once again she could take the evidence aft with her and perhaps turn the trick.

On the following day Pebbles and Barney brought little news save that some one had been in the galley stealing ship biscuits. The steward had secured the case with two fathoms of marline and a "thief knot." A thief knot, it seemed, was a reef or square knot made backwards; but on this particular morning Pebbles had found a "granny" in its place. Who was the landlubber, he wondered. But even Keith, who had vowed to let nothing pass unsuspected, gave the theft scarcely a thought.

That evening, as had been the case on several evenings, there was no sound from the forecastle. It seemed evident that the men had realized the probability of being overheard; and in Keith's mind there was little doubt that, although there had been no signs of it since Jane's last visit, the fore-

castle was employing the ventilator as he himself had used it some time before. Later that night, however, shortly after four bells of the first watch, the dim light generally left burning for the men until dawn was extinguished. It was at the hour that Jane had been in the habit of making her calls and the hour too when the prisoner had been in the habit of lighting his lantern for the girl's benefit. But now for obvious reasons he decided to remain in the dark. If Jane called she could take the clay model unfinished. It might serve its purpose as it was. She could explain; and if necessary he could finish it before the old man's eyes.

An hour passed but still the girl did not come. Keith grew more uneasy. He hoped that she would stay away. Recent strange happenings caused him to feel the presence of danger, and the fact that its nature could not be divined, made it the worse. Once he seemed to hear noises in the forepeak just beyond the door of the brig—something like a whisper, he thought; but with the sound of water rushing at the bows, he was always hearing things, suspecting things, dreaming and fearing—fearing that it was all delusion after all; that perhaps his mind *was,* as it was considered, losing day by day more of its equilibrium. He knew that had it not been for Jane's visits he would have been turned into a madman of the first water.

His thoughts were interrupted at last by a sudden familiar drumming of fingers on his door. With a sharp tremor of apprehension he rose, returned the tapping and waited for the sound of a key twisting in the lock. He heard it and then something more—a scuffling, a slight gasp, a muffled scream. He hurled himself against the door which, bursting open almost of its own accord, left him stumbling and groping in darkness. He was about to call out the name of Jane; but two long arms, hard as iron, locked themselves about him, a huge wad of oakum was jammed into his mouth, his feet were snatched out from under him and he fell struggling and scuffling beneath what seemed to be a pack of furies. He forced loose an arm and struck but it was immediately pinned down by the full weight of a man. He kicked, but the leg was treated likewise until at last, pinned down at every limb and with a knee upon the pit of his stomach, he was helpless.

"Got it, gov'ner?" panted some one hard by.

The answer was the squeak of a cork being removed from a bottle. Then:

"Gimme it! As I've sailed the seven seas this is gona be done quiet and proper."

And the next breath of the captive threw his mind in panic. Half frenzied he twisted, tugged and jerked his head from side to side until suddenly a damp icy rag clamped itself down over his mouth and nostrils and the rank odor of an anæsthetic seared his lungs.

"And it all depends on the miss," resumed the voice of Duff, "whether you're gona wake on this here globe or in hell."

Keith attempted first to hold his breath, then to cry out; but in another to the hollow sound of torment that rang in his ears came only the angry pounding of his heart.

"John, my poor boy, you need not struggle." It was Barette talking now. "This is simply a little sleep for you—a forgetting, as it were. There are certain things you need to forget."

The last of the hermit's words sounded miles away. A tingling giddiness overcame him. He heard low familiar voices, whispers and the rasping wails of a laboring hulk all of which seemed to come from another realm where great cogs were grinding, wheels turning, boilers roaring as in some gigantic power plant that spun the universe. He was clearly conscious of some one striking a light, but his eyes were covered and he could not see. He attempted to move but it was as if the entire lower portion of his body were gone and what of him remained were suspended several feet above the planking. Some one said: "We got him." Some fiend said it, and kept repeating: "We got him. We got'im. Gotim. Gotim. Got'm. Gotm-gotm-gotm-umm-umm-umm! *Umm! Umm! UMM! UMM!*" Faster and louder, faster and louder, faster and louder until everything blended with the eternal whir of wheels with such horrible din that if it had continued another fractional part of an instant he would——

CHAPTER XVII.

When Keith first opened his eyes and attempted to orient himself in the hazy strangeness of his surroundings his head was throbbing. His entire body was aching; he was helpless, half paralyzed. After a while

the pain died away and he was drifting back into the chaos of the past. He struggled. He wanted to live; and at that instant—or as likely, a century later—he felt the gentle pressure of a hand upon his forehead and some one said:

"Lie still."

Again he opened his eyes, but could see no one.

"Where are you?" he heard himself say. "I—I can't see you."

He found it difficult to speak. The sound of his voice annoyed him.

"No," came the reply. "It is still dark."

Keith smiled. What a charming voice she had! Again he felt the pressure of her hand, and reaching, he took it in his own. He knew her now and although his eyes were closed her features were vivid. Brown hair she had, and large hazel eyes—bright eyes with a tendency to close halfway so that only some far-off subtle dream drifting on the warm glow of passion could reveal itself. Her complexion was olive touched with rose so that even the fragrance was there. And, with sudden ecstasy, he kissed the hand. Now he could feel her breath against his face, and tears—her tears pressed upon his cheek. He was no longer dreaming, he knew; for although on opening his eyes he could see nothing but the starry sky there was an enchantment in her fingers' touch which he felt and knew; and he had heard the sonorous tone of her voice.

"Eileen!" he cried, clinging desperately to the hand. "Eileen, why are you here? Why did you come?"

But immediately the spell was broken. The hand seemed to dissolve itself in his grasp. He groped for it but felt himself drifting helplessly out above the sea and the clouds and the stars, beyond time and space, into a tense light, a tense warmth. And he looked about.

This time he sat up and the first object to catch his gaze was a huge brown crab with protruding eyes, holding its pinchers in an attitude of "hands up" and tumbling sidewise from the base of a pinnacle rock. Before him, strewn along a desolate beach of gray sand and stone, were the remnants of a derelict half eaten by worms and tangled amid a profusion of kelp and eel grass. Its ribs, emerging some from sand and some from water, were mostly shorn of planking and protruded like the bones of a mammoth carcass picked clean and white by the scavengers of the sea. The booming of surf resounded in the distance, but before him was a shallow lagoon, muddy and jetted with rocks where short seas came idling in, washing and trickling sluggishly about the stones, too lazy almost to recede after their feeble advances. At the opposite shore the beach sloped gently to an arid sky line. There was no vegetation whatever—not even a shrub, a clump of cactus nor a blade of grass. From the highest point—this perhaps only ten feet above sea level—a long cablelike stretch of interwoven seaweed extended down to the water's edge, like the tendril of a great octopus, or a snake drinking.

"It's not very inviting, is it?—this island of ours," came a voice from behind him.

Until that moment Keith's mind had been a clean slate whereon impressions had come and been erased without meaning. But now on recognizing Jane Macfarland the past came swinging back—their counterplot in the brig, the assault in the forepeak, the ether which he could taste even now. He wondered what had happened at that crucial instant. Indeed it seemed that he had awakened, that that time was *now*. His presence here—wherever he was—seemed such a contradiction of time that he dared not trust himself to speak.

Jane, however, was smiling. It was a smile of amusement but there was sadness beneath the amusement. Clad in her Chinese costume of frosted blue and vermilion, she was seated on a low flat rock over which had been spread her dark coat. Her auburn hair, under the direct glare of the sun, fell in a fiery luster down her back. She seemed worn and tired. Her eyes were slightly drooping; one of her hands was badly scratched, and a sleeve of her silken blouse was torn its entire length. Before she could gather it together Keith beheld the smooth whiteness of her shoulder, and immediately his indomitable artist mind, despite the incongruity of the situation, traced in the remainder of her figure and might have given it an imaginary pose had she not risen and come to him.

"You've been dreaming a long time," she observed with a strange little trembling of her lips and a frown of disapproval when he attempted to rise.

Keith, wondering if he were not dreaming still, staggered to his feet and gazed down at her perplexedly.

"Where is the *Jane?*" he asked, compressing his white lips as he swayed to and fro.

"About sixty miles away by now," she replied. "I think she hauled due westward. Sit down, please. I'll tell you all about it later."

But he strolled away, realizing only vaguely what had happened. The reason for it however was clear enough. He had been defeated. And Jane, who without him would never have been implicated, was being made to pay. His mind, still swimming in the obnoxious drug, churned itself into paroxysm; while trudging along the water's edge he kicked at rocks and pieces of wreckage. Wreckage—that was his life and hers to share; that was his career, and she was the price. Then in a vain attempt to check his virulence he wondered what she had undergone during the torment of his dreams, what senseless babble she had heard from his lips in return for her efforts to keep his barren life and soul intact. An intrusive thought of Barette rankled and fanned the flames within him until through the realization of his helplessness his finger nails bit into the palms of his hands. If the opportunity should come he would kill and have done.

Never once raising his eyes from the littered beach he turned back; and now in an earnest struggle to check his emotions the color attempted a return to his cheeks and his steps became more sure. He even paused for a cigarette, but discovering that he had none, became suddenly aware of an appetite more positive—this not to be disregarded. It was thirst and a ravenous one. He wondered if the girl had sensed it and if she knew where water could be found, but said nothing. Such matters pertained to life and death. They were questions that would fall to him and they were his to answer. He raised his eyes and scuffed slowly toward her through the sand. She was seated on a rock with her hands locked over her knees. She had been crying.

"What can I say?" he ventured. "What do you want me to say? How could I be grateful to you—grateful for the prolongation of my existence at the cost of your life?"

He lifted her gently to her feet and before he could realize it discovered her in his arms. Instantly they drew away, each unable to determine which one was to blame.

"I'm tired," said Jane, lowering her gaze so that her eyelids fluttered over obstinate tears. "I never cry unless I am. And I haven't really been crying, either. We may find a way out of this, although I've thought about it to no end of hours. I made the dinghy fast behind that." She nodded toward a large pinnacle rock hard by. Then, noticing the other's expression, smiled. "I've got a lot to explain," she observed. "That's the same dinghy the cabin boy was supposed to have escaped with. It was hidden under the fore hatch all the time. But I'll tell you about it later. As things stand, we have"—she faltered—"we have a demijohn of water, a half case of hardtack and a heavy box of I don't know what, besides a bucket of trinkets such as matches and one thing or another. We'll have to make the best of them." She paused, her face brightening. "I wish you could have seen how we came in over the reef last night. The boat can't do much beating to windward, you know; and the island seems to have no lee-shore landing. There are rocks all around. I thought I found an opening near the entrance to this lagoon. Black water, so I made for it. As a result we struck twice; the last time nearly staved her. Hauled up as she was to make the entrance we nearly piled on the lee point, but stood through into smooth water and drove broadside on the beach. So here we are."

Her gaze, wandering over the desolate slopes, bore an expression which in a woman of little finesse might have accompanied a shrug. "Not even a sea gull," she observed, turning away with resignation; "and low enough to be awash in half a gale. It's the best place in the world to be made the best of."

Keith did not reply. Until now, it seemed, he had never known her. In appearance she was a woman—an almost perfect conception, he thought. In her posture and temperament she was the same; yet in action she had done the work of a man, carried it through; and now, like few women in such a plight, her attitude was purely philosophic. Not only that but she was more acquainted with the surrounding circumstances than he. In disclosing what she knew the best had come first; a demijohn of water and the hardtack. The rest she was withholding; and in compassion for her he did not press for further information.

"I could tell you the name of the island," she concluded, "if it had any. I've seen it on the chart marked 'E. D.'—existence doubtful, that means. We've always given it miles berth. All vessels do, except"—she paused to glance at the wreckage—"except here's one that did not."

"I wonder if there will ever be another," mused Keith.

He traced along the flats to the opening where the sea tumbled in silver-white cascades over a distant rock. The sun had already climbed to a point of vantage in a cloudless sky and despite the steady breath of the trade winds the morning was uncomfortably warm. The rays reflected visibly from baked salt earth. Obviously the girl was nearly exhausted, and as for Keith, a depressing sickness, a throbbing headache and thirst united to paint the setting blacker even than it was. But the time to brood was not now. Keith, in order to plan for the future, went about to estimate their resources. He stripped the dinghy of her dunnage and hauled her high and dry into a patch of sand. He turned the bilge out of her, propped her against oars on her beam ends, and spreading a blanket beneath, called for Jane.

"It's your watch below," he announced, motioning her to the shelter.

"Call me at eight bells," she responded; but, arranging herself for a rest, remained with her eyes open. "I can't sleep until I know what's in that heavy box. Maybe it's tinned goods—preserves or something. It looks familiar."

Keith had just lifted the demijohn to place it in the shade and incidently out of his sight, while the sound of the water lapping and thunking beneath the cork added doubly to his thirst.

"I wish it were water," he replied, laying the huge bottle behind the girl. "But it's too heavy for that; too heavy, I'm afraid, to be canned goods either."

He examined the box curiously, lifted it and shook his head; then, taking a long, rusted bolt from a shattered timber close by carefully knocked loose the battens.

"I think it's a ton of bricks," he said, without daring to look.

Then after a deep breath there came a screeching of nails. He had wrenched back the entire cover.

"What *is* it?" cried the girl, peering anxiously from under the boat.

Keith only groaned in an agony of supreme disappointment and disgust. He faced her with a whimsical smile and shook his head. Then, bending over, he reached down and withdrew a handful of modeling clay.

"This," he said, "is *mud*—ordinary mud!" He rolled it between his palms and let it fall to the sand. "Mud!" he repeated. "Try to sleep. I've got to find water!"

And turning away he stormed off down the beach.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Over a thin-crusted and almost flat desolation, baked in with glittering particles of salt, Rupert Keith, bareheaded, barefooted and half prostrate from heat and thirst, crunched upward toward the summit of a squatty knoll, a kind of a bubble perhaps that had barely missed being a dent. The entire island seemed to have been poured boiling at one time from a gigantic crucible, and allowed to settle in blisters and wrinkles and folds, each of which had melted somewhat into the other, assuming a tone of brutal monotony. And it was a monotony worried only by shadows of naked boulders —naked save when, through a pathetic sense of modesty, some of them had resorted to draperies of dried kelp. Nowhere was there a vestige of life but that from out of the sea. There was not a scraggling weed, not a spider or a gnat. It was barren, hopeless destitution. It was as if, through wretched loneliness, its soul had been withered, then crushed, beaten by the sea and carried away.

By now Keith had reached the summit where he could view the entire island; and although the parched earth was sizzling brimstone beneath his feet, and the lagoon a weltering caldron of silver heat intensifying twofold the violence of the sun, here the trade winds swept unhindered and bore relief. He breathed deeply in lingering survey of the horizon whence long shadow-pushing waves, flaunting their white crests before them, straggled in to shatter themselves on reefs. The island, shaped roughly like a horseshoe, was but three or four miles in extent of its greatest diameter, and was guarded by a jagged stockade of rocky islets, some of them towering from the jade-green water to a height surpassing that of the main body. But the deep blue beyond spread uninterrupted to

its very rim where, to the eastward, the spinning disk of sun rose higher and struck down its torment.

Fresh water! Folly to look—folly to hope for it. Anxiously gazing toward the upturned boat he thought of the girl who was resting there and wondered if she were asleep. He dreaded the time of his return to her when she would have to hear the inevitable sentence of doom from his lips. About a mile away he could see the black shadow of a narrow ravine, a rift cut down among rocks on the seaward slope. But what of it? Shade, perhaps; and the prolongation of thirst, torture. His lips were dry and when he swallowed it was as if his mouth and throat were coated with a substance thicker than glue. He thought of the box of modeling clay and, wondering if it were put there in the spirit of mockery or of simple innocence, shook his head and trudged on.

Hope was never vain, he persuaded himself. The earth held many surprises, strange phenomena, things unaccountable. He recalled a yarn, spun him in the brig by the bos'n. It was of a vessel becalmed many miles off the mouth of the Amazon. All hands had died of thirst—all but one who had been better dead, for fever had seized and led him to madness. Accordingly he'd tossed a bucket overboard; and, after bringing it up filled with water from the sea he'd put his bursting lips to it and drunk. That man was living to-day, the story ran; and he was called "Barney the bos'n." The bucket had held no brine, but water as pure as rain. The vessel had been wallowing in a current, a fresh stream from the Amazon River; and, because of temperature variations, it had, like other currents, remained intact—a body in itself.

That was a sailor's yarn. Keith had weighed it as such; but now, despite him, he believed. Miracles for the first time presented themselves in glowing lights. He wanted to live; and more than that he wanted to preserve a life worth many times his own.

Scuffing weakly along over the burning, thin-crusted ground that crumpled beneath his every step he had noticed vaguely the shadows of two huge boulders through which he intended to pass. He was close to them now and although he had not intended tarrying there, suddenly he stopped. And his heart, for the instant, stopped too. He caught his breath and with a shudder drew back. Two empty sockets, where eyes had been, returned his open stare. Two rows of teeth, where lips had been, were grinning. Two clutching hands of clean white bone lay clawed into the ground; and skeleton legs, half buried, sprawled behind. The vertebrate neck was bent almost to the breaking point as if at one time he had fallen face downward and in a last struggle raised his head to view the sky and sea.

Keith, dropping his hands limply to his side, turned away. A leaf of dried kelp, tumbling in drunken manner before the breeze, passed over his feet and lodged itself within the skeleton frame. Listening to the somber boom and tumble of surf, he thought of the wreck. No doubt here was one of its victims, one who had found the shore and died because of it.

"Poor devil," mused Keith, while every instinct of self-preservation tried to paint his own body in a similar condition, thus to urge him on in quest of water.

But thought of the girl, whose life he assumed as depending on his, took possession, closing his mind to all else save means of her salvation. He paused only to cover the pitiful remains with dried kelp; then, moving on more hurriedly, attempted to smother his hopes in resignation to the inevitable. He had returned to where he could see the lagoon and the upturned boat; but discovered to his disappointment that the girl was no longer resting. She was hurrying toward him along the beach and motioning for him to wait. Reluctantly he obeyed and in a few minutes they were together again, she breathing heavily and glad to sit beside him in the broiling sun to rest.

"I couldn't sleep," she panted. "It's too hot. And—why did you put that water so close to me? I kept thinking of it."

"It's not to be thought of," remonstrated Keith. "It's for you to drink."

Jane volunteered no response. She sat in an attitude of grave meditation, her hands locked over one knee and her gaze fixed on space.

"Does an anæsthetic make one very dry?" she asked at last, without turning. "If it does, you must be nearly parched."

Keith, rising impatiently, whipped the dust from his dungarees.

"I'm not thirsty."

The girl shot him a quick glance

"I'm glad there's water to be found, at any rate," she remarked.

Keith returned her glance and noticing that her professed gladness was confined solely to words asked:

"Do you *know* that?"

She shook her head. "Mr. Duff said he'd been here. He told Mr. Barette and me that there would be plenty of water. I really think that the hermit believed him. And possibly it is true."

Thanking God for the chance Keith glanced anxiously in the direction of the ravine.

"Only he said something else," Jane qualified; "and it's far from the truth. He told us that besides water there would be vegetation. His purpose, I judge, was to humor Barette's conscience, if the miserable little creature has one." She rose, adding: "But I'll tell you what I know while we walk. Did you notice any signs of good water?"

Keith disclosed his meager prospect; and together they started for it, Jane revealing all that had transpired during the past night. She explained that in view of the fact that her actions had been watched she had postponed her visits to the brig until at last she had found what seemed to be a favorable opportunity.

"And you know how favorable it proved to be," she went on. "Evidently they'd been waiting for me to unlock the door because not until I'd turned the key was there a sound. After all, though, I was more frightened than hurt. Some one's silk handkerchief—it must have been Barette's—served as a gag; and Teague held me while the others ambushed you. It was a long time after that before I knew what they had done to you. My captor escorted me up to the deck. He seemed a bit frightened when we passed Barney's quarters; but I was covered by a pistol and also a whispered threat—one they used continually—that if I made a sound they'd kill you."

On passing the fore hatch, Jane continued, she had noticed two men removing several planks of the cover and rigging watch tackles, and later discovered that the dinghy had been concealed there; for while she stood under guard abaft the wheelhouse the boat was carried aft and made fast in its former position to the davit falls.

"It was some time," she said, "before I learned that you were in it, lying unconscious beneath the thwarts. They held me some distance away while Barette and the mate held a whispered conference that I could not hear, the former seeming to be in an attitude of resignation as if everything went very much against the grain.

"One thing I like about Duff," she digressed, "is the fact that he makes no bones about anything. He came lumbering up to me like this." Jane threw back her shoulders, pouted and stepped with clumsy rolling strides toward her imagined self. " 'Our friend, Mud,' " she quoted, stamping one heel into the ground and putting one hand so that her thumb caught under an imaginary suspender strap, " 'our friend, Mud, is now middling well foundered; and if you make a squeak he'll go down. He will! As I've sailed the seven seas. You two been up to something not quite healthy for you; and we squashed your stachew to a pulp—just what we ought to properly smash Mud into!' " Jane resumed her normal gait but continued somewhat in her low-pitched deep-sea vernacular. " 'But we ain't soft shell anyhow. Not us. We held off middling long and you can thank your friend the gov'ner you ain't bound—both of you—seven different directions in seven different sharks!' "

Keith marveled at the girl's vivacity after her long night, while she resumed:

"From the looks of them all I thought they still intended sending me off in seven different directions; but since you were middling well foundered and ready to go down if I squeaked, I only stood there like a quiet mouse listening. I think I did look to Barette for further enlightenment, because, as I remember, he said:

" 'Tell her that he's safe; and about your island, my dear Duff.'

" 'Island. Humph! She seen it on the chart. That's about all anybody seen it on except me. I been there. Loveliest little island ever you laid eyes on; good water, fruit trees, pretty flowers—everything little hearts could desire. But lay to this, miss; it's all got to be done decent and proper. Until we cut you loose it's all as if your friend Mud was settin' trim under a knife what don't like young lady's squeals. I've risked aplenty for all your pranks; and by the time you're launched this here hulk'll be within five miles of rocks. Due south's your bearing; and if you can't sail the dinghy, you got it to learn. Take a four-point bearing on that.' "

Jane explained that while this was going on a man had climbed into the boat; and others, moving like clockwork, were bringing up dunnage, the hermit checking every item as if personally concerned with the future welfare of his prisoners.

"All the time I was wondering where you were," she went on; "and I was debating whether or not it would be wise to give some sort of an alarm when Duff seized me by the shoulder with:

" 'He lays there in the boat, miss; and he ain't dead. Not him. Only he'll be needing your careful attention presently. He will, as I've drove seven times around Cape Stiff, he will!'

"And by that time I was ready to believe him. They'd lowered the boat to the taffrail and I saw you with several handkerchiefs over your face. As I came closer the odor of ether terrified me. If I had ever screamed in my life before I should have tried it then; but they let my feelings subside a bit before they relieved me of the gag. Then too, the man in the boat was watching me and ready, I'm sure, to act in the event of any emergency. So I deemed it best to save my breath until he'd left us. Then would be the time, I thought, for all the noise I could make.

" 'The rags come off him,' said Duff, 'when you take 'em off. Not before. And you don't take 'em off neither, till you do what the gov'ner has to tell. He'll be dead too if you don't hurry up. Gov'ner, give her that there paper and pencil.'

"It will sound funny," said Jane, "when I tell you this, but before I was allowed to go aboard the dinghy I had to write a note professing to my intentions of suicide. Barette dictated while I wrote, but I don't remember a word of it. Aboard the *Jane,* unless they know me very well, they'll think I've killed myself.

" 'Now lay aboard,' Duff ordered; and I was quick to obey. The third party in the boat—whoever he was—confronted me with a pistol and ordered me into the stern sheets where I was to jerk the lanyard of the release hook 'at the proper time.' While they lowered away I was not allowed to touch you; and I was afraid that you had breathed too much of the terrible stuff already. I had a feeling too that we should be capsized as soon as we touched the water, but they held the stern well down; and as soon as a wave grazed aft, I let go. We spun with a jerk that sent me nearly over the transom, although they paid off forward as fast as they could and cut loose. The man in the bows swung off on the davit fall; and while he dangled there with his leg wrapped around the tackle I was conscious of his pistol being leveled at me.

"But by that time my hands were full. Before I could tear the handkerchief off your face and dip an oar we were almost broadside again and shipping a green sea. I veered her and didn't think to scream until then—when it was too late. The lights of the *Jane* were already some distance ahead. I watched them while I got some canvas on the boat. Later I noticed the schooner hauled to the westward. They'd given us the whaleboat's compass, which I did not discover until this morning; but I couldn't have used it anyway on account of the dark. I went by the wind and the north star, keeping both fairly well astern. It was hope against hope that we'd make the island which I actually believed not to exist. But in less than an hour's sailing, I saw the reef—a long streak of breaking sea. The *Jane* must have come within three miles of it." The girl paused. "Talking makes one thirsty, doesn't it?"

Keith, halting, gazed steadfastly into her eyes. He had nodded to her question; but, forgetting their present plight, his mind was back with her in the trials she had already undergone because of him. Despite them, however, as she stood with one white shoulder peeping from her torn sleeve, her hair tossed helter-skelter by the breeze and her eyes without a shadow of self-consciousness, meeting his in bold expectancy, her charm now seemed more entrancing than ever before. Not of the primitive, but capable of enduring its hardships; not masculine, but fit to play the part, she was unlike any girl he had ever known. He was obliged to admire her even more than she whom he truly loved. The two, both in nature and appearance, were totally different; yet Jane was a constant and painful reminder of the other. She evoked a desire predominant, but it was a desire for one beyond his reach and lost to him forever. The appeal of her clear blue eyes kindled a longing for other eyes that were hazel; and the light ring of her voice seemed to arouse faint echoes of another voice—a low dream tone, still bewitching to his obstinate memory. Had he never known Eileen Patton,

at that moment he might have snatched Jane up into his arms; but as it was his ever-growing regard for her only fanned the flames created by another; and the burning of it brought an expression of supplication to his eyes which, if the girl apprehended, she did not understand.

"Please don't look at me that way," she pleaded. "What is it you want to say? Only don't thank me."

"I have nothing to say and there's nothing I can do," he responded, feeling helplessly entrapped between a fire and its magnified reflection. "You've done it all. Perhaps there's nothing more—— Jane," he said, faltering through a feeling of utter torment, "while I was dreaming I think I—I think I kissed your hand."

Jane shook her head. "Not my hand," she said, her sad gaze fixed upon him; "neither did you think so at the time. You were talking while only I could listen; but your address was directed—not to me."

Keith frowned. "But it is you now; and if you will let me—as my only expression of esteem toward you——" He broke off, caught both her hands, lifted them slowly to his lips, kissed and lowered them again to her sides. "Only for that," he breathed, "let me thank you. As for all you have done, I might have taken it for granted had I known you as I know you now."

They moved on in silence over the thin crust that broke beneath their steps and held prints as vividly as does the snow. Unlike the effects of snow, however, each time Keith's weight fell upon a naked foot a burning agony conveyed and added itself to other physical suffering, while his anxiety in hope of recompense was doubled at every stride. The ravine, a deep and almost precipitous crevice only a few yards in width and extending seaward, lay now only a hundred yards away. Jane, increasing her pace, soon broke impatiently into a run. Keith attempted to follow but a sudden dizziness held him back. He reeled in his tracks, then stumbled on while the girl, coming to the very brink, halted and gazed down. The other brought up sharply, holding his breath and waiting for her to turn. She did, at last, very slowly. Her expression at first was an enigma; but obviously it was an intentional one; and her eyes spoke the answer when she demanded:

"One guess!"

Keith forged on, ecstatically, with the cry of "Water!" Jane, giving way to laughter ran to meet him with extended hand. At the edge of the rift, which seemed to have been cut to a depth even below sea level, the silver liquid bubbled spasmodically and trickled off in a tiny stream to a broader area of rocks. One glimpse was enough, and in almost frenzied anticipation, Keith felt the cooling liquid run sizzling past his throat. He was drinking, already. *Drinking!* And he would never stop.

"This way!" he cried, fairly dragging her after him to a series of rocky ledges that promised a safe descent. From one he dropped to the next, helping the girl after him, until standing on the gravel floor by the effervescent pool, he waited, motioning her to drink first. Upon her acquiescence, he beheld the reflection of her anxious eyes—eyes sparkling more brilliantly than the water. Her lips touched their reflection and a lock of her hair, floating on the surface, glowed warmly in the sunlight, and danced about on the bubbles.

Then she drew back, hiding her face in her arms. She rose and with a low cry dropped back upon a rock. She attempted to speak but her voice broke into sobs.

"Oh, God! God!" she repeated over and over again. "Why have You—why?"

She rose, clung to his shoulders and, with a look of despair, threw back her head while her waving hair fell like a cascade of fire over his arm.

"No!" she cried. "No, you can't drink there. The water is salt! From a rising tide!"

CHAPTER XIX.

East by north, east northeast, or perhaps northeast by east—Hawaii lay somewhere within that arc, the radius of which was more than a thousand miles. The dinghy, sixteen feet over all, might at her best cover that period in something less than two weeks. But one gallon of water to last two people through that time and in tropical latitudes!

Jane shook her head. "No, John, it couldn't be done. I know well enough it couldn't!"

Returning from the salt spring at last they reached their camping ground; and like two half-melted figures of wax they wilted down into the boat's shadow, Jane leaning back upon her arms, Keith doubling his legs before him and resting his tor-

tured forehead upon the palms of both hands.

"Don't you see how impossible it is?" continued the girl. "We have no chart—nothing but a toy compass. A wrong guess in bearing would mean missing the islands altogether; and then, even if we guessed accurately, there would be heavy drift currents, to say nothing of leeway. And water! We haven't enough."

"Mexico," suggested the other, finding a certain value in confining his speech to monosyllables. "Far?"

"Roughly, I think, fifteen hundred miles—that is, to Lower California. And it's absolutely out of the question. It would mean beating to windward and the dinghy won't beat. Even if she would, the time element makes it not worth a hope. Besides, in those parts, this is the hurricane season."

Keith drew a deep breath, staring out over the half-dead waters of the lagoon.

"Then it's Hilo, Jane. Start now! East by north, and trust to God. Why not?"

Jane glanced at the demijohn lying between them but did not reply.

"One gallon," observed the other. "Rain, perhaps, near Hawaii."

The girl shook her head. "We'd never get that far, John. Never in the world!"

It was this attitude that Keith could not understand. There was not a prospect of fresh water where they were. He was sure of it. They had surveyed practically every square foot of the parched ground. Of course he realized the dangers of such a venture in such a boat and with so little water; but if a chance for life existed, where else could it be found? That well-known region "between the devil and deep-blue sea" was not without its alternatives; and why Jane, whose life had always been in the very arms of the deep-blue sea, should suddenly choose the devil in preference seemed beyond all reason. With a boat at their disposal, was it making the best of a gallon of water to consume it, sip by sip, on a hopelessly dry island that would be awash in the first gale?

"To stay is suicide," averred Keith; "to sail is to hope and perhaps to live."

"Assuming," put in Jane, "that there is no fresh water on this island. We may find it. If we do I'll be glad to start; but to put out now, with only what we have, would be suicide. Wait till to-morrow. We need rest. In the morning we'll be able to think."

Keith lifted the demijohn to his knees and laid his cheek upon the cool outer surface. From within came the sweet condolence of water tones, lapping and thunking the glass. No sound was half so sacred; no music more alluring. He drew back, gazing into the liquid silver behind the glass where animated and distorted reflections of his ashen face stared back at him and evoked a sudden fear and mistrust of himself. Abruptly he handed the tempting bottle to the girl, whose ready hands were extended to receive it.

"A sip, Jane," he pleaded. "Drink, please."

For there had come over him the insane notion that the sight of the demijohn, lifted to her lips, would somehow damp his own thirst. But Jane only shook her head and hastily placed the bottle behind her.

"I am not thirsty," she said quietly.

A strange expression came into her eyes. For the first time since he had known her, she seemed afraid—afraid of him! What had come over the girl, he wondered. The water was hers. He had told her so. Did he look as if he would snatch it away and drink it himself? But leaning forward and covering his face with his hands he dismissed the thought and attempted to order his mind for some means of persuading her that they must leave the island at once. If the girl was conserving the water with the idea of using it to best advantage, now was the time for positive action. Contained within the demijohn was an only hope of getting to Hilo—an only hope, in fact, of life. Why in the world didn't they start?

It was this question that shunted his thoughts suddenly into a new channel. It occurred to him from what the girl had said of Duff and Barette and from his own observations that the two men were working not altogether as a team. Their motives conflicted. Duff was willing to resort to any means of gaining his ends. The other was more compromising. He had shown that he held something of their welfare at heart by equipping the boat with the water, the blankets, the hardtack, matches and other things including, pitifully enough, clay and modeling tools. Jane was convinced that he believed the mate regarding island springs and vegetation; but if there were water enough either on the island, or in the demijohn to

afford a possible transit to Hawaii, surely Duff would have realized it and canceled that chance. The island water was salt and that being——

Keith snatched up the bottle and removed the cork. Jane scarcely moved. Watching him, she took a handful of sand and let it pass slowly between her fingers. She saw the bottle raised to his lips, tilted. She saw it lowered again, dropped; and she watched it with whimsical resignation as its silvery content bubbled and gulped and washed a small crevice in the sand. When Keith turned toward her she was looking calmly into his eyes.

"I have known," she said, "for a long time. Now you understand why it is best to stay here and hope for the impossible. If there had been fresh water there I should not have hesitated to do as you suggested; and I should have made you drink hours ago. But you see, Duff was not taking the chance of our getting away so easily. I didn't want you to know the worst, because I had hopes of our finding water and I wanted to keep that hope alive in you. I am thirsty enough myself; but your thirst, after the ether—I know what it must be." Tears came into her eyes. "I was scarcely as heartless as I seemed," she said, "but there must be some way out of this. Think of what we have. There's the clay, for instance. There's moisture in it."

"A little," agreed Keith, rising to his feet. "If we could only get it out! Come, Jane, we're going for a swim. We'll think to better advantage afterward. We can absorb moisture from the lagoon."

He attempted a smile which Jane, on rising, was able to return.

"My poor clothes," she mused, glancing down at her cherished silken costume and regretfully brushing off small particles of sand. "Oh, well, they're ruined already, aren't they?"

Later the delightful coolness of the water made the sacrifice worth while. For more than an hour they swam and floated about, discovering that the bottom was laden with oysters, abalone, mussels—all varieties of shellfish as well as long sly-faced eels which they carefully avoided. Farther out there was long greenish ribbon grass besides ordinary kelp and devil weed. Jane picked a piece and held it up.

"We had a Chinese steward aboard once," she announced, swimming beside him and holding her head far above the surface to keep the thirst-producing water from her mouth. "He used to cook this variety of kelp for us. He showed me how; and it's really not bad. It tastes something like shell-fish smell, if you can bear the thought. He'd dry it, cut it up into short lengths to boil. If we only had water we'd be fixed—for a time anyway."

Keith nodded.

"We'll look again to-morrow," he said, trying to restore some of his shattered hope.

The sun slid down from the meridan, later welcoming them back to the beach, where they spent the rest of the afternoon preparing for the night. For the sake of the boat's seams, which were already shrinking in the dry heat, Keith launched her, made a rock fast to her painter and moored her a short distance offshore, using her sail as a substitute shelter for the girl.

When the half moon appeared that evening it found Jane fast asleep. She lay uncovered with a blanket beneath her and her coat rolled for a pillow. Not far from her crude bower rested Keith; but his eyes were open, focused meditatively on the silver light that danced over the water. In the late afternoon he had made a discovery which he had not disclosed to Jane. While clearing the débris from the beach in their immediate surroundings he had laid hold of some dried kelp and found it rooted. Jane had remarked that the island would be awash in half a gale; but the evidence now proved that, not so long ago, it had been not only awash, but totally submerged.

Despite the heavy traffic over the sea there are to-day no few islands of the Pacific marked "existence doubtful;" and these, in many instances cannot be regarded as "a sailor's pipe dream." Nor is it a mystery that, after a careful search by hydrographic surveyors, reports of such places cannot be substantiated. It is natural for submarine ranges to emerge from the sea and no strange phenomenon for them to sink again. The earth is cooling, shrinking, crumpling up here, crumpling down there. It lives and it changes; and life changes with it.

This particular island, then, was only an active member of a natural process. It was in the now-you-see-it stage at present. And that night, as the wind subsided and died, as a thin sheen of cloud changed the moon from silver to a deathly white, as the warm

air became warmer and sultry, Keith waited in suspense for the simple twist of a demon's wrist that might put an end to his agony of thirst and prevent the sun from rising again on the utter hopelessness of their plight. He was thinking of this now; but later, from the gathering blackness overhead, came the hope of rain. There was water vapor over the island. It had only to condense and fall.

Then his eyes brightened. He dragged himself suddenly to his feet. Rain or no rain they might have water. Vapor could be made to condense. Salt water could be turned to vapor. There was the bucket. There were the matches. And—but there was need for other equipment: something shaped like a funnel to be fitted to the container, and tubing of some kind. His heart leaped, for he had thought of the modeling clay.

"Mud," he mused, smiling; "you'll be useful for the first time in your life!"

He wanted to live; and he wanted the girl to live. And he intended to make it possible. He would start now before the sun could detain him with its swelter of heat. For light he would build a bonfire; and without further delay, he went about it.

During this time he had forgotten the presence of the prestidigitator, and forgotten his desire to see the feat of magic completed. After gathering some timbers of wreckage and small splintery sticks of driftwood he fumbled about in the bucket for matches. Close to Jane, he could hear her soft breathing. Thirst to her was forgotten. Her dreams perhaps were bathed in the clear water that buoyed his hopes—the water he was to conjure from fire and brine. His hand trembled as it searched about. He had found the box, but with a sinking feeling that approached physical sickness he wilted down into the sand. During the trip to the island spray had accumulated within the pail. The matches were wet. He tried one and he tried another and another. None would burn.

They might be dried, he thought. Whether or not they would ignite after that he did not know. In his experience, sometimes they did and sometimes they didn't, all depending on the ingredients of their composition. And then, too, although in his childhood he had failed as often as he had tried there were other methods of making fire: friction on dried wood——

But here his trend of mind was shattered. There came a gentle trembling—a deep half-subdued rumble. The sand beneath him was moving, breathing, humping, shifting about. Tiny breakers went splattering along the beach. Farther beyond were heavier waves, lashing about as if the lagoon had become suddenly alive with great tussling monsters. Then all fell quiet; and holding his breath he awaited the second shock.

CHAPTER XX.

The discovery of Jane's disappearance from the old schooner came to Captain Macfarland as a volcanic upheaval followed by a ravaging fire, the smoke of which on drifting away left him to stare blankly over the distorted contours of his life whereon half of its work and all of its meaning were reduced to cinders. It was the second morning after the skipper's discovery of a certain note signed by Jane and left on his table. Even now he was scarcely responsible for his actions; and throughout the previous day—this be hanged and that be damned—the vessel had been a slave to his fevered whims. She had been hauled to the northward, brought about to the eastward, veered to the southward, broached to the westward, tacked, squared away, gybed, hove to; she had boxed the compass and she had combed the waters within an area of fifty square miles. No hope, of course. Poor Hollis knew it. Yet, without a word, he was still obeying orders and taking abuse, giving orders and forcing them through, attempting with all that was in him to master his own despair and face soberly what he believed to be the truth.

To him there was no mystery whatever. Jane's desperate act was too clear. Moods, perhaps; but moods well grounded. He remembered the occasion in her stateroom when she disclosed a true depth of regard for one whom she believed to be Rupert Keith. She told of meeting him in secret—early mornings by the dock. Then there was the episode of the missing key for which he had taken the blame. Hollis could not doubt the fact that the girl had been visiting the prisoner. When he had escaped, although the skipper held Barney responsible, it was probably because Jane had left the door unlocked. For some time Jane had not been quite herself—a little despondent, quiet, not confiding. That was

a sign. The girl had been in love, if any brother ever knew his own sister. As for the other, Keith or Mud—whoever he was—must have put himself in the way of the schooner to be with the girl. No other explanation. Acknowledged a mental disorder, too—dual personality, and all. Poor Jane! She'd probably noticed this but for obvious reasons tried to discredit it. Then, no doubt, she'd realized. Rejected him maybe. Only right. Nothing else. That accounted for his escape and suicide. His suicide accounted for hers. The note, final and conclusive evidence.

Thus ran the mind of a brother who knew his sister, who was used to her confidences, who confided himself and who loved. But the father's mind was none so settled—the father, who seldom bothered with confidences, who never confided himself and whose love, since the death of his wife, had always been divided between memory and personal pride. Recently however, he had forgotten the latter and memories, once held solely by the spirit of Jane's mother, were confided to Jane alone. He wanted her back; he would go through hell to get her back, and he longed for the sight of those mythical fires, the sight of devils and fiends that he might lay hands upon them. He did not know that perhaps they were all around him, watching, waiting for his recognition of faces behind masks. He hoped that Hollis might make such a discovery. Hollis had a way of suspecting things; but what was the matter with him now?—now, when suspicion was worth while, when it might lead somewhere!

The *Jane* had resumed her westerly course; and tense rays from the early sun moved slowly to and fro athwart the foreward bulkhead to the swing of a monotonous quartering roll. The old man, his head drooping like a flaming thistle with a broken stem, sat with both arms extended before him on the mahogany table. During the past half hour he had neglected even to stroke his fiery beard and his only visible movement was the strumming of his fingers—a muscular and nervous expression which to a more savage species of noble animal would have confined itself to the slow and ominous swish of a tail. Close to one hand lay the scrap of paper where Jane was supposed to have left it some thirty hours before; and, in the direct line of his vision was an unfinished assignment of "Hippolytus." Over the translated lines his restless eyes were moving, although the impressions conveyed by them were only as the ticking of a clock or the intermittent sighing of the sea. Now and then his frowning face frowned more as faulty translations, made conspicuous by the mark of his huge blue pencil, tripped his gaze. But he did not know that he was reading; he did not know that Hollis had entered and he did not hear when Hollis spoke.

"Told steward bring your breakfast in here."

Hollis scrutinized for a moment, then fell meditatively into a chair. The skipper rose, locked his hands behind him and began pacing to and fro, taking no more than four steps in either direction.

"Breakfast," he murmured at last. "Yes, I'd forgotten." Then he flounced down again into his chair with one of his direct glances at his son. "Oh, Hollis."

"Yes, sir."

There was silence until at length the old man opened his cigar box and extended it.

"Smoke?"

"No, thank you."

Another silence. The captain's face assumed the expression of a thunder cloud. Staring at the cigars, his strumming became more rapid, loud, until finally with a quick swing of his hand he slammed down the box lid with:

"For God's sake, say something! Can't you—can't you—don't you suspect anything? Why did you come here?"

"To advise your more active command of this ship. It might help you."

"Help me! What help?" He paused, and his face brightened; then leaning forward he fixed a burning scrutiny upon his son. "Do you notice anything, Hollis? Answer me. Do you?" He shot a glance at the note. "It wasn't like her, I mean. She wouldn't have done it, Hollis, lad. You know that, don't you?"

With an expression of pain Hollis buried his face in his hands, then, compressing his lips, sat back again, meeting his father's stare.

"All I can say is," he answered, "she wasn't as close to me toward—toward the last. Always something on her mind. And"—he paused, glancing toward the note—"well, you know her handwriting better than I do."

The old man was dazed for a moment.

He had not expected this from Hollis, the all suspecting. Was it possible that he could accept such evidence when even at face value it was bald contradiction?

"Handwriting, eh? Is that all I know of my daughter? Do you presume to know her better than I? Brothers and sisters confide, yes! They have their little secrets; but half the time they don't know what they're talking about. Handwriting, eh? Very well. This is her handwriting." And his huge fist crashed down upon the note. "But—this—is—not—Jane!"

Hollis rose with a sigh.

"But you don't understand, sir. She loved him. I'm sure of it."

"Granting she did! Granting she did! And granting, if you insist, that it was in her to do as the note intimates; I charge you, sir, on this! Would Jane, my daughter, be guilty of such construction? Look at it. Look!"

Holding up the note and slapping it with the back of his hand, he flaunted it before his son's startled eyes. "Isn't there something there that strikes you squarely in the face? Read it! Read it! Listen to this: 'only a blessing,' it says, 'that I have been given the will *to gladly follow him.*' What's the matter with it? *Quick!*"

Hollis smiled faintly.

"Split infinitive?"

"Split infinitive, of course! Jane used to argue in favor of it sometimes; but she wouldn't have dared to use it in a note to me. In such a confession as this it would have been treason! It would have been an insult! Jane—no, Jane was not that kind." He lowered his gaze while two large tears escaped from his eyes and trickled down to his beard. "Jane loved me," he said half to himself. "I know she did."

Hollis nodded, reflecting his father's grief.

"I'm sure of it, sir," he responded.

And at that moment there came a knocking at the door. Pebbles was admitted with the breakfast tray which he placed before the skipper. This however seemed not to exhaust the purpose of his visit. He swayed nervously from one foot to the other and rubbed his square paws upon his white apron.

"That will do, steward. Thank you," said the ship's master.

"Might do as a breakfast, sir. But I got somethin' t' tell you. There's the short of it. And Pebbles don't talk unless he talks facts. And I come now to say that there's more missin'!"

The skipper whirled abruptly in his chair.

"Who?" he demanded.

"No, that ain't it, sir. More hardtack, I mean; and a particular lot more—a whole half a case, night afore last when the young lady disappeared."

Captain Macfarland, who for an instant had relaxed, bristled again and his eyes fairly snapped beneath the flaming red of his eyebrows.

"And I ask you this," the cook went on: "do you know of anybody aboard this hulk who'd make a granny for a reef knot?"

"Don't think I do," answered Hollis. "Unless it was Mud."

Pebbles grinned.

"Good enough. Now we're comin' to the facts. There was only one duffer aboard who'd make a granny besides Mud, and that's Lester! S'pose I'd say now as how after he was s'posed to've got away with the boat there's been no end of grannies made in place of thief knots on my hardtack box. I kep' it in the galley because generally they wasn't wanted; but seems t' be different now. They're goin' and they're goin' fast.

"Here's somethin' else, too. The night when they went fastest, when a whole half box went—was the only time when the proper square knot was made. That was the night afore Mud and—er—the young lady was missin'."

The skipper straightened himself in his chair.

"This morning?" he said. "What kind of knot this morning?"

"The kind Lester'd tie; a granny. Lester, he don't know a stu'n's'l bend from a round turn on a stovepipe. Now here's somethin' else, sir. I seen men stowin' scraps in their pockets off the table. I even seen Mr. Mathsen do it this morning!"

"You suspect, then, that Lester is aboard!" cried Hollis.

"It ain't for Pebbles to suspect nothin', sir. Hard, cold facts—that's all."

"Thank you, steward," nodded the old man, stroking his beard. "I think we can make the proper deductions. You can take away the tray. I don't care for breakfast this morning." He opened the table drawer, removed an automatic pistol, examined it casually and dropped it into his pocket. "Steward, open up the lazarette and un-

lock the scuttle. Take a lantern in there but don't let the light into the hold. And, Hollis!"

"Yes, sir."

"Go with the steward. Lay b'low through the scuttle before there's a light in the lazarette; and see that it's shut behind you. Take your gun and the key to the brig. Make your way farard to the forepeak quietly as possible and wait until you see me coming toward you with the lantern. I expect to find somebody stowed away there and I expect him to make for the fore scuttle when he sees my light. I expect also that he will be surprised by you and that you will conduct him aft. I think we can persuade him then to tell us what we want to know. That's clear, is it?"

Hollis nodded impatiently and rushed toward his stateroom. He returned promptly, buckling a cartridge belt under his coat—an act which, by chance, Mr. Duff happened to notice as he passed the skylight.

CHAPTER XXI.

The *Jane Macfarland*, built especially for lumber cargoes, had no "'tween decks." From garboard to shear strakes her hold was one vast compartment, empty now save for ballast sacks packed snugly to a height somewhat below her bilge stringers. Close to one of these, Hollis, under cover of complete darkness, crept forward toward a dim glow emanating from the forepeak scuttle and seeming to shine with particular emphasis on the rungs of a ladder leading downward from the deck under the forecastle head. All hatches being battened and the lazarette opening guarded by the captain and Pebbles, this ladder marked the only possible exit for a stowaway; and among the black shadows hard by Hollis meant to conceal himself.

Like the hold of any sailing vessel this one reverberated with numerous congested noises. There were the low plaintive groans of timbers; there were the rasping wails of beams; there were the high screeches of rivets and crunching of bolts. There was the vibrant cracking of masts or checking of booms or scurry of rats or thumping of boots; and there was the wash of the sea without, and there was the slosh of the bilge within. And there were variations and combinations and grand choruses of them all. But despite these sounds, which however numerous were not deafening, Hollis listened for something more. On reaching the forepeak, he heard it. It *was* something more—something more than he'd expected to hear and something more uncanny than he cared to listen to. It was like the hiss of a serpent, loud and close at hand.

"Whiss-iss-ist!"

Hollis stepped back. It seemed then, although the darkness was all but absolute, that something passed not more than a foot in front of him. It hissed again, this time louder than before; and a shadow fell down along the rungs of the ladder.

"Whiss-iss-sst!—whiss-iss-sst!"

In the open scuttle above appeared the great walrus face of Mr. Mathsen with eyes straining into the darkness. It remained there while the hissing, now farther away, continued.

"You can't find him?" came the deep-sea voice from above.

"No," was the reply. Then another "Whiss-iss-sst!"

Even a dog dislikes to be summoned by a hiss, but of the dumb brutes evidently Lester was numbered among the less discriminating varieties.

"Must be asleep," called down Mr. Mathsen. "Look in the brig. He dozes in the bunk there sometimes."

"You say d' ol' man's got a lantern?"

This time Hollis recognized the voice of Phil; and he realized that the captain's plan already had been discovered and bruited among the men.

"Sure. You'll see him in time to clear out. If he ain't in the brig; then lay on up. We'll bottle 'em all three."

Hollis stepped out and keeping clear of the light moved stealthily toward the brig. If there were bottling to be done he had decided to do his share. He heard the door swing open on its rusty hinges and following the direction of sound slipped up behind. The hissing came again. It was well inside and it was answered by a sleepy tongue-tied drawl. Again the hinges screeched. The door slammed and the bolt clicked to. Phil and Lester were prisoners.

Hollis glanced toward the scuttle. All was clear. Realizing that only three seconds had been given him in which to restore the sovereignty of his father over the *Jane Macfarland*, with a run and a jump he alighted and geared himself to the central rungs of the ladder. Amid the muffled cries

of warning from the brig he sprang up from the opening like a red-headed jack-in-the-box and leveling his pistol covered four men. One wielded a knife, one a marline spike, one a belaying pin; and the other, bare-fisted, was attempting to hold his own against all three. He was Barney the bos'n. With one hand holding off the knife he landed a blow in the direction of the spike while over his head an iron pin went up and was about to fall.

It fell but it fell with its wielder. Hollis had fired—fired twice; and the giant, Teague, joined his shadow on the deck. His last move was the slow muscular contraction of one arm and the doubling of a fist, while the three startled combatants fell apart, glaring fixedly under the hypnotic spell of a Colt automatic.

"Step aside, Barney," advised the red-headed jack-in-the-box, only half of whose body was visible above the deck. "Throw 'em up, Mr. Mathsen. Higher! Good! And you too, Aleck! A noise out of either of you and I'll see that it's properly punctuated. Captain Macfarland's very particular about such things and remains the master of this ship."

He climbed on out of the scuttle, his eyes flashing quickly from one to the other while Barney, with a coquettish list of his thatched head, moved off and leaned back panting against a carpenter bench.

"Bottle us up, will you?" growled Hollis.

Aleck, his arms extended vertically and as high as they would go, trembled. Mr. Mathsen blinked. He was the man to watch, for his restless hands moved continually up and down, depending of course, on which way the weapon was aimed. But Hollis had already decided upon a method of procedure. He thought of the exclusive quarters of Barney the bos'n.

"You're under arrest," he said. "Search them, bos'n."

The latter obeyed, gathering the greater part of the weapons from the deck where they had fallen.

"Aw now, matie, what can you do with such men as these? They'd string 'em from a yardarm in my day." He paused to withdraw a sheath knife from Aleck's belt, then slapped him across the stomach with the flat of the blade. "Stan' up, you ol' alligator!"

"The brig's full, bos'n. We'll need your quarters for the time."

Barney lent Mathsen a boost from the rear. "Then *lay* along!" he ordered. "Until now I've kep' it perty clean of insec's."

Hollis stood guard while the other removed from his locker several articles of value, including a revolver, and fixed the key to the outside of his stateroom door. When the lock snapped, two more men were prisoners; and Hollis, with a deep breath, held up five fingers to mark the score.

"And three to go," he said; "if Barette can be counted for one."

"Aw, he's got his mudhooks in it all right," assured the boatswain. "Here's the short of it. I was swinging in the foot ropes un'er the mizzen boom splicing a lazyjack; and I see the mate stan'ing off for a peep down th' ol' man's skylight. Barette was on deck at the time; and right away—both taking bearings on me—they begin whispering all excited. They agree quick on something and Duff drops below. Barette, careless, follows. Then up swings Mathsen, laying farard fas' as he can lay, while Hud, standing wheel, keeps squinging at me with 'is fishy riding lamps. I sniff trouble. And I find plenty. Swinging down I starts for the fo'c's'le where all hands are on their toes, taking orders from that big stiff, Mathsen. But no sooner'n I got to the ladder off the poop than a knife comes whistling past my ear. Hud flung it; and quick he lashes the wheel an' drops below. To help Duff, I guess. Then I make for th' ol' man's cabin. You both are gone; an' I hear Pebbles singing out from the lazarette. 'They got me, cap'n!' he sings. So in I sneak to the cuddy where I can see. They had him right enough; all made fas', but they don' kill cooks as a rule. Then, thinking I'm best farard where my gun is, I go, climbing outboard along the guard. Nobody sees me till I come after my gun under the fo'c's'le head. Then they get me. You saw 'em. Now, what I want to know is, where'n blazes is th' ol' man?"

But the old man was already in a position to speak for himself.

"Coming, bos'n!" he said. "I'm coming!"

And he came like flames from a blow hole, his fiery beard sweeping in all the details of the situation that it could entangle. Springing from the scuttle he alighted on both feet, glanced at the body of Teague, at Hollis and at the surprised boatswain.

"Bless you, cap'n," said the boatswain.

"Hollis," snapped the other. "Who's in the brig?"

"Phil and Lester, sir."

"Good! Hurry! Teague dead——"

"And two in there, sir—Mathsen and Aleck."

"An' three running loose aff," added Barney. "Cook b'layed, he aren't bad hurt."

"And they think we're trapped in the hold, do they?" The captain shot a quick glance aft; then turned with sparkling eyes upon his son. "Hollis, lad," he cried, bringing his hand forcefully down on the other's shoulder, "good fighting you must have done; and it may have been for your sister's life! Lester aboard, you say. The boat didn't put off alone, did it?"

"Only thing is," observed Hollis, "it disappeared before she did."

"Bother that. We'll see. Follow along. It's all clear aft. Starboard ladder to the poop, you two. And not a sound."

The three, at a brisk dog trot, covered the distance. Besides them there was not a sign of life on deck. Evidently the mate had been so confident in the success of his five men forward that he and his friends aft were taking their time. And when Hollis peeped down the skylight he discovered that they were taking more than that. Duff, seated in the captain's chair, at the captain's table, was helping himself to the captain's cigars. Hud stood respectfully before him as if taking orders; while the hermit engaged himself in one of his characteristic dance-step promenades, his ivory cigarette holder fixed as usual in the center of his mouth. Hollis was laughing when he looked up; and by now the captain had seen as much as he cared to stand.

"Sharp, now," he whispered, "cut adrift the lashings."

Removing his pocketknife he kneeled beside the skylight while the others, following his example, made their own preparations. Obviously the attack planned was to be in the nature of an aërial invasion. At any rate, when the lanyards were cut, the skipper, posting the others, took his place at one end of the skylight. He designated the prospective action by an upward and sideward sweep of both hands and a nod toward the framed glass structure.

The three men laid hold, drew a deep breath and at the captain's signal bore up.

"Yee-eeve-ho!" sang out the boatswain.

And the skylight crashed aside. Hollis jumped. Barney jumped. The skipper jumped. Hollis struck the table, bounced and sprawled Duff over backward in his chair. Barney, alighting similarly, tackled Hud; while the skipper, stepping down more leisurely, confronted Barette with what dignity his manner of entry could afford.

"It's a cold and sultry day, Mr. Barette," observed the latter, "when a Macfarland loses his command." He drew a pair of handcuffs from his pocket. "You will oblige me, sir."

Two hours later the *Jane* was beating back in an opposite direction. Duff, in irons, was consigned to the brig. Where he would be consigned later would be up to the Federal authorities. Francis Barette, from whom it was hoped to gain information, was allowed to saunter about as usual. All hands were searched and relieved of their weapons, and all including Lester were compelled to a speedy return to duty. An interview, which proved a difficult one, with the cabin boy, confirmed the suspicion that the boat had not actually put off until the time of Jane's disappearance. He revealed nothing further, however; but the log book offered a clew. The latitude and longitude of the schooner at the time of the supposed tragedy was pinpointed on the chart. "Island (E. D.)" was marked as the closest possible land.

The old man nodded gravely.

"If such a place exists, Hollis, lad, we'll find it," he said; and drew the course of the *Jane* accordingly.

CHAPTER XXII.

The still that Keith had built was a crude affair, owing its existence to the bucket, the modeling clay and to the matches which, when dried, fortunately enough proved effective. Of the clay the sculptor had fashioned a funnel-shaped hood or steam chamber to fit the pail, together with a small receptacle to catch the distilled water, and a sectional tube about fifteen feet in length to condense the vapor and convey the proceeds. For the construction of pipe sections a whittle stick about twice the length of a lead pencil and similar in shape had served as the mold, this being tapered at one end and dilated at the other to provide the joints. As a means of firing these parts and others an oven of clay-mortised rock had been built in such dimensions as to re-

ceive the sections in lengths of two. These lengths, when baked, had been placed end for end upon a timber and by the use of moist clay fitted snugly together so that by raising the plank the tube could be connected to the steam-chamber vent and propped at such an angle as to allow a gravity flow of distilled water to the receiver. Condensation was effected more readily by the continued application on the tubing of saturated blanket strips. In all the task had not been an easy one; but a day's painful labor paid reward many times over. That night they drank; and shortly before the waxing moon could register what Jane believed to be midnight they had laid aside a full demijohn.

Preparing for a time in the near future when they would be obliged to trust their lives to a sixteen-foot dinghy which was to carry them through a distance more than a thousand miles on a guess bearing for Hilo, Keith had dealt sparingly with the clay, saving enough to mold another water container. The demijohn was not enough. The bucket, if equipped with a wooden cover, might have been a solution had it not been an indispensable part of the still—the only receptacle in their possession that could stand the necessary heat in the process of distillation.

The food question had never been a vital one. It was being answered now with a vengeance. Many new rocks were conjured into being and many more spirited away while the island proper was made to rise; and so marked was the rise that, day by day, the waters of the lagoon, growing shallower, receded from the shores, thus exposing more shellfish than could be consumed. Ribbon grass gathered by Keith from the deeper pools and treated according to the Chinese recipe by Jane proved a strengthening vegetable, although it did taste "something like shellfish smell," or even worse. They did not make a diet of it.

Their chief worry now while they prepared for the voyage was evoked by the strange antics of the island. Like some great poisoned monster it seemed to be swelling, expanding in all directions, as if it had consumed what it could not digest, become bloated; as if, at any instant, it might collapse. It seemed to be diseased, like some poor animal suffering from distemper and mange. Its skin was hairless and dead; it either breathed or forgot to. It seemed to be sleeping through troubled dreams; shaking its back in subconscious protest to the intrusion of insects that had recently made their abode upon its ugly hide. Sometimes the movement was confined to a mere muscular or nervous twitching; other times it was a marked trembling of the entire body. Sometimes it humped its back; other times it emitted a heavy slumbering sigh or a deep rumbling as from an acute inner disorder. For this reason "the insects," regarding their lives, strangely enough, as well worth preserving, had made ready to migrate; but for another reason—a very foolish one, perhaps—they were now postponing the venture.

It happened upon the third day of their island life that the lowering waters of the lagoon had exposed, among other things, a steering wheel fouled in a tangle of its own gears; and it happened also that Keith, hoping to find some use of it, had set it up before Jane's shelter. After that, other things occurred; and everything, at first, was apparently of little or no consequence. Despite the bothersome contortions of "The Isle of Nick," as they chose to call it, a rest before setting out for Hilo was deemed a necessity. Consequently when not occupied in gathering fuel or edibles, they sought recreation by way of a plunge in the sea or whatever other amusement caught their fancy. Perhaps it was for this reason that Jane, in a light mood, took the wheel, stretching her imagination to the extent that she pictured herself getting some canvas on the jumping island and sailing it away! And as she stood there to the tune of "Port a bit," "Steady," and "Hard o' Starboard," she did not realize that another imagination, as fertile as her own, was working on a very different tack; but she perceived at last in the gaze of Rupert Keith a sudden light of enthusiasm that flared to passion.

"Stand there a moment! Stand there!" he exclaimed, springing toward her. "Your hands this way. *So!* And your hair—Good Lord! You are beautiful! Like this: a little over one shoulder. Now don't move. *Please* don't! Let's see. The sun—yes, turn away just a trifle. Good! Oh, if we only had more clay!"

And, in a nervous turmoil of ecstasy, the sculptor stepped back, his hands fell upon the precious and diminutive heap of modeling substance—all that remained, all that was to have served them in affairs of life and death on a long voyage to Hawaii.

"Don't try it, John," protested the girl, holding her pose in a half-hearted manner. "It means only that we'll have to destroy it."

Keith nodded absently; but it was apparent that he was not in the least concerned with the warning. He propped a piece of planking at a desirable height; and, with many flash glances at Jane, began working the clay beneath his fingers.

"Destroy it," he reflected. "Certainly. That will be necessary. I'll tell you about the statue 'Power,' Jane. Perhaps you've seen it: a stoker at work in the fireroom, supposedly aboard the ship of progress. Through his industry he feeds the fires of the boilers of commerce. Now the sister piece, which will be 'Virtue,' should have something to do with that same ship. Put 'Virtue,' perfect womanhood, at the wheel—the wheel of the ship of progress!" He paused with an air of triumph as if he could see hidden somewhere in the shapeless mass before him the masterpiece of his youthful career. With almost brutal assurance he pressed the clay between both hands, then moved off slightly to one side. "I wonder why I didn't think of it before."

Jane was smiling submissively but with growing interest. And in her once empty chamber of vanity echoed the words that she could not still nor even disbelieve. They had come from his lips. "You are beautiful!" That remark, however urbane, had been spontaneous. He had never made such utterance before; he had never looked upon her with such vehemence; and although his zealous regard as ever seemed impersonal and detached it held none of the former patience and uncertitude. It was as if he had already achieved, as if the squalid pulp had sprung suddenly into the finished and life-sized product in bronze, or as if he could divine therein a ready-created object which had found its being with the beginning of time.

It was just before sunset and a crystalline silver topped the dwarf seas that splattered along the shores and ran in miniature waterfalls from rocks and stranded timbers. A warm breeze came down from the higher slopes of the island, chasing runaway bits of crisp kelp along the beach and launching them on short and perilous voyages over the lagoon. A driveling crab stood watching from one protuberant eye, clipping dainty titbits from a mossy ledge and tucking them one after another into its bubbling maw.

Keith worked on while the lingering intensity of heat and the continued impatience of action, mental and physical, brought innumerable drops of perspiration to his tanned face. Hours passed. The girl had ceased to comment, for already she noticed that he heard nothing, felt nothing, saw nothing save that immediately occupying his mind. His words, whenever they chanced to come, were: "Rest a while, Jane." Yet even while she rested he worked on, continuing to glance toward the wheel as if he could see her still posed before him.

Darkness fell but he did not rest. He moved closer to the condenser fire, kindled it into bright flames and begged Jane to stand "only one minute longer!" For her part she saw no startling evidence of his progress, save that in his expression which never for an instant lost its glamour. The lump of clay, as she saw it, was still a lump. Every time it threatened to resemble something, the touch of a modeling tool, or the pressure of a finger reverted it back to its former shapelessness. But she posed for him "a minute longer"—a half hour, had Keith but realized. Then, after a deep breath, he dropped his tools with the remark that the sun had been in a frightful hurry to get away.

At dinner that night—a dinner of mussels, oysters and ribbon grass—Jane found herself sharing his newly awakened ebulliency; and although the dying monster on whose back they lived took up its jerky breathing it seemed only to add to the zest of things. They laughed and ran to the support of the condenser tubing when the props threatened to give way. Life took on a true aspect of a game—a gamble with its chance element magnified to the *n*th degree. As for Jane, if she had had only herself to consider, if she had forgotten her father and Hollis, if she had forgotten the great shadow land beyond the seas that continued in its claim upon her companion, if she had forgotten the shadow girl whose name she had heard upon his lips, she would have gladly remained here with him until the island crumpled and bore them down. She was happy in her dreams; but these, she knew, must end, and the old pastime of watching life through a window, but taking no part, might be hers again on waking.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The day passed, and several more while the island continued in its contortions and became so disintegrated at one extremity that part of it had tumbled bodily into the sea. But the sculptor worked on, forgetful of the vital purpose for which the clay was to be used, forgetful of the pending danger, of the sweltering heat, forgetful of all but the triumph he foresaw. The girl watched with growing interest the artist's work. Her anxiety, her conflicting hopes and fears for his success, her enthusiasm combined with a delicate but positive expression of something more divine than Keith himself could name, crept like an immortal spirit into the clay until now, their seventh day on The Isle of Nick, the finished conception stood before them, not as an interpretation of life, but as life itself. It was, in fact, a part of each of them—a product of a woman's love and a man's passion, both indomitable although the very earth was crumbling beneath their feet. It stood as a manifest creation; and regardless of the long days of painful labor it seemed now to have sprung into being not because of the sculptor but in spite of him. Like 'Power,' it was a force in itself. It demanded recognition as such and defied them in their will to demolish it. It had thrust itself upon parents; it demanded their protection. Water jug! Bah! *That* for your water jug! Who are you to live at cost of me?

Keith sat mournfully upon a rock, making grotesque patterns in the sand while the water continued in its constant dripping from the condenser tube. Fuel was growing scarce. It could last them only a few days longer and their diet of shellfish and seaweed was beginning to tell.

Jane stood by the model, passing her fingers lightly over the graceful contours and wondering how she could have inspired such a work—especially when the artist regarded her, even now, only as a sculptor's model. She frowned and a sudden cold stab of pride turned her away. It seemed to her that during the undertaking his keen eyes had penetrated to her heart and perceived there within what she would have concealed even at the day of judgment. For the life he had given his work he had chiseled into her very soul; and, having found what he wanted, now he was through.

She could have turned at that moment and mashed the figure into a pulp, trampled it into the sand, squashed it beyond recognition. She had warned him; and if it was not in him to destroy the thing, then she would—but she wouldn't. She couldn't. It was masterful. It was his. It was all that he had seen in her. Then with a sudden feeling of shame she wondered if he had seen what was not there. She turned to him, longing to throw herself down at his feet, to bury her face in her arms; but she only said:

"We'll take it with us. You love it. The demijohn may last for many miles; and as you mentioned, we may meet rain." She glanced toward the small clay receiver of distilled water. "A cover for that would help a little."

Keith rose and shook his head.

"After all," he said; "it's only so much mud. But for you I shouldn't hesitate to destroy it. It seems a part of you. But then, that's a mere fancy and the agreement remains. Go away for a short while, Jane, and when you come back it will have been done. To-morrow we sail. I've been mad, keeping you here so long for this." He glanced lingeringly toward "Virtue," then, closing his eyes for an instant, walked impatiently to the water's edge and back again. Jane felt another slight trembling of the sand as he continued. "But you've given me a satisfaction. Regardless of what they say of me I'll know always that I haven't failed in this work. When I picture it later, after it's gone, I shall think of you; and that memory will mean more than the achievement because it will be of you."

Night had fallen and a pale three-quarter moon, its rays half spent through a filtering mist, appeared a little to the eastward of the meridian. Only the distant thunder of the surf interrupted the stillness.

"But there is nothing of me in what you have made," protested Jane, her eyes moving away from him and filling with tears. "It's what you put there from yourself. It is you. I shouldn't like to have it destroyed."

Keith forced a quiet laugh. He took her gently by the shoulders, whirled her about and started her on her way.

"Quick!" he said. "Walk over to the hill now, and back again. Sentiment is well enough in its place but it's got to make room for water here. If you say any more I won't listen to you."

Jane resisted slightly but obeyed. For

his sake and for the sake of her father and Hollis there was only one solution. Dangers enough would accompany them on their voyage without challenging more. And five minutes later found her standing alone on the ridge, looking westward toward the horizon.

There were lights.

At first she took them for two low planets; but then another appeared, and several more. They were too numerous, too close together, too large for celestial bodies, too bright. And when she beheld a flash of green she caught her breath. She stood for an instant while her hands clung and pressed harder at the seams of her forlorn jacket. She was thinking of the *Jane*. But it couldn't be. It was not. She could see a mast light and only power vessels carry those. And there were large portholes—a string of them, close to the water. With a cry of joy she whirled on her heels, leaped over a patch of kelp, over small chasms and ugly folds of the dead earth, tripping, catching herself as in a nightmare when the elements combine in uncanny resistence to all muscular action. Down she bore toward the smoldering coals beneath the condenser, with the cry of:

"*Pasado Mañana!* Here! She's coming! John! Stop! Wait! She's here! Hurry! Look!"

Keith had been bending over the fire to add a stick. He dropped it, reacting almost exactly according to her dictation. He stopped, looked, waited, then sprang to meet her. They met, Jane breathless, and Keith, glaring wildly over the low ridge, able only to breathe the name of the yacht and add: "No! It can't be." As if, in their plight, it made any difference.

Jane replied in broken phrases that it was; and she knew it was—big portholes; everything!

Both had forgotten the crime against "Virtue." She was no more. She had come with patience, gone without pain, and now she lay like a lump of cold mud on the plank where she had once stood in all her modest glory.

To Keith the appearance of the yacht, if indeed it were true, was no less a miracle than the incident as described by the boatswain: a ship drifting in fresh water while all her crew perished of thirst. He did not know that it was Rolland Patton's intention to explore the sea in search of doubtful islands; and he did not know that The Isle of Nick was the closest of all such places to Honolulu. The coming of the *Pasado Mañana* was impossible; yet even then he could see a light. He stood as if transfixed by it, as if he were on the point of collapse, as if he might drop down upon the sand and die in his elation rather than accept the blessings that fused it. Of what he said Jane caught only a part.

"Brought her here—places in God's world —Good Lord!" Then something else about "Virtue" which she did not understand until she glanced over and saw the pitiful remains.

"Jane!" he cried, coming suddenly back to himsef. "Signal them! We've got to signal them." He sprang upon the pile of fuel, swung half of it up into his arms. "If I can only persuade this stuff to burn!" He paused for an instant, whirling in a complete circle. "Here!" he cried, kicking over the condenser and dropping the entire load upon the smoldering coals. "Make it go! I'll build another on the hill!"

Seizing more wood, he was off. Jane watched his shadowy form moving away from her and a sudden feeling of loneliness bore down. Not until now had she realized what her discovery was to mean; and wilting down she gripped at the sand while a thick white column of smoke rose before her and circled into a cloud high above her head. The pale moon and the stars went the way of her dreams; and in their stead, coming closer and closer, were the lights of the *Pasado Mañana*.

Reluctantly she kneeled and fanned the coals. The smoke burst into bright flames that crackled and licked amid the soaring sparks and cinders. Before she could discern the signal fire upon the hill a long arm of diaphanous silver-gray from a powerful searchlight reached in from the sea, traced along the barren slope and fumbled at last upon the silhouette of Rupert Keith. He waved his arm and she knew that they had found him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The *Pasado Mañana* had brought up within a quarter of a mile to leeward of the island when the *Jane's* dinghy, tossing over the reef at the mouth of the lagoon, leaped out from the shadows of rocks and splashed into the moon path on the open

sea. Jane sat silently in the stern sheets, watching her companion as he leaned and bore back on flashing sweeps, while hundreds of flying fish, attracted by the yacht's searchlight, skimmed like darting silver over the waves.

Keith laughed but the girl only smiled. She was happy for him, yet her heart was heavy. Continually she gazed back toward the island and its blurred image came to her through tears which she could not withhold. To her it was The Isle of Nick only in name, for she saw it now as the island of dreams, of hope, of all that was real in her and in him. Like the clay it had been lifeless until they had given it life; and like the clay it held treasure which they had created, destroyed and left behind. Of course they could have tarried there no longer. It had to end. It had to end, like everything, when least expected, when hopes were brightest and dreams most vivid.

She listened to the intermittent clicking of oar locks and watched the phosphorescent whirlpools that came and vanished with every stroke until at last the impressions were broken by a voice sounding faintly against the breeze. She was unable to catch the words, but did not fail to notice the wild and almost ecstatic joy in Keith's response.

"Ahoy! *Pasado Mañana!*" Then, to Jane: "Rolland Patton!"

He leaned forcefully back upon his oars. Cries and shouts from the yacht cut through the wind, repeating many times over the name of Rupert Keith until obliterated by the resounding blasts of the whistle. Jane shifted uneasily. She felt suddenly alone and forlorn, picturing the many new and unfamiliar faces quite as they appeared later when she stood on deck before their staring eyes. The intensity of that stare, however, surpassed her imaginings, for she saw nothing about either her own person or that of Keith really to cause such alarm. To his unshaven face, to his somewhat long and very tousled hair, to the slight drooping of his eyes and the shadows that lay in the deepening hollows of his cheeks she had grown accustomed; and his dungarees were not unbecoming, she thought, and his tanned bare feet not out of keeping. As for herself, she did not know; but on several calm mornings she had caught her reflection on the glossy surface of the lagoon. Although her hair fell down over her shoulders she had kept it free from gnarls, and although her costume was torn and bleached it had held together fairly well, considering.

Yet, at last when they stepped up from the ladder and stood in the bright electric light beneath the awnings she might have believed, to judge from expressions, that the yacht's company were confronted by specters. Trying to smile but wanting more to hide she had turned for the moral support of her escort; but at that instant he was pounced upon, whisked away and surrounded by all hands.

"Let me introduce——" he was saying —trying to say, and repeating many times over amid a fusillade of questions, exclamations, ejaculations and general palaver. "I will introduce! Get away!" he laughed, breaking through the gabbling circle with a sweep of his arms. "Miss Patton!" he cried. "Where are you? I'd like you to know Miss Macfarland."

Jane felt the warm blood rise throbbing in her cheeks—for she was to see her—Eileen! the vision that floated always before the eyes of Rupert Keith.

White flannels, cap visors, black bow ties fell back in general disorder leaving a tall dark-eyed girl with a languid smile and the grace of a panther to "advance and be recognized." A wave of disappointment sent a pang to Jane's heart, for as Miss Patton's slow, heavy glance lingered upon her torn costume and tumbled hair she felt herself again in her old rôle as "curio" and knew Eileen to be another woman of the shadow species. Not real. A shadow—a beautiful shadow, like most of the other women she had met outside of books. The tears that welled behind Jane's eyes were saved at this moment by Rolland Patton. He stepped forward, extending one hand and adding the other.

"I know all about you," he laughed. "'Oriental doll from an ivory box—Chinese costume, gray-blue like the calm of a misty sea,' and all that. Well, it's all right. I'm only quoting our mutual friend, the hermit. How is the dear little fellow? This is going to be good! I told him I'd find his infernal island!"

Keith smiled. "We'll tell you how far you succeeded in a minute," he interrupted, and went on with the introductions.

There was a Miss Somebody—a tall blonde with large teeth; Mr. Somebody-else and what might have been his twin. Jane

had no time to notice them. She was wondering vaguely where Patton had heard such a description of herself and was conscious the while of Eileen, who was attempting constantly to relieve her of her bodyguard.

"And to think that it's you! You!" she kept repeating as they started below. "Why, I wouldn't have known you! You frightened me, hiding back of those terrible whiskers of yours. Really, you look as if you'd been shipwrecked!"

"We have, practically."

All hands stopped in the companionway. They were pushing from both directions while a volley of questions shot from all sides.

"Very well, I'll tell you this much now," acquiesced Keith. "We were alone on that island. We've been alone for a week. We don't know where our ship is. We're castaways. We're hungry and half dead—both of us. So make some allowances, please!"

There came an awkward silence in which faces stared at Keith, stared at one another, stared at Jane. Then Rolland Patton interrupted a low murmur by the order that Miss Macfarland was to be taken promptly into his daughter's stateroom and given everything she needed. The steward would have a supper ready when she returned. "You come with me," he nodded to Keith.

The group dispersed.

A short time later the company met in the main saloon. It was a spacious cabin, carpeted and upholstered in gray velvet plush, and paneled in elaborately inlaid mahogany. Jane was clad now in one of Eileen's dresses —something silken and blue and rather too large for her; but the pale tint of the gown complemented with striking effect the bronze glint of her hair. While dressing Eileen had left her quite alone, inviting her to "come on" whenever she was ready. She seemed offended, Jane thought. What could be the matter? Why hadn't she stayed to talk? Didn't one woman ever talk to another?

Glancing at Keith she hardly knew him. Some one's razor and comb had performed the greater part of a miracle; some one's double-breasted coat and white flannel trousers had completed it.

"You look very charming," he told her under his breath.

"And you very—different," she replied, then hastened back into a state of inner rigidity. Eileen was looking, now with an expression of rightful ownership at Keith, and now with her sweet smile at Jane. It was a smile such as any woman might inflict upon a squint-eyed, moon-faced doll in an ivory box—one that amused her. The tall blonde with the large teeth was very sweet and kind also. She sat very close, and, as Keith told his story, kept smiling down—way down—at Jane. Patton was seated comfortably in a cushioned seat, twirling a cigar under his white mustache, squinting and puffing furiously every time the name of Barette was brought into the tale. Jane liked him. He reminded her strangely of her father.

The steward brought the first course. Oysters on the half shell! Jane turned gingerly toward her late comrade of "Oyster Lagoon," but on observing that his spare moments were so occupied by Eileen that he had not noticed the plate before him, she withheld her smile and bravely applied her fork. When at last Keith came to the shellfish part of his story, however, a timely observation prompted his tact. They had lived, he said, principally on kelp and barnacles and, when lucky enough to catch one, an eel. He omitted in the course of narration the discovery of his true parentage and of his rightful heritage on Agrigan Island. All this, while he dressed, had been confided to Patton. His former presence aboard the *Jane,* he explained now, was a simple case of abduction. He had been shanghaied.

"So that ends my yarn," he concluded, "and starts yours. Tell us what brought you to this God-forsaken island."

"Looking for God-forsaken islands," responded Patton. "This happened to be the closest. We wanted to find the hermit's condemned statue factory—his Utopia, you know."

"That's exactly what we are looking for!" cried Keith. "Head for Agrigan, one of the Marianas. I happened to overhear the name, although only the captain and Barette were supposed to know our destination until we called there."

Patton announced that they would sail on the following day. The *Pasado Mañana* would stand by during the night so that an accurate survey of The Isle of Nick could be made in the forenoon.

"I don't wonder that you ran across the remains of a wreck there," he observed. "We might have piled on the place our-

selves. The island seems to be about twenty miles north of its charted position; and to my knowledge there's a schooner out there now in no uncommon danger of fouling it. The mate's keeping an eye out for her. We sighted her before sunset, beating this way."

"Beating?" cried Jane. "Are you sure?"

All eyes were upon her. Patton became suddenly interested.

"She was close hauled," he said; "and we saw her come about. She didn't have much wind at the time, either."

"Three masted?"

"Yes, she was." Patton frowned, puffing heavily upon his cigar. "She had topm'sts and a squares'l yard on the fore. Plenty freeboard. Seemed to be sailing light."

Jane, with both hands upon the table and a sparkling glow in her eyes, was rising slowly to her feet, when the other inquired:

"You don't suspect, do you, that she was your ship?"

Keith shook his head dubiously. No, she couldn't be. Duff's men numbered the skipper's eight to four.

"That's very true," observed Jane, "but besides the fact that there is a difference in the kind of men involved, there's another little item to consider. You don't often see a sailing vessel tacking in these waters. She's not bound for Honolulu or she'd be sailing free; and she's not bound for the West Coast or she'd be in the westerlies or the southeast trades. If she's the *Jane,* looking for us, she'd be doing exactly as Mr. Patton said. She'd have to beat. She must be the *Jane!*" And with a quiet little shriek she whirled and vanished up through the companionway, leaving the astonished group staring after her.

Her deductions, as it proved later, were accurate.

CHAPTER XXV.

Several miles from the west shore of the island when the distorted moon hung low and the warm breath of the trades white-topped the heavy swell, the *Pasado Mañana* brought up to windward of the *Jane,* spoke her, conveying the news that the girl and Keith were safe and aboard and warning her of the dangerous proximity of the doubtful island. Then, dropping astern, the yacht swung to leeward for the reply. Through light shifting gusts it came somewhat indistinctly; but Jane, with a suppressed cry of joy, sprang to the rail on recognizing the voice of her father.

"No boat—please send her over. Bound for San Francisco. All well aboard—except Barette—yesterday and killed himself. Tell Jane. And God bless you, sir!"

Then from Hollis came a ringing "Hello, Jane!" And the yacht's searchlight, being played upon the girl, gave her the opportunity of acknowledging the salutation. With one hand resting on the rail she waved frantically, while further cries sounded from Hollis and the skipper.

"Can you get over the dinghy?" Jane cried to Patton.

She was standing on the bridge close by him, not far from Keith and Eileen.

"In three shakes, young lady," replied the yacht's master. "They've parted a sheave pin on one of the fall blocks. May have to rig another tackle. Won't be long, though."

Jane, nearly breathless, gazed anxiously toward the schooner now bringing up in stays. The great sails were alive with long waving shadows while swinging her gaffs she pitched in a seaway and slowly drifted astern. Eileen, her arm locked in Keith's, pressed her elbow tightly against her side and turned questioningly toward him.

"You're going to remain aboard with us," she whispered, drawing him into the shadow of the chart room. "Why don't you tell me about everything? It's been so long, and it seems so much longer than it's been, since the last time we were together. It's as though we were meeting in another world; as though some power, stronger than ourselves, were denying us the right of—of separate lives."

Keith gazed into her dark eyes—eyes that were closing, as if to lock his image forever within, as if to instill even deeper that memory which had so long haunted his thoughts and dreams.

"You're not going to leave us," she reiterated with a premature smile of triumph which Keith overshadowed by a shake of his head.

"I have to," he said, turning his attention seaward; "it was rather strange how we met this time. However, Mr. Patton seems to have been looking for us; and simple circumstances put us in his path. I believe in fate, but not as a working code. In life we can trace nothing beyond the work of man. Man takes the risk and the credit. He

should take the blame. As for us, we've muddled things."

"I have," confessed Eileen. "I've been a fool. I've been spoiled. I've been given always what I wanted until your life became a part of mine. Then I expected and asked for the impossible. Oh, I realize it now ——" She broke off to a whisper, her eyes fixing themselves keenly upon him. "Now when—when perhaps—it's too late."

Followed a long silence, while in the short lulls of ocean tones he could hear her breathing.

"Do you never recall the old times?" she pursued. "Is it possible to toss aside the past as you would a closed book?"

"I've tried," replied the other. "I believe that either memory slaves for will or will for memory. Which one is to rule, depends on the man. I try to forget. I think I can."

Keith, despite a slight resistance, moved out from the shadows, realizing that he had not deluded himself in the thought he had attempted to express. In him memory seemed to have dominated until now. It had stood as an impregnable and dazzling armor enhanced manifold by separation and by the constant reminder that seemed to have been vested in Jane. The memory of Eileen had been both a reflection and an echo of which Jane was the source. But now the echo became an independent voice; the reflection a separate reality. As his eyes caught sight of Jane they lingered; for despite the fact that since their arrival aboard the *Pasado Mañana* their lives, once so closely linked, had suddenly drifted apart, she stood now as one distinct personality. The sight of her evoked the vision of no one else; the memories she aroused were of her own life and his—theirs, cut off from the past, exiled from the world, marooned.

Eileen dropped her arms to her side and moved slightly to one side. Patton, who had been talking to Jane at the opposite rail, thrust down the lever of the engine-room signal. The exhaust steadied itself in a manner of sudden determination as the yacht gained steerage way.

"Starboard. Hard to starboard," called Patton to the quartermaster. "Well, Rupert," he said, throwing back his shoulders, "you're not going to desert us, are you?"

Keith was conscious of an anxious glance from Jane as he replied.

"I'm afraid so. I've got to get back. The *Jane* seems to be bound that way. Your offer to take me along is tempting; but I can't afford——"

"Afford! That's rubbish. You *can* afford, because I say so. How about our little contract?"

Keith frowned. "What contract is that?"

"Haven't heard of it, eh? From what you told me of Barette I might have guessed it. I left a message with that spat-footed nuisance the day before we sailed. He was to have given it to you. You were to have called on me at Belvedere that evening. However, it amounts to a sure market for your output as soon as you are through with the city; and it amounts to about ten thousand dollars advance in good faith for the bargain." He turned to the wheel. "Steady."

"Steady," echoed the quartermaster.

Steady—Keith was anything but that.

"You made that offer in San Francisco!" he exclaimed.

Yes! Did it make any difference where he'd made it? It was made and needed only Keith's signature. Patton was building a new home with a gallery for his collection; and besides that he wanted a few bronze pieces for the garden. Why didn't these infernal artists have telephones? They missed good business that way.

"And here's another proposition," he pursued. "We're bound for the hermit's island and we're coming home with a cargo. It's up to you to lay claim to it and set your price!" He squinted, then broke off laughing. "By George, what miserable business men you devils are. Starboard a bit." He reached again for the signal lever. "Steady."

The *Pasado Mañana,* allowing for the schooner's drift, had brought up some distance astern, while several men aft continued their work with the lowering of the dinghy. Keith, still vaguely attempting to link the proposition with the question whether or not to remain aboard the yacht, again became aware of Eileen's presence beside him.

"You are going, then?" he heard her ask.

Patton was again preoccupied by the maneuvers of his vessel. Keith deliberated, frowning, gazing down at the water while visions of Jane checked his response. He had noticed her clad again in her old costume, and realized now that he was still in his borrowed clothes. A sudden sense of

panic came over him when Jane approached with:

"The boat will be ready for me in a minute, John. I don't want you to come. It will be all right—everything." In her voice there was no sign of trembling. She spoke hurriedly and distinctly with an expression untempered by any apparent emotion. "If we're not mistaken," she went on, "Barette has resorted to the last measure; and it's your place, I think. to put the memory of your father in its rightful place under the sun. The *Jane,* when she arrives at San Francisco, will probably be laid up and if shipping doesn't improve may never sail again. This seems to be your opportunity. When I'm aboard I'll verify the name of the island. If it is not Agrigan, Hollis can speak you. I'm taking our dinghy. I've persuaded Mr. Patton to let me go alone. It will be easier."

She smiled, extending her hand. He seized it, while the yacht, with rapid pulsations of her iron heart, crept closer to the *Jane.* In Keith's mind were thoughts conflicting with passions and passions with newborn dreams. Forgetting all else he clung to her hand while a voice from below the bridge announced:

"Ready aft, sir."

Jane, drawing herself quickly away, turned toward Patton with words which Keith did not hear.

"Ho, nonsense!" replied the yacht's master. "We're coming aft—all of us to see you off. I only wish, young lady, that you'd change your mind and come along." He walked with her toward the ladder, then turned. "See you at the davits, Rupert. I'm taking care of Miss Macfarland."

"Good-by, Eileen," cried Keith, turning abruptly, "or would you rather come aft to say——"

Eileen broke suddenly into tears. She clung to him with:

"I didn't mean all that I did and said—when I returned your ring. I couldn't have meant it! Oh, you were so blind not to realize that!"

Keith felt a sudden gnawing repugnance and embarrassment which might come to any man facing the sudden collapse of a woman's pride. He had come aboard to win back what had been taken away from him, but where was victory in the fact of this? There was nothing to win but the ready conquered. Vainly he had attempted to weed his mind of disillusionment and to train his eyes to see as memory saw. He had found it an effort wasted. The last flame burning in his heart for Eileen was snuffed.

"That's all past and gone," he was telling her. "You did right by yourself and by me in regarding it as it was—a mistake. In my trade, as you once intimated, I should never have aspired. And I—I can't go with you. Mr. Patton was kind to make me that offer. If he wants me to sign the contract, I shall; but I have another contract to be fulfilled; and that's my first duty. I'll tend to the other later. Are you coming aft?—or would you rather say good-by here?"

Eileen drew herself suddenly to the height of her dignity—something that seemed now much taller than herself. The tears still glistening in the corners of her eyes were not party to her expression, for she was breathing heavily in anger.

"I suppose you pity me," she observed with a cold laugh. "Oh, don't bother. I shall not bore you with my good-by. Your —your *model*—'Virtue'—is waiting!"

The hand he had extended received only her haughty glance; and Keith, with some relief at her sudden change of attitude, turned toward the ladder. When he reached the after davits Jane already had descended to the boat and was being assisted aboard by one of the hands.

"Hold off down there," said Patton, leaning over the rail; then, whirling suddenly about: "Where the devil—Rupert! There you are! The young lady is anxious to shove off!"

"I'm going with her, Mr. Patton," announced Keith. "You'll be calling in Guam for fuel. I'll ship these clothes there. And please reconsider our contract. It may be I can never fill the one I already have."

Patton regarded him soberly for some time, then smiled.

"My contracts are as good as yours," he said. "I stick to them. If you'd been my own son I'd have ordered you back to your job. But you're not." He paused and, reaching into his pocket, withdrew an envelope. "So I'm leaving it to you. You are doing exactly as I anticipated. Here's the contract. Look it over and forward it to Guam. If you're satisfied I'll send the check. I can look after your heritage. Good luck to you. And—Rupert!" He bent over

whispering. "Take care of that little 'Oriental doll from an ivory box—tint of gold and dull copper,' and all that. Adios!"

The moon had set and the lights from both vessels cast their reflections over the water when, shortly after Keith's good-by to the yacht's master, the dinghy climbed over the heavy swells toward the *Jane*. A lantern was displayed over the schooner's bulwarks and a ladder dropped over the side. From the *Pasado Mañana* the searchlight projected its long white arm to the rocks by The Isle of Nick; and, as Keith bent easily upon his oars, his eyes shifted from the island to Jane who was seated as before in the stern sheets with the yoke lines in her hands. He was wishing now that their week of exile could be repeated. He was wishing that he could be alone with her again, undergoing thirst, hunger and weariness, but knowing her as he knew her now.

"Are you happy to be returning to the *Jane?*" she asked at last.

Keith leaned forward, resting upon his oars.

"I was thinking," he said, "that I'd rather be back with you on the island. We were —we might have been——" He faltered. "Jane, would you believe me if I should say I'm in love?"

The girl hesitated for a moment, then, quite simply:

"Yes."

"If I should say I'm in love with you, and that I have been for a long time, but didn't know it until——" He paused, unable to think of the time.

"I'd believe you," came a soft voice, "if you told me so."

Keith's response was not confined to words. Midway between the schooner and the yacht the dark shadow of the dinghy might have been seen suddenly to swing into the trough and to go down slightly by the stern. But if seas were taken over the gunwale those aboard were oblivious to it until a voice from the schooner sounded an anxious, "Ahoy!"

It was many months before the *Pasado Mañana* returned with her cargo to San Francisco. The statuary of the true hermit sculptor, although the law granted it to its rightful heir, was lent by Keith to Patton until such a time as each piece could be replaced by work of the younger master. He who had been known as Francis Barette had been buried from the *Jane* during her homeward voyage; and the old schooner had taken her final resting place in a small cove of the harbor where many vessels like her have dropped their anchors for the last time and are swinging to-day beyond the low green cliffs of Sausalito.

The old man, like his ship, had retired from the sea. Hollis was a student of law; and Jane—Jane had a home and world of her own; an active world far removed from the old land of shadow things. In her garden was a studio where one particular kind of mud was being molded into forms that served, among other things, to identify the young sculptor as the true author of "Power," although his contract with the city, because of delay, had been revoked and awarded another. This, however, was a matter of relief to Rupert Keith, to whom the sister piece, "Virtue" remained as a secret achievement and a sacred recollection, never to be reproduced in its original conception. Its remains had gone now into the sea with The Isle of Nick; for it was said that ships searching for the place had passed directly over its reported position, finding only a shoal of sand, rock and mud.

The Isle of Nick is still recorded as "Existence Doubtful," and although it is marked on certain charts at about latitude 17° 20′ north, longitude 135° 35′ west, it bears no name and is regarded by some as "a sailor's pipe dream." Even to Rupert Keith it remained always as a dream, though no less a reality. Like many dreams, it bore its inspiration, and, in this case, an inspiration that lasted and grew, that lived and breathed and found its everlasting source in Jane Macfarland.

Don't miss the first installment of Ralph D. Paine's great serial, "Four Bells," in the next issue.

When Carmen Sang in Sandoval

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

Author of "Smoky Steps Out," "The Snowbird and the Bull," Etc.

When Carmen sang in Sandoval, that summer night in Sandoval,
Vaqueros drank tequila with rurales from the south,
While scornful of the show they made, a somber gringo renegade
Watched dark Felipe as he played—and Carmen's saucy mouth.

FROM the Golden Palisades—that would be south in Arizona—you may journey on down to the border with very little interruption in the way of civilization, provided civilization has no black mark against you. In that event it would be better to ride at night.

Paul Overton, with more than a sufficient reason, rode at night, slipping down through the Santa Rosa valley, across the Comobabi hills and into the Tecolote country. After he had crossed the line he rode in the sun, in no great haste. Eventually he arrived in Sandoval, a foothill town backed by a notable range of mountains and fronted by more miles of desert than a man might cross in two days, riding steadily. In Sandoval Paul Overton became a changed man. The expression usually implies a regeneration. In this instance there had been reverse English in the stroke that sped him. Nor had he chosen the unenviable position of cue ball in the game during which he had pocketed one ball in irretrievable obscurity. That had happened in Arizona. Chance held the cue and drove hard. Overton did not tarry to explain that it was Chance. He pursued an instinctively wiser course. He vanished. Certain hot, hard-riding enthusiasts trailed him. Paradoxically they cooled off as they approached the arid reaches of Old Mexico where Overton's pony tracks continued unfalteringly toward the southern horizon.

Sandoval looked as though it might have tried at one time to climb the range back of it and had given up the job as too strenuous. The scattered adobes each seemed to have found its own small flat or hollow on the hillside where chilis, beans and melons grew in season. Goats grazed along the lower ridges and *muchachos* tended the herds—miniature shepherds, stanch, swarthy, silent little men, eight or nine years of age, whose big dark eyes mirrored the mystery of spaces and far ranges blue and dim. The children were herders because so many of the males of Sandoval were busy elsewhere, working as vaqueros on distant ranches, or with rifle and bandolier pursuing or being pursued. Trails from the hillside homes meandered down to the flat where the adobes clustered about the cantina and the church. A wagon road came up from the south, lost itself in the street litter of the town and timidly ventured out of the northern environs, crawling across the desert to a somewhere or other of little interest to Sandoval.

Far from a railroad, secluded, and sufficient unto itself, Sandoval knew few visitors,

few changes in its rural calendar. True, there were white men there—a few—Americanos who had "gone native" marrying Mexican women and making the most of their exile and the unsettled conditions of the country—conditions which afforded free play for their peculiar talents. Never were these gringos loved by the swart males of the community, but their marksmanship was highly respected. Isolated Sandoval was sanctuary—a haunt of missing men, each with a chosen *nom de guerre;* collectively branded "renegade."

When you are in Rome, change your name. Paul Overton became "Tecolote Pete." Paul had reverted to Peter, with the geographical qualification of Tecolote added for good measure. He let the community name him—it was easier than inventing a new name for himself.

To become established in Sandoval—that is, established among the white population—a man had to prove without backing of friend or reputation that he was capable of taking care of himself. This was not a rule of conduct forced upon the visiting stranger as an initiation, but rather the eternal law of exigencies prevailing where banditry thrived and morality was so impoverished it hardly had strength or courage to assert itself. Yet Tecolote Pete had been in Sandoval three weeks and neither man nor circumstance had challenged the quality of his mettle—or, spell it "metal." Of course it was taken for granted that he was not an invalid—and his attitude alone made it clear that he intended to take care of his excellent health. Pete was not large, physically, yet he never appeared small in a gathering—possibly because his eyes held the attention of others, rather than his person. One was likely to remember Pete's eyes and his smooth, firm, ruddy-brown countenance; and there were women in Sandoval who liked the way his dark hair grew snug about his temples and his neck, unlike the dead black, straight hair of their menfolk. And Pete never strutted, made eyes or posed for admiring señoritas as did the young vaqueros of the country. Pete let the girls do all that for his benefit. And if Tecolote Pete lacked subtlety of attitude he did not lack keenness of mind. When he *did* smile he meant it.

Tecolote had been in Sandoval three weeks and he was still a bachelor, by choice, an outlaw through circumstance, and a lonely man for two reasons—one, his contempt for the white renegades who made Sandoval their headquarters; the other, because of a girl back in the Golden Palisades country, who had begged him to stay and stand trial for the shooting of one Gormer—the billiard ball in the game that had been irretrievably pocketed. Then, with the sweet perversity of her sex, she had thrust money into Pete's hand and the reins of the best horse on the ranch—late at night, imploring him to ride for his life, and hers. He did.

Even the girl's father admitted that while young Overton had shot not wisely but too well the provocation had called for a sincere and accurate retort. Which was pretty good for a father who was out his best saddle animal and fifty dollars in gold—borrowed of course, but in such a swift, sudden and femininely importunate manner that the old man felt as though he had been held up.

The natives of Sandoval were poor, proverbially happy, and too lazy to realize either. They always had enough to eat and sometimes more than enough to drink. There were deer in the high hills back of town, and chilis, beans and melons in the garden patches. A shirt, a straw sombrero and a pair of overalls, with a pair of shoes thrown in for good measure, were equipment enough to see a man through several seasons. And one thus equipped was happy for the very good reason that when he buttoned his shirt he locked his trunk and had no call to worry about being robbed. Then, a shirt was an actual necessity. Otherwise where could a man stow tobacco and squares of corn husk for his cigarettes? As for overalls, they were necessary to strike matches on, sit on, and loaf in. And no Mexican is a Mexican without a sombrero of some sort. And shoes—well, they were not always worn. In fact some of the vaqueros wore a kind of soft-legged boot, or moccasin boot, of buckskin and rawhide. Still, shoes were useful—to dance in and to wear on fiesta days. And they danced, played the guitar, sang, sinned and prayed—just as we all do—and saw to it that the local census report showed a regular annual increase. The occasional advent of a wild gringo served but to add a tang to the romance which they lived, breathed and sang, without realizing that there was such a thing as romance in the world. Their perspective was limited to the day and the hour. The moun-

tains behind them gave them a feeling of security and the desert which they faced was a plaza spacious enough for the gods. At least that is how it appealed to Paul Overton when he became Tecolote Pete and lived in a one-room adobe on the edge of that same playground of dust devils and other less obvious spirits of unrest.

Pete was looking out across the spaces; incidentally he jingled three ten-dollar gold pieces in his hand. He was thinking hard. A shadow poked round the corner of the adobe and stopped. Pete shifted the gold pieces to his left hand. The sun was just rounding up over the rim of the desert—and it was altogether too early to expect visitors. The shadow—a horse's head—moved up and down. With the creak of leather another shadow appeared and materialized into Williams, tacitly acknowledged the most influential Americano in the community—a renegade who had come to Sandoval in years past, had married, and had prospered in a dark way. A big man, powerful, with red visage and gray hair. Quiet enough when sober, reckless and unscrupulous when drunk.

Tecolote Pete, standing relaxed in the doorway, nodded and smiled. It was a fine morning, yet he did not say so. There were two seats in the adobe, yet he did not invite Williams in. Nor did Tecolote's attitude or expression indicate that the visit was unusual. He reasoned swiftly. Williams, at this early hour, had ridden over—a distance of a few hundred yards. A roll was tied to the back of the saddle. A morral, presumably filled with corn, hung from the saddle horn. Williams' belt sagged heavy with cartridges. There were other details, significant to Pete. One might almost have surmised that Williams was going somewhere. Tecolote Pete allowed himself that privilege, and even the possibility that he might be invited to come along. As yet Pete had not proved up his claim to a permanent residence in Sandoval. Perhaps Williams thought it was about time for Pete to do so. Perhaps Williams thought Pete was too silent even for a hunted man; an unknown quantity and therefore under suspicion.

"We're making a little ride south," said Williams with a casualness that was intended to cover a multitude of sins, in perspective.

As Pete had nothing to say to this, Williams continued: "Just our bunch. Thought mebby you'd like a little exercise."

Pete smiled affably and shook his head.

"We could use you," said Williams, "and there's something in it."

Tecolote Pete jingled the coins in his left hand. He still had thirty dollars left, and living in Sandoval was not expensive. In fact Pete had made twenty dollars go a long way, practicing unusual economy. But then, it was the girl's money and he felt responsible to her—or rather to the opinion which she held of him, which she had expressed in three glowing words and a caress more precious than all speech, that unforgetable night when he had left her. Ordinarily Pete was careless about money.

Williams quite correctly assumed that Tecolote Pete did not intend to join the expedition or give a reason for not doing so. "Thought I'd give you a chance," said Williams. He had hinted. That was enough. He was used to being followed, not ignored. "I guess that's all," he concluded as he stepped to his horse and swung up.

"Possibly," said Pete. The word in itself irritated Williams. To him it was "dude language," to say nothing of the implication that his own assertion had not been accepted as final.

Horse and rider moved slowly toward the cantina where other horses and riders awaited their leader. Pete noticed that they were all renegades—"Williams' bunch." Not a Mexican among them, which meant, so Pete argued, a final exodus of the Americans from Sandoval or a raid on some southern town or rancho. The horsemen drifted away in a light cloud of dust. The sun twinkled on rifle butts and filled cartridge belts.

Pete shaved, combed his hair and completed his toilet by carefully examining his gun. Being alone he talked—to himself. "South might mean loot. Williams, Brent and 'Chalk-eye' are married. Wonder which one of 'em told his wife of this little All American pasear? .Brent talks more than the others. Now Brent's girl, she sabes American talk. You'd think, just because I raised my hat to her every time I met her—well, what would you think? But mostly, what does she think? She isn't any too strong for the young vaqueros around here. She likes white folks. But it ain't safe to be too polite to women down this

way. They jump at conclusions—and they jump blind."

Pete jingled the three coins again, gazing at them thoughtfully. "Her hair is about that color—when the sun shines on it." But he was not thinking of Estrella Escobar, the daughter of Brent and his Mexican wife, who was as swarthy as a Yaqui. Estrella Escobar's hair was lustrous blue-black.

Conspicuous among the dusky daughters of the community was Estrella Escobar, known to the Americans as "Brent's girl." Remarkable, in a way, because she was sixteen and still unmarried. But never for a moment did Estrella allow herself to forget that she was beautiful and that her father was an Americano. Indolent, selfish and arrogant, Estrella could upon occasion become vivacious, generous and as indulgent as her own mother, who was a slave to her every caprice and whim. Estrella danced and flirted with the young vaqueros, but as for marrying one of them—not she! Her man was to be an Americano, young, handsome, with steady gray eyes; a caballero who did not smirk and smile eternally and who could not be twisted round one's little finger at will. She had never met just such a possibility until Tecolote Pete, belted and spurred, rode a tired horse into Sandoval and meeting her by chance had politely asked where he could find the alcalde. Immediately Estrella had surmised that the handsome young gringo was outlaw, which quickened her interest in him, although his personality itself was striking enough to have awakened more than a passing curiosity.

Hence, when Tecolote Pete strolled over to the cantina and shortly after sauntered up to Brent's hillside home, Estrella, with the most natural egotism in the world, concluded that he had come for the sole purpose of admiring her. Moreover, his presence lent a distinction to the occasion. Pete had never called at a home in Sandoval until that morning. Estrella, who had been languidly watching her industrious mother hoe beans in the fenced garden patch, felt her heart quicken as the lithe Americano strode up to the portal. Hat in hand he greeted her quite as though his visit were a matter of course—a visit delayed, perhaps, but always intended. He sat on the portal step, literally at Estrella's feet, as she lounged in her father's easy-chair, toying with the sleek silken folds of a mantilla. She had not changed her position to greet him. She knew she looked well just as she was. The white sunlight touched Pete's ruddy cheek, his bronzed throat. He leaned back against the portal post, in the shadow. Estrella tossed the mantilla aside and held out her slim brown hand for Pete's sombrero. She smoothed it caressingly as she talked. "You do not ride with the others, Señor Tecolote?"

"Just Pete. No, I had rather be here."

"Pete," lisped Estrella, and she laughed. "Perhaps they did not tell you they were going."

"Oh, they told me, all right. You see, José who runs the cantina, told me there was going to be a grand baile to-night. Thought I'd stay and mebby get invited to the dance. I can get just as much exercise dancing all night as I could riding over to Hermosillo." Pete paused and shook his head knowingly.

"Hermana," corrected Estrella.

"That's right! Williams did say Hermana. I always get those two towns mixed. Hermana is the big town on the railroad. The other is that little burg way down south."

Estrella Escobar laughed at what she considered Señor Tecolote's ignorance—even as the ignorant always laugh at the ignorance of others. "Hermosillo is on the railroad—a grand city. Some day I shall see it, and the rurales who are very brave men and good to look at. Hermana," and Estrella shrugged her shoulders, "is but a little place, not as big as Sandoval, so my father says."

Pete seemed to be casually interested. "I like Sandoval pretty well."

Estrella's dark-fringed eyelids were lowered as she stroked the gray sombrero on her lap as one might stroke a cat. "They will dance 'The Sombrero Blanco' to-night; and there will be other dances. It is to be a grand baile. I shall wear—no, I shall not tell you." Her glance flashed up to Pete's level gaze. "It must have been some great trouble that caused you to leave your own country and come to this poor place. A quarrel about a beautiful woman, perhaps."

Pete shook his head. "No. But it was a pretty lively row while it lasted."

Estrella Escobar arose lithely and gave Pete his hat with a swift, graceful gesture. The sunlight glinted on her brown eyes. They seemed like amber—like the eyes of a black panther. Tecolote Pete realized

that she had not told him all that she knew about the departure of Williams and his men. It suddenly occurred to Pete that he might have asked to take her to the dance —to dance with her, to be allowed the privilege of escorting her home. She was the daughter of an American and now that Pete had called at her home it was but natural that she should expect him to express a preference for her companionship at the baile. He was the only American in Sandoval.

"You see," said Pete with exemplary modesty, "I haven't been invited to the dance to-night. I'm a stranger, down here."

"But, yes! I ask you to come. It is for every one."

"In that case, Señorita Estrella, *nos volveramos a ver.* You see, I had an idea every caballero in the country had asked you to go to the dance. I didn't think I had a chance in the eliminations, to say nothing of the finals. *Gracias, señorita, mas de cien veces!*"

"You have the Spanish?"

"Oh, not enough to hurt. I'll come over about seven? All right. Adios. With your permission I will go."

Preparations for the baile were in evidence as Pete sauntered down the hillside toward the cantina. A fire was going in the barbecue trench; there was much scurrying about by the younger citizens. Already some of the girls had donned fiesta finery. Obviously it was to be a grand baile, as Estrella had said. But it bothered Pete to reconcile the scarcity of eligible males and the profusion of femininity which graced the community. Estrella could have told him that vaqueros from Estancia and Caliente would be there; and that with them would come six rurales from Hermosillo, visiting Sandoval for the first time; that for them were the barbecue, the *vino tinto,* the unusual preparation, and because of their coming, Williams, her father and their companions had left town—temporarily. But Estrella Escobar had not told Pete —fundamentally because there was more Escobar than Brent in her cosmos. She had enjoyed keeping the secret from him almost as much as she had enjoyed anticipating her presence at the baile with the only Americano in Sandoval—and the rurales and the vaqueros aflame with jealousy. Moreover, Estrella, deliberately ignoring the possibility of a lively row under the circumstances, was curious to see just how Tecolote Pete would conduct himself as her chosen caballero. Of a truth, it would be a test! Had she told him, he might have found occasion to leave town before the guests arrived. And Estrella wanted him to stay—and face the music, so to speak. Even had she known that the coming of the rurales was more in the nature of a visitation than a visit it is doubtful that she would have warned Tecolote Pete. In spite of racial feeling the local Mexicans showed a certain deference to the resident Americanos, appreciated by Estrella as significant of her social superiority. Now that her father and his friends had left town she felt more than ever anxious to parade the fact that she was Señor Sam Brent's daughter, escorted by the only Americano in Sandoval—especially as there were to be such notable visitors as the rurales. Men were like mirrors in which she could study the effect of her charms.

Chance, bending over the soundless loom of the hours is forever weaving bright fabrics of amazement. Sometimes the patterns of these fabrics are redrawn by men into strange stories of adventure, of coincidence, of mystery. Sometimes these fabrics are lost or so disintegrated by time that only fragments of the patterns remain. Yet even from a fragment of pattern may be constructed a more or less interesting design. Chance passed the shuttle back and forth in Mexico City, where there is much colorful material with which to weave, and eventually Carmen la Alondra, weary of adulation and the throng, distressed several influential personages by abandoning her villa and the stage and retiring to the bandit-infested region of Hermosilla, where her father and mother lived in the comfort and seclusion which a portion of her munificent salary afforded. Carmen was the pet songbird of her nation, which prided itself upon the fact that she was not an acquisition but a native daughter of the soil who had studied in Paris and Vienna, and famous, had returned to repay in golden melodies the indulgent admirers who had made her eventual triumphs possible.

Carmen, surfeited with ice cream—so to speak—hungered for plain bread and butter. It happens that this particular Carmen —called affectionately "The Lark"—was generous, proud of her humble origin, sympathetic toward the people as distinguished

from the personages; and while exceedingly tempestuous at times, she never failed to forgive the occasion of her temper as well as herself. Her mouth was shaped beautifully and not small like the pinched rosebud mouths of so many of the admired of her land. Her eyes could express anything in the world worth expressing, and they were usually warm with amusement. A rival had once said to her, in Vienna: "You are beautiful; but your mouth is too large." Carmen's retort was characteristic. "You say it with a mouth too small to evoke any criticism whatsoever. Of a truth, the lips reflect the mind."

And finally Carmen became weary of Hermosillo and the quiet home of her parents. The captain of rurales paid much attention to her—considerably more than she did to him. But he was amusing because he took himself seriously—and Carmen was used to the attendance of admiring males. One evening, in the moonlit patio of the old homestead, he told her of Sandoval, romantic spot, a hermitage in the hills, which he, even he in all his wanderings, had never visited. A town far from the railroad, reached only by *carroza*—such a journey would be but an uncomfortable and weary experience for one obliged to make the journey, and who would think of making such a journey simply to visit an old, all-but-forgotten town of the hills? "After all," continued the swart captain, "is not romance best in anticipation, in a beautiful name, or in a memory of desire fulfilled?"

"Ah, yes!" murmured Carmen, "and so much safer. Why did you mention Sandoval, Don Esteban?"

"I spoke of it as something unknown—and therefore interesting."

"Yet it was in your mind—and not through an accident of romance." Carmen smiled. Her intuitions were alert. She had thought the good-looking captain incapable of imagination, his life being so exceedingly practical. He was a caballero, a leader of men who hunted men and sometimes killed. "You would visit Sandoval?" she asked.

The captain was taken aback. Had she guessed or did she know that he had received orders from Mexico City to investigate Sandoval as a refuge for certain Americanos of dark repute who were said to be plotting against the welfare of the State? "It is not impossible," he declared uneasily.

"But when will it be possible?" queried Carmen with a frankness which he found himself unable to parry.

"It is true that I go with my men, to-morrow."

"Ah! A matter of duty, no doubt?" Carmen stretched lazily, touching her lips with her fan as she yawned. "It is too bad," she said, smiling up at him from the depths of the shadowy couch upon which she reclined. "I shall miss you."

"A day—two days, perhaps. Had I my choice I should not go while you are here. A divine accident brought you to Hermosillo, Doña Carmen. Fate decrees that I banish myself from the light of your countenance for these two days, perhaps three. Were it in my power this should not happen."

"You go—to-morrow? Is it imperative that you return within three days?"

"Only that I may return to you as speedily as possible."

"Ah, Don Esteban! You need not so despair. To-morrow morning you will arrange for a carriage—the most comfortable to be had—and strong horses. I shall go to Sandoval. My doncella is also weary of Hermosillo. She will go with me. Your rurales shall escort us. I would visit Sandoval. Among the Escobars I shall find welcome. They are of my family. I shall go as Señorita Carmen Escobar—not as La Alondra. You will see to it that your men are so informed. It will be good to be among the simple and kindly people of my country. I am weary of my name."

Esteban Martinez, captain of rurales, was a courageous and capable young man when dealing with his kind. In this instance he was not dealing—he was accepting the cards dealt to him by one to whom his superiors in Mexico City bowed graciously when favored with a command. He was not altogether certain of the outcome of his visit. He had received orders to arrest one Williams, the leader of the Americanos. This might involve a battle, a chase, even the defeat of his band. The captain did not underestimate the prowess of the gringos. It was no place for a woman. Their journey would be delayed. And a woman like La Alondra! Yet Esteban Martinez, like many a better man, bowed to the inevitable. "It shall be as you wish," he said, without animation.

Carmen overlooked his failure to smile.

"You may kiss my hand," she said. "And see that we are furnished with food and wine for the journey. It is my wish to pay for my whim. My maid will attend to that. Adios, my friend."

"I would be more than your friend," declared Esteban.

"Many men have said that," laughed Carmen. "I am still unmarried."

The captain departed, cursing himself for having mentioned Sandoval. Quite the male, he resented Carmen's audacious disregard of conditions, of the hazard, and his obvious inability to refuse her anything. At the same time he experienced a thrill of anticipation. She had elected to allow him to accompany her to Sandoval, a compliment which would have turned the head of el presidente himself. "But it is not because I am Esteban Martinez, captain of rurales, that I am so favored," he soliloquized later. "It is simply because I happen to be going to Sandoval, and the Carmen desires to go."

The following afternoon a small cavalcade left Hermosilla and journeyed north; six rurales, including Captain Esteban Martinez, who rode splendid horses and displayed personal equipment of the finest; and a carriage loaned for the occasion by the alcalde of Hermosillo, together with his spirited team and their driver. With Carmen rode her doncella, both women veiled against the dust.

Previous to Carmen's importunings the young captain had anticipated an entirely different campaign, comprehending his arrival in Sandoval without warning and the swift capture of the renegade Williams, whom he had secret instructions to obliterate with the neatness and dispatch which characterized the methods of the then potent ruler of Mexico. But now that Carmen was virtually captain of the expedition Martinez decided to disarm suspicion as to his ultimate intent by making his first visit a holiday occasion.

That evening from the rancho where they were encamped he dispatched a swift courier with a message to the alcalde of Sandoval, virtually commanding him to advertise a fiesta, that Carmen might be pleasantly surprised—and incidentally the gringos warned of his coming. If they took the hint and decamped, so much the better. Martinez did not relish the prospect of a pitched battle with the gringos just then.

When his courier returned at daybreak with news that all the Americanos had left Sandoval, Captain Martinez smiled, flattering himself that his reputation had swept the way clear. As for the renegade, Williams, he could be captured and shot later.

Possibly the presence of Carmen had diverted the captain's attention from the fact that the Americanos had left Sandoval before the advent of his courier—a significant exodus for which the alcalde was responsible. Playing one hand against the other, the alcalde, like a true son of his ancestors, was in correspondence with the powers in Mexico City and at the same time friendly with the resident Americans. Long before the captain's message had arrived the alcalde dropped a hint to Williams that the rurales might be expected any day or night. Williams had consulted with his men, finally deciding to ride south by devious trails, and making certain that the rurales had left Hermosillo, loot the local bank as a sort of reprisal. There was a sort of somber humor in a situation that would discover Martinez and the law in Sandoval and Williams and the lawless in Hermosillo.

About noon of the second day's journey from Hermosillo, Carmen and her escort entered Sandoval and were received by the alcalde, who quartered the rurales about town and offered his exceedingly modest villa of three adobe rooms—without bath—to Carmen and her maid. Carmen, however, sought out her cousins the Escobars and conferred the honor of her presence upon Mrs. Brent, an Escobar of Chihuahua, the mother of the beautiful Estrella and the matron of a home which included a real American bathtub—although it had no connections either coming or going. Still, it was a bathtub, and it decided Carmen. A true daughter of the people she adapted herself to the meager conveniences gracefully. And Sandoval! Never had she viewed so quaint and picturesque a town! Then, the folk were receiving her with feasting and music. It was good to be among her people again—simple souls who could hardly suspect that she was the great Carmen la Alondra. And there was to be a dance that night, with fires lighted in the plaza, whose beaten surface was almost as hard and smooth as a floor. The musicians would sit in the shadow of the portal of the cantina. The wall of the cantina would act as a sounding board—the door of the can-

tina as an inspiration to the musicians. To dance and sing beneath the open sky! Truly a touch of the barbaric, the real, the primitive rural joys for which Carmen yearned and for which the unsophisticated Estrella all but apologized, having ascertained through Carmen's maid that Carmen was in truth the illustrious contralto who bore the family name.

Captain Esteban Martinez, after talking business with the alcalde and learning that one gringo, a recent arrival, was still in Sandoval, sauntered down to the Escobars' where he was informed that Carmen was resting—that she hoped he would not allow her presence to infringe upon his valuable time as she was really quite comfortable and exceedingly charmed with the rural community. The captain was neither pleased nor flattered—but he took the hint. The temperamental Carmen wished to be undisturbed in the enjoyment of this, her latest whim. However, there was the cantina, *vino tinto,* barbecued beef—even tequila and other solaces. Captain Esteban Martinez slanted an interested eye at Estrella who had conveyed Carmen's message; yet Estrella seemed unimpressed. He departed, jingling his spurs as he swaggered down the road which became a street leading to the plaza, where his appearance created an impression which flattered his vanity and put him more in tune with the festivities.

A captain in Hermosillo he assumed the proportions of a general in Sandoval. The alcalde, the vaqueros arriving from distant ranchos, the local male population made his presence an additional excuse for conviviality. And it was just as well to fall in with the mood, reasoned Martinez. More than one secret had found its way to the light through the neck of a bottle. Martinez himself was a practiced hand at the game of bottle and glass, becoming in fact more secretive the more he drank. Before the sun had settled behind the range backing Sandoval the captain had learned much about the recently departed Americanos, their families, and their individual characteristics. As for the gringo who had remained in town—the swarthy natives shook their heads. They knew little enough about him, save that he kept by himself, paid with gold for the food he needed and did not patronize the cantina. True, they had named him Tecolote Pete. Yes, he had come from the north, riding a tired horse. The garrulous natives shrugged their shoulders. El capitan—implied the shrug—could judge for himself. Martinez thought he would like to meet this gringo who had been so indifferent to the arrival of the rurales as to remain. Toward evening Martinez was afforded opportunity. Tecolote Pete, appearing in the plaza, was surreptitiously pointed out as the strange gringo who talked to no one. Captain Esteban Martinez had no slightest idea of what Tecolote Pete had been; but he knew him for a fighting man the minute he set eyes on him. Yet not a man of quarrels or one who sought trouble. For Tecolote strode across the plaza with sprightly step and manner, as though he had made the spirit of this festive occasion his own.

Yet there was less of the festive in Tecolote's heart than usual. That afternoon he had taken a long siesta anticipating the night's demands. He was not asleep to the possibility of Estrella's making the most of him as her companion, escort and dancing partner. He did not flatter himself that Estrella cared for him. But he knew the type. She would parade him as a challenge to the jealous eyes of her countrymen. The prospect did not displease Tecolote. Nor was he troubled because the rurales were in Sandoval. He had committed no depredations south of the line. The occasion for his inner disquiet was the glimpse he had had, upon awakening from his siesta, of a rurale leading five saddled horses from the corral of the alcalde to the walled inclosure back of the cantina—a peculiar proceeding considering the hour and the occasion. Tecolote's horse was in the foothill pasture lot of Juan Armigo a half mile above town. Had any definite danger threatened, Tecolote Pete would have planned to meet it or dodge it as seemed best. The very indefiniteness of things worried him. Without reasoning to a conclusion he surmised that he would feel better if his own horse were saddled and within reach.

Hence his appearance on the plaza while it was still daylight. Already he knew that there were at least six rurales in Sandoval. He had seen their horses. Presumably they had come to attend the fiesta. But Pete was placing no long bet on that card. He wished to show himself, unarmed and unconscious of any hint of trouble. He succeeded rather well. The alcalde introduced him to Captain Esteban and two or

three of the visiting rurales. Pete acknowledged the introduction by inviting them all to drink with him. He paid in gold. Esteban Martinez noticed and became thoughtful.

The advent of a group of riders from a distant rancho created a diversion. Rurale and vaquero talked and drank together. Pete moved quietly away to mingle with some townsfolk who were looking at the horses of the rurales in the high-walled inclosure back of the cantina. The old wooden gate had long since fallen apart. The entrance was barred by two corral poles. A rurale evidently deputized to guard the horses, was talking with the curious natives. The rurale, who had had enough tequila to make him loquacious, was boasting about his captain's horse—a half thoroughbred from Chihuahua that could outrun any steed in Mexico. No one controverted the assertion. Pete pretended indifference and turned away. "Yet you would not think," continued the garrulous rurale, "that so gentle a *caballo* was brother to the wind. Nor does he wear himself out dancing upon his shadow. Of a truth he is gentle—yet he is of a swiftness that not even his shadow may keep pace with him." The natives stared. Pete smiled to himself as he strode away.

Complications, like tumbleweeds, run down the wind, perversely inclined to tangle one with the other and mass against the first obstacle that bars their irresponsible progress. About seven o'clock that evening, after a satisfying meal of barbecued beef and tamales, Pete called at the Escobar's hillside home to escort Estrella to the baile. But Estrella, reattiring herself in some finery that the gracious Carmen had lent her, was not in evidence. Carmen, however, was—and very much in evidence. A Spanish comb, a priceless ornament, glimmered in her fine and classically arranged black hair. She wore the costume of a Carmen—silk of crimson and black. Her fingers were jeweled: her ankles clad in crimson silk stockings and her feet in a tiny pair of red morocco chinelas with jeweled buckles. Pete stared, explained his presence, wondered from whence this Andalusian divinity had arisen. Carmen, not displeased either with herself or the handsome Americano, smiled and told him. Her English was excellent. Pete immediately recalled her fame, spoke of one or two operas—for Paul Overton of the Palisades was not at the moment Tecolote Pete, but a gentleman of fortune—or misfortune.

When Estrella presently flashed upon them, her eyes growing somber in rivalry, Pete immediately realized that he had both hands full—for while Estrella had deliberately chosen him as her companion of the evening, Carmen had effortlessly taken possession of him as one with whom she could chat about many things alien to the comprehension of both her cousin and Esteban Martinez.

Captain Esteban swung up the path, bowed, with sombrero brushing the earth at his feet, and begged to be allowed the privilege of escorting La Alondra to the baile. Carmen thanked him. However, when Estrella's mother joined them, and they spoke of walking the short distance to the plaza, Carmen turned to Martinez. "But, Esteban, my shoes! I cannot walk in the dust."

Esteban knew that Carmen could and would walk a mile across the desert sand in her bare feet if the humor seized her. Yet he sprang up and with a sweep of his hat departed to arrange for Carmen's carriage to be fetched up to the Escobars'.

Had Estrella dared she would have hinted that Tecolote Pete escort her to the baile at once. But hospitality forbade. So Estrella occupied her impatience in observing Carmen's methods and manners, apparently so unstudied and effective. With vivid and sprightly conversation Carmen led Tecolote to talk about his country, until the carriage arrived. Then with the bond of conversation between them she led him to the carriage and casually arranged that he should sit beside her. Estrella was in a rage, but a rage subdued. Her prominence as belle of the baile was obscured, all but obliterated. Deliberately she flirted with Captain Esteban thinking to arouse her cousin's jealousy. Captain Esteban reciprocated, possibly through a similar motive.

Then—slowly the noise and laughter subsided as the carriage, rare sight in Sandoval, stopped in the plaza, and Carmen gave her hand to Señor Tecolote as she gracefully alighted. Rurales, vaqueros, townsfolk stared. Never had so graciously regal a figure honored the poor plaza of Sandoval. The alcalde rose—albeit unsteadily—to the occasion. His introduction was classically concise.. "Carmen, La Alondra," he said,

and gestured. The name rippled through the crowd like a whispering wave across pebbles. Several townsfolk had heard of Carmen, even in remote Sandoval. Those who had not wished to appear as though they had. Yet there was no outburst of applause; unconscious but more subtle flattery, the silence. Again the subdued murmur of a name—and another name; The Lark, and Tecolote Pete. And this Estrella heard and the grip of anger tightened her throat. The alcalde with officious zeal—although his legs were all but ex-officio—escorted Carmen to a comfortable chair which had been placed for her against the blank wall of the low adobe building next the cantina. Señora Serafina, Estrella's mother, sat near Carmen. The four musicians with their guitars and violins arranged themselves along the wall of the cantina—which wall acted as a sounding board and the door as an inspiration. Bonfires were lighted at the four corners of the plaza. The dancing began.

When partners for "La Jota" were chosen Tecolote asked Estrella to dance with him. But Estrella declined, saying that she was to dance with the captain of rurales. Meanwhile the captain was standing near Carmen, talking with her. Tecolote took the rebuff good-naturedly, watching Estrella enter the dance with a young vaquero whom she seemed to know. As the dance was concluded Captain Esteban strode forward and asked Estrella to dance "El Borrico" with him. The song-dance was a success, applauded handsomely by reiterated "bravos!" and a pretty compliment from Carmen herself. Then came "El Sombrero Blanco," a favorite dance, at the conclusion of which Estrella came breathless to her mother's side and was complimented again by her famous cousin. The flames of the bonfires constantly replenished leaped in lean red tongues toward the velvet dusk of the summer sky. The lithe, swarthy vaqueros, the dashing rurales, the flash of color and motion, the unstudied picturesqueness of the little groups of townsfolk, and above all, the spirit of joyousness for its own sake affected Carmen more deeply than she knew. These were her people—the people of the soil. Theirs were the enchanted to-morrows of eternity. Among them was little yearning for that which may never be. Their few ideals became concrete—were attainable. Carmen's soliloquy was interrupted by the bemused alcalde who asked her in the name of Sandoval if she would sing for them. Always gracious, notably generous, she said she would, but not until she had seen "The Dance of the Harvesters," which is indeed the most spontaneous and joyous of all rural dances. The alcalde dispatched a younger man to make known Carmen's desire. Meanwhile Captain Esteban talked with Estrella. They sat on the bench along the adobe wall. Estrella was laughing. Tecolote stood near Carmen watching the dance then in progress. Carmen glanced up at him and suddenly his profile suggested a young patrician she had met in Vienna and whom she was quite willing to forget. "You look at them but you do not see them," she said, gesturing toward the swiftly moving figures.

"That's right," acknowledged Pete, turning and looking at her face, intense with an emotion she could not control.

"It is not my cousin—Estrella?"

Tecolote shook his head.

"But another? A girl of your people, with golden hair, perhaps, and blue eyes?"

Pete nodded and smiled. Carmen touched his sleeve. "You would return to her?" Then, as Pete did not answer. "The other Americans, of whom I have heard, Mr. Brent, Mr. Williams—you are not of them?"

"No."

"And because of that you did not leave with them?"

"Exactly."

A vaquero, half crazed with tequila, lurched from the cantina and pausing before Carmen invited her to dance with him. Before she could reply Tecolote's arm shot out and he swept the vaquero's hat from his head and held it out to him. "Didn't you forget something?" queried Tecolote in Spanish.

The vaquero mumbled, took his sombrero and lurched away, to be taken in hand by Captain Esteban, who had witnessed the scene.

"Thank you, señor!" said Carmen. "You were very quick."

"Oh, he didn't know what he was doing," said Pete. "I apologize for him."

"Again I thank you, señor. You are both quick and gracious toward ignorance."

Presently Tecolote excused himself and drifted across the plaza, smoking a cigarette and pondering. Among other things he wondered where Williams and his men had

gone and what they were up to. Carmen had asked him if he were of them. Evidently she had heard some rumor or other —possibly Estrella had confided something to her. In any event the saddled horses in the inclosure back of the cantina meant that Martinez had something up his sleeve—perhaps up both sleeves. Pete, arrived at the barbecue racks, stood for a few minutes watching the feasting.

Captain Esteban Martinez and Estrella were watching "The Dance of the Harvesters," when, round the corner of the adobe near which they stood, thundered a horseman who slipped from the saddle, glanced about and would have passed the captain when the other spoke. The rider, a rurale from Hermosillo, recognized his captain. "The gringos!" he panted. "They have robbed the bank, killing José Baca and another. It is known they are gringos. One of them is in Hermosillo, wounded. The are of Sandoval."

"Take your horse to the *cercado*. Say nothing. I will attend to this."

"But—my father!" exclaimed Estrella. "It cannot be that he was with them!"

"That is to be hoped, señorita. Do not be alarmed. I shall not forget that you are the cousin of La Alondra—that she also is an Escobar."

"You will go at once to Hermosillo?"

"I cannot say, señorita. But you can be of great assistance to me. Without letting it be known to the many I would talk with one or two of the town. It will be more than a favor to me if you will say nothing of this matter—not even a word to your mother. Upon your silence may depend the life of your father. Above all, do not speak of this to La Alondra. Within the hour I will gather my men and we will depart quietly. As for this Tecolote—if he had known of this thing he would not still be here."

Captain Esteban swung round and strode toward the cantina. Estrella hesitated between the desire to warn Tecolote and the jealousy which his attentions to Carmen had awakened. Before she could make up her mind as to what she should do Tecolote was at her side. "See here, Estrella, you needn't turn me down every time I ask you to dance just because your pretty cousin happens to be in town. I didn't invite her. I thought you and I were good friends?"

"Oh, then my cousin has allowed you to speak to me?"

"No. Strictly my own idea. And you are the only girl in Sandoval that I would dance with."

"I do not care to dance."

"Then let's take a walk."

"Not among the people," said Estrella. "There is something I would say to you."

Together they sauntered down the shadowy street which led from the plaza toward the hills. Behind them sounded the brisk tune of "The Dance of the Harvesters." And after the dance Carmen was to sing. Estrella determined that Tecolote should not hear the song, hoping that Carmen might notice his absence, or later, realize that he had not been present when she sang. Pleased with her little sisterly scheme Estrella abandoned her jealousy and became the generous, the vivacious, the alluring. She would tell Tecolote of the robbery that he might be warned—for Esteban's assumed indifference to the fate of Tecolote did not deceive Estrella in the slightest degree. She knew that the captain would arrest Tecolote, question him, and possibly take him to Hermosillo, prisoner. And that meant that Tecolote would never return to Sandoval. If warned, Tecolote could ride into the hills—she would tell him where to go —and be safe until the rurales had left Sandoval, when he could return and claim that which Estrella was only too willing to give him—herself.

Tecolote had seen Captain Esteban talking with her—and Tecolote, gazing across the barbecue pits, had seen the spent horse and rider appear. He had watched the rider and Esteban talking together. But it was Captain Esteban's change of manner as he strode over toward the cantina that told Tecolote something was in the air other than the smoke of the bonfires.

And now Estrella Escobar had something to tell him. Tecolote stopped and turned to her. They were alone, screened by the deep shadows of overhanging branches. Yet Estrella wanted to make sure of him —that he would return to her. "Señor Tecolote," she murmured. Pete was not indifferent to the presence of a really beautiful girl and did not pretend that he was. He touched her hand, clasped it. "I counted on you as my good friend," he said in Spanish. Estrella interpreted this her own way. She put her arms about his

neck, threw back her head. Her lips parted. Estrella had flirted with many men, yet no man had ever kissed her. "*Mi amor!*" she breathed. Her warm lithe body hung unresisting in his arms. Pete would have kissed her, held her closer—but a shout from the plaza awakened him to actualities. Estrella felt him straighten his shoulders. Her passion flamed to hate. She struck him in the face and leaped back.

Then she was gone, running down the street toward the plaza.

"Now if she had had a knife in that little fist of hers——" Pete shrugged his shoulders.

With Felipe of Sandoval as accompanist the Carmen was singing a folk song dear to the hearts of the people. Her stage was a table placed against the adobe wall of the cantina. To her left, grouped in the plaza, stood Esteban and four of the rurales. Her audience, a motley of dark faces, bright serapes, sombreroed vaqueros, girls, matrons and old men and children, listened breathlessly. Carmen's voice transmuted the old familiar song into a melody of singing gold, making a commonplace divine. She, of the people, sang to them about themselves. Hushed the last mellow chord of the guitar, and hushed the dark audience until one cried, "Bravo! Bravo!" and the tide of applause rose high. Felipe of Sandoval, in a transport of excitement broke the guitar across his knee. "Never again shall it sound a note for one less great than La Alondra!" he cried. And as Felipe was as poor as the average musician the tribute was not so small. Perhaps he realized that Carmen would promptly offer to buy him a new guitar in generous appreciation of his homage. Quien sabe?

Tecolote, edging toward the inner circle of the crowd, saw Esteban and his rurales grouped near Carmen. And but recently the man hunters had been scattered among the people. Estrella was not in evidence. The people were clamoring for another song. Carmen graciously assented. Felipe, borrowing another guitar, struck the opening chord of the swiftly moving cadencia, "The Bandit." Tecolote watched Carmen's saucy mouth as she chanted the devil-may-care song of the outlaws. She seemed to be looking at him, singing to him, or at least so Pete imagined until toward the end of the ballad when Carmen deliberately changed the name of the outlaw to "gringo." Then he was sure that her song was a warning:

> "The loot is much—the gringo naught,
> To-night the gringo dies."

With the excuse of congratulating her Tecolote strode forward as the song reached its conclusion, and before Esteban could reach the table Pete offered his hand to help the Carmen to the chair and thence to the ground. "You are quick," laughed Carmen; then as she stepped to the ground: "Esteban would kill you. Go!" she whispered.

And Tecolote knew, by the quick pressure of her fingers, and the intensity of her whisper, that it was not jealousy that inspired the captain—but something more coldly impersonal. Tecolote, bidding adieu to Carmen, turned. Esteban Martinez barred his way. "You would not go before La Alondra sings again?" Esteban's rurales stood either side of their captain. There was no chance to get through and into the crowd, that grew silent, awed by the significant attitudes of the rurales. Then, like wind across the desert sand, a sinister murmuring rose and subsided. Carmen's romantic song had been translated into an immediate reality. And the murmuring of the people was a threat—not against the lone and unbefriended Tecolote, but against the law which, visiting Sandoval in the guise of friendship, had so suddenly shattered the harmony of feasting and song and dancing; an insult to the occasion and the town. Captain Esteban Martinez was quick to catch the undertone of anger in the mutterings of the people. He knew they would not openly dare to interfere with him—yet they could make it decidedly difficult for him to carry out his future plans. Sandoval had long been a sanctuary for outlawed Americanos. Moreover, Carmen was watching.

Tecolote Pete, to whom a forlorn hope was as strong wine, laughed in Esteban's face. "Let's see your warrant," said Pete.

"*Aqui!*" cried Martinez and his hand swept down to pull his gun. Tecolote made a motion as though striking his own chest. Flame leaped from his clenched hand. Martinez staggered back, then, swaying, he lurched forward and crumpled to the ground. Tecolote whirled, dashed through the cantina doorway, dodged a drunken vaquero and was out through the back and

into the walled inclosure, before the rurales realized his intent. It was too dark to distinguish Martinez's horse, but the captain's silver-trimmed saddle glimmered in the dusk. Tecolote snatched the rein, vaulted into the saddle and just as the rurale in charge of the horses realized that something was decidedly wrong, Pete put the animal at the low bars of the inclosure. The spirited horse cleared the bars as a bird skims the crest of a wave. Clear of the town Tecolote headed north along the edge of the desert, for here was harder ground and easier going than on the desert, where a running horse would soon wear himself out. And Tecolote let the horse run for the first few miles, that the rurales might not trail him by sound. Then he swung abruptly toward the east, holding the horse to a fast walk.

Far out on the desert he dismounted, changed the stirrup length, examined the Winchester slung in the scabbard. The box magazine of the .30-40 was filled, for he could not press the topmost cartridge down. Five cartridges—one for each rurale should they overtake him. He knew that the rurales would hunt him like a wolf pack running a deer and that the least mistake on his part would be his last. Again in the saddle he bored into the desert night straight for the far rim of the eastern range, and a chance to water his horse at the spring in the pass. Once over the pass it would be a matter of sheer endurance—a fight against pitiless heat, thirst and the temptation to put a willing horse too far during the first hours of the ride.

Slowly the dim outline of the eastern range resolved itself into definite pinnacles and hollows. Tecolote struck into the trail across the hills without difficulty. He had ridden that trail before, a fugitive, though in the opposite direction. Frequently he breathed his horse and turned to listen and peer through the dusk of the desert night. No hint came to him of pursuit, yet he knew that he was pursued. His horse invariably turned when they rested and pointed his ears toward the desert below. At the top of the pass, in the scant dwarfed timber, Tecolote watered the animal and refilled the canteen on the saddle horn. Imperceptibly the brilliance of the desert stars faded. The velvet dusk grew thinner. Tecolote dismounted and led his horse down the steeper slopes of the range. Along the eastern horizon ran a line of cold white light which spread and crept upward. And as the dusk melted away before the dawn the desert floor seemed to rise from out of nothingness, its ridges and low-set hills shimmering in tints of amethyst and gold. A half hour later Tecolote was riding across an almost flat desolation which did not break for fifty miles—save where it was torn and gouged by prehistoric earthquake and volcano. And in that spot—a rendezvous of missing men—there was water. Far out on the barrens Tecolote turned and glanced back. Down the wild and winding steep of the range the foam-breasted horses of the rurales lunged. They had seen him.

"Fools!" breathed Pete and held his horse to a walk.

Away and away in the east the bright legions of the dawn massed, their lances tipped with fire as they marched across the awakening floor of the desert. But not until the golden lances of the sun became invisible were they to be feared. Tecolote again examined the rifle, as his horse stepped briskly along. Satisfied, he slipped the carbine back in the scabbard. As he did so he noticed a peculiar marking on the horse—a narrow black stripe that ran from the edge of the saddle skirts to the animal's tail. The horse was a clear bay—and yet here was the marking often seen on a buckskin, the black line from mane to tail—and a horse so marked was considered to possess unusual endurance. Tecolote was too good a horseman to make snap judgments, yet he allowed himself to infer that the marking indicated a sire or dam of the tough mustang strain—that the animal had both speed and endurance. Meanwhile he was searching the saddle pockets—nor urging his mount although the rurales were gaining perceptibly. He hoped to find food of some kind. He found none. But he discovered a pair of excellent field glasses, a folded silk bandanna, a pair of gloves, a notebook and a penciled map of a bit of country unfamiliar. The saddle pockets were long and heavy. Tucking the binoculars in his shirt he untied the strings and tossed the saddle pockets away. He glanced back. The rurales were almost within rifle shot. Pete tightened the reins and touched the horse with his heels. Instantly the bay changed its gait from a fast walk to a single foot. The leading rurale pulled up, dismounted, dropped to his knee and fired. The bullet

fell short. Tecolote turned as he heard the sound of the shot. The rurales swept on past the dismounted man, who swung up and followed them. The morning sun—crimson in the early dawn—now shone like a disk of polished brass, striking short, quick shadows of horse and rider upon the sand. Again Tecolote turned and looked back. The distant horsemen bobbed up and down in a haze of white light—one instant clearly defined and seemingly nearer, the next, blurred and indistinct. Already the refraction of the sun rays on the desert was playing tricks with distances. Not certain that his pursuers had gained within the past few minutes Tecolote did not urge his horse. A bullet ripped through space and kicked up a puff of sand several yards ahead of him. Almost instantly came the *whang* of the rifle shot. Tecolote eased the reins and leaned forward. The bay swung into a lope as easily as though he had not changed his gait.

Within a mile the rurales had dropped behind. The horse was running—not with the fierce quick stride of the cow pony but with the smooth and easy precision of some splendid machine. Another mile—so Tecolote estimated—and he pulled the horse to a walk. Hour after hour he bored on through the white light, the heat, the silence. With grim restraint he kept just so far ahead of the horsemen of Sonora, until toward noon the bleak, jagged pinnacles of El Salitral showed sharp against the eastern sky. Behind him some three miles the wolves of Sonora still followed, evidently saving their horses. Screened by a low mound of sand and rock Tecolote dismounted. With the sudden cessation of movement came a keener realization of the shriveling heat which struck up from the earth like a physical blow. He loosed the cincha, lifted the heavy saddle, cursing its weight of silver ornament, and cooled his horse's back. He soaked his handkerchief and sponged the animal's nostrils. Then he poured a scant pint of water into his sombrero. The horse drank greedily. Pete drank little more than a mouthful himself. He strode to the edge of the mound and watched the moving black dot separate into distinct figures. Grimly the rurales held to the trail, as blood hungry as the gaunt wolves of the hills.

When he had estimated that they were within a mile of the mound he swung to the saddle and bore eastward toward the pinnacles. He had set his teeth in one unalterable decision. He would keep no more than a scant thousand yards—the maximum range of their carbines—between himself and his pursuers until he was within at least ten miles of the pinnacles. Once inside the intricate maze of those rocky walls and riven peaks and ridges he could ambush them in a dozen different places. An Apache would hardly risk trailing a man in there in the daylight. Moreover, El Salitral was well out of their territory and most probably unfamiliar ground to any of them.

The chase became a test of endurance, vigilance and restraint, with the ever-present temptation on Tecolote's part to let his horse do just a little better than he was doing, for in spite of the heat and lack of necessary rest the willing animal showed no appreciable slackening of stride. The rurales also "rode with their shadows" saving their horses for a final attempt to ride the gringo down. Tecolote realized this because they did not try to rush him but hung doggedly to the trail a scant mile behind. Two hours of vicious and almost unendurable heat—ten miles of alternate walk, single foot and walk, and the pinnacles loomed sharp and clear against the steely sky. Tecolote had glanced back time and again, making certain that he had not dozed and allowed the rurales to come within rifle shot. Once more he glanced back. They had lifted their horses to a lope. Their quarry was drawing too near the pinnacles to risk further delay.

Tecolote knew that if he won to the pinnacles of El Salitral he would have a fighting chance to get away. If the rurales came within range they would try to shoot his horse from under him. He was still more than ten miles from the pinnacles. If the horse could make it—Tecolote, keeping the animal to a fast walk, reached down and loosed the latigo. Cautiously he worked the leather through the saddle ring, then through the cinch ring until the latigo dangled free. Riding by balance, he drew the rifle from the scabbard and held it across the horse's neck. With his rein hand he grasped the mane. As the loosened saddle worked back he rose in the stirrups, then, leaning forward he jerked his feet free. The saddle turned and dropped to the ground. Tecolote gripped hard with his legs as the startled horse jumped sidewise. Then, bareback, he gave the horse its head. Relieved

of forty pounds dead weight the animal swung into a long, reaching stride—a true running gait—that slowly overcame the gain the rurales had made in their recent spurt. Even with the speeding threat behind him and the bleak uncertainty ahead Tecolote realized that never before had he ridden such a horse. With stride as unvarying as the beat and swing of a pendulum the bay swept across the barrens with no other urge than the slackened rein and the angle at which his rider sat. Tecolote's one fear was that the horse could not hold the pace, but would literally break his heart in his gallant attempt to outdistance the pursuers. Yet there was nothing for it but to let him run. It was now or the eternal never of oblivion.

Tecolote allowed himself to wonder if the horse of Captain Esteban Martinez realized what a magnificent race he was running, and why: if the mighty and sustained stride was the result of a desire translated from man to animal or sheer physical pride of unconquerable lineage. And as he sped like a bird down the wind Tecolote noticed that the dead level was occasionally broken by a shallow arroyo—the waterless watermarks of mountain storm and flood. The base of the pinnacles ran down in a long hollow sweep of scattered red rock and pebbled patches. Tecolote, glancing back, pulled his horse to a lope, to a walk—kept him moving to slowly equalize his breathing and his gait. On the first sloping bench land he dismounted. Some three miles away the rurales still came on. Pete drew the binoculars from his shirt. The quirt arms of the pursuers were rising and falling. Evidently they intended to drive him deep within the mazes of El Salitral before they relinquished the chase—or, perhaps, follow in spite of the danger of an ambushment. Tecolote pressed on diagonally across the sloping bench land, riding a tired horse. Behind him, on the level ground below, the rurales came on, their horses running one behind the other in a ragged line, forced by quirt and rowel. Ahead loomed the sinister gateway of El Salitral—a gash in the rocky front of the forbidding red range. Within a hundred yards of the narrow entrance he turned to look back. The rurales had bunched near the edge of the slope and were walking their horses, evidently cautious about exposing themselves on the open slant of the rise. Tecolote dismounted to lead his horse up the last few yards of the steep pitch.

Out of the hot silence came a voice, startling as an unexpected shot. "Drop your gun—and come along up—slow." Pete could see no one. He did not argue. Less than a thousand yards below the rurales had halted; were dismounting.

Tecolote stepped round the angle of the cliff. Sangster, who had made El Salitral notorious as an impregnable rendezvous for outlaws and horse thieves, stood with rifle at hip, the cocked Winchester centered on Tecolote's belt buckle. "Get it off your chest," said Sangster, nodding toward the bulge of Tecolote's breast holster.

"Dog eat dog?" queried Tecolote.

Sangster nodded; his eyes—steel blue—were bright, expressionless. His bearded face was a mask.

"You win," declared Tecolote. All Sangster had to do was to move his forefinger less than an eighth of an inch—if Tecolote had risked trying for a bull's-eye. Tecolote surrendered his six-gun.

"Now we can talk business," declared Sangster. "Who is the bunch, down yonder?"

"Rurales—trailed me out of Sandoval."

Sangster shifted his gaze to Tecolote's horse. "Fetch him back here. He's too good to waste. Rurales, eh? First time they tried this gate. Guess I'll collect a little toll. You step over there where they can see you. Don't try any funny work."

Tecolote stepped to the spot indicated, some twenty yards across the cañon mouth. Sangster raised the sights on his Winchester and threw a shot into the grouped horses. A horse went down, kicking. The dismounted rurales, who had begun to climb the slope, scattered for what scant cover they might find.

Sangster threw a fresh shell into the barrel. "I raised the price of board and lodging since you came through," he said, once more eying Tecolote's horse which stood, head lowered, its sides caked with dust and sweat, its eyes half closed. Yet the quality of the horse showed through it all.

"I've got a pair of binoculars worth eighty dollars anywhere. You could use them. All I want is water and enough grub to make it to the line."

"All right. A bargain's a bargain. Go get your rifle. We can drop back to the spring. Those coyotes down there won't

ride into this cañon in a hurry. They're going to stop and think a while."

Just before sundown Sangster and Tecolote came within sight of the stone corral and the ancient cliff dwelling above it which Sangster used as both home and fortress. From it he could command the spring and the flat round about the corral. Tecolote was surprised to find there were no other outlaws there. He had become suspicious of Sangster. The latter had not asked to see the binoculars—a significant circumstance. Sangster wanted the horse. Tecolote knew it and determined to keep the bay even if he had to make a fight to do so. Tecolote now had his rifle, although Sangster had not returned the six-gun. Tecolote watered his horse, and then was forced to turn him over to Sangster, who said he had no feed nearer than the mesa above the cañon.

While Sangster was away Tecolote helped himself to food from Sangster's scant supply, and then, so dog tired and stiff that he could have slept standing, he hobbled about the stone-walled room searching for matches, a canteen and a sack in which to carry enough food to see him to the line. He knew that Sangster would never give up the horse. Moreover, Tecolote was not so sure that the rurales had given up their hunt for him. They might risk a sally up the cañon at night. They were picked men, recruited from outlawed bands and as tough and as accustomed to desert travel as Apaches. Tecolote made his way across the cañon, working craftily round the stone corral and across to the opposite wall. He felt his way in the dark, dreading but one thing, a coiled rattler in the sun-warmed rocks. He crawled along a ragged ledge to a cleft in the cañon wall which he had noticed as he came into the camp. Working back in the crevice so that he could not be seen in daylight, from the vantage of Sangster's stronghold, Tecolote dropped his sack and before he could adjust his weary body to anything like a comfortable position he fell asleep.

The noon sun was blazing down into the cañon when Tecolote awoke, cramped and stiff, and peered into the stone corral. He wondered what Sangster had thought when he found him gone. No sound came from the cliff dwelling across the cañon nor was there any sign that Sangster was about. The old wolf of El Salitral had either decamped suddenly, or suspecting an ambushment was watching the flat below either from the ancient cliff dwelling or some less obvious concealment. Tecolote used the binoculars, focusing them on the low stone doorway framing a square patch of light on the beaten floor. The powerful lenses drew the doorway close. He could see the texture of the rocks, the mortar in the chinks, the smooth surface of the floor. His eyes grew tired with gazing. He lowered the glasses. He drank from the canteen and replaced it noiselessly. Again he raised the binoculars and found the patch of white light framed by the rocks. As he gazed something dropped like a grasshopper on the square of sunlit floor. A thin, almost invisible thread of smoke stood up and wavered above the grasshopper—which resolved itself into the stub of a cigarette. "And it didn't drop from heaven," soliloquized Tecolote. Sangster was there, watching.

And Sangster, returning from the mesa and finding Tecolote gone, had argued that the other was not foolish enough to attempt to win across the desert on foot but had taken a canteen and food and was laying out somewhere waiting to get a clean shot at him. Yet Sangster had slept that night. A piece of bailing wire, stretched across the low doorway about a foot above the floor —one end of it attached to a stake on which was balanced a tin cup filled with pebbles— was an invisible alarm that, if sounded, brought an instant fusillade from the corner where the outlaw slept.

There was absolutely nothing that Tecolote could do but wait until night—and even then he did not know whether he could get a horse from the mesa pasture without being discovered. So he watched the front of the cliff dwelling across the narrow cañon until the heat and the food he had eaten put him to sleep again. He was awakened by the faint sound of shod hoofs. The afternoon shadows were long in the cañon. Three horses were coming down the trail from the mesa—a trail which ran past the old cliff dwelling in which Sangster was waiting and watching. One of the horses was the bay. They trotted past the open doorway and down to the flat where they swung across to the spring. After drinking they seemed in no hurry to return to the mesa, but stood switching flies. Tecolote noticed that all three occasionally raised

their heads and cocked their ears in the direction from which he had entered the cañon.

Tecolote drank sparingly and carefully replaced the canteen. The shadows lengthened. Early dusk settled in the narrow cañon. Presently a figure emerged from the cliff dwelling and moved slowly down the trail. In the flat below the figure resolved itself into Sangster with a saddle on his shoulder. Tecolote watched him herd the three horses into the stone corral and saddle the bay. If Sangster had saddled either of the other horses Tecolote would have let him go. As it was Tecolote reached back for his rifle, centered on the blurred bulk of the other as he led the horse from the corral and waited for him to mount that he might show clear from the horse. Sangster put his foot in the stirrup, swung up—and a rifle snarled from somewhere down the cañon. Sangster rocked in the saddle. The bay jumped sidewise. Sangster toppled and fell. Tecolote let down the hammer of his rifle and without hesitation slipped from the crevice and worked down the ledge to the flat. He ran for the saddled horse, mounted and drove his spurless heels into the horse's ribs. The bay leaped forward and pattered along the rocky trail. Something tugged sharply at Tecolote's hat and instantly another shot crashed behind him. The bay, catching his stride, leaned to the sharp turns of the trail, his hoofbeats rumbling in echoes from the high walls. Tecolote found Sangster's rifle scabbard empty. "Must have pulled it when he fell. Well, he crossed over game, anyway," he muttered.

On down the winding cañon he swung, wondering if the rurales would follow, or satisfied with one killing and the loot of Sangster's place, camp at the spring. He had left his sack of food and the canteen in the crevice, reasoning swiftly that Sangster had equipped himself for a long ride. And when Tecolote came out to where the cañon opened on the eastern desert and had made far enough in the open to feel comparatively safe he reined in and examined saddle pockets and canteen. Satisfied with what he found he set off again at a lope, heading north across the starlit miles of sand and greasewood and cactus that lay between El Salitral and the border. As he rode he had much time to reflect. And as he reviewed the past few weeks he decided that if he did not intend to spend the rest of his life in the saddle his best bet was to return to the Palisades, hand over his gun and stand trial for the shooting of Gormer.

As he drew nearer the line, slowly Tecolote Pete reverted to Paul Overton. He owed fifty dollars—and he had ten in his pocket. He would return the fifty dollars first. Then he would give himself up. To get the forty dollars. Well, he could sell the saddle and rifle for that, somewhere along the way. As for the horse—that would be his gift to the girl. He recalled the fact that all is fair in love and war, and if his battle with the rurales had not been a small war he did not know what the word meant. Occasionally he stopped and listened but it seemed that he had the night and the desert to himself. He grew hungry. There was food in the saddle pockets and he ate a little. His horse swung along in a fast walk that was good for six miles an hour. Just before dawn he crossed railroad tracks. As the sun rose he saw the familiar country west of Nogales. He took off his hat to the country from which and into which he had been chased like a rabbit dodging the hounds.

Passing a small district schoolhouse he looked for the flag, forgetting for a moment that it was vacation time. He was back in the Tecolote country and among cattlemen whom he knew. Nooning at Thompson's of Comobabi he was roundly and profanely lectured by the old cowman for running into Mexico instead of depending on his friend to see him through his trouble.

"You don't deserve to know what I'm going to tell you," concluded Thompson, "but to keep you from bumping off some citizen what counts for something I'm here to say you're a dam' poor shot. That coyote Gormer ain't dead, which is sad news seeing you had the chance to get him. Everybody thought he was—but he pulled through, after confessing that the Northern bunch hired him to put you under a stone with your name carved on it. Gormer is in the pen at Yuma. That speech you made last spring against the big owners and the cattle inspector was too good a speech to be safe. You turn your cayuse into my pasture and bury your iron. I'll drive you up to the Palisades. I been waiting for an excuse to mosey up that way. You look like a pretty good one."

Paul Overton, who was so recently Tecolote Pete, didn't turn pale with joy, or any-

thing like that. He shook hands with Thompson and told him he was the unregistered son of a not-to-be-mentioned ancestor, and other eloquent endearments. And there was some good liquor in Arizona then. Thompson had his share of it; and he was not stingy.

Line rider at fifteen, acknowledged a "right good hand" at twenty; law student for several succeeding years, then modestly situated as practicing attorney in his home town, Paul Overton became a local political firebrand before he was thirty, afraid of no man or party. However, he knew his country and its men. He went to court with a six-shooter among the letters of his brief case, which in those days was an old-fashioned letter file—ample to accommodate both literature and artillery. Paul Overton began, politically, as a Republican—but man! The first speech he made he singed the coat tails of the local party so effectively and so subtly that they didn't know they were on fire until their friends told them so. Then when Paul found he could not adjust the political machinery of either party with a verbal monkey wrench he declared that he would affiliate strictly with himself. That pleased many. He was called upon to say things, at times, and he said them vigorously and honestly. Some of the big cattle owners decided that he was unnecessary and tried to prove it. Hence Overton was obliged to either blow the interior lining out of one Gormer, paid to assassinate him, or suffer oblivion. This was not an altogether uncommon occurrence in Arizona and it never failed to advertise the survivor.

But Overton was not thinking of that when Thompson drove him to the Wade rancho and discreetly sought out old man Wade, leaving Paul with a tearful, smiling and altogether happy young woman whose first name was Dorothy and whose last name became Overton several years before he was nominated for the State assembly and elected after a right-smart battle with the powers of darkness—as the other party was called. But that is an entirely different story. In fact no story ever actually ends. Nor did the story of a certain Tecolote Pete —a renegade of Sandoval, cease to be told because this Tecolote had vanished somewhere within the arid desolation of El Salitral. For instance:

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Overton of Phoenix, Arizona, were vacationing, some years later, in a California city notable in some respects and notorious in others. The café in which they dined on this memorable evening was brilliant with various and many stars both in the ascendant and otherwise, lions of literature, celebrated composers of music and the inevitable and curious out-of-towners who came not so much to dine as to see how this or that celebrity handled his fork and how this or that one "did" her hair. Incidentally—Paul Overton came because his wife wanted him to.

The arrival of the great Carmen la Alondra was a surprise to every one in the café. She had not been heralded or advertised in the papers. Even the local celebrities stared and forgot for the moment that they were there to be stared at. With the beautiful and gracious songstress of Old Mexico was a dark, distinguished-looking man of her country. Beads of sweat started on Overton's forehead when he saw Carmen's escort. Dorothy Overton turned to her husband. "She really is beautiful, Paul." Then noticing the beads of sweat upon his forehead. "She is rather exotic, isn't she?"

Paul Overton smiled—brushed his handkerchief across his forehead. "Yes. But I was noticing the man, especially."

"But you don't have to apologize, Paul. If I were a man I should fall tremendously in love with her. I believe she is looking at you. And everybody is staring at us. Don't look so self-conscious, Paul."

La Alondra, catching Overton's hasty glance, nodded and gestured gracefully. Then she spoke to her escort who frowned but rose and followed her to Overton's table. "Ah, Tecolote, is it not? And your wife, yes? It is good to see you again. Of a truth it is long since I sang in Sandoval. My husband, Captain Martinez. You have met before. Ah, Tecolote, I owe so much to you! And I shall never forget the fires, the dancing, the quaint Sandoval, and the running of horses in the night!"

Carmen turned to Dorothy Overton. "It was because of your husband I learned to know my own heart. Oh, no! Not as you think. A little accident. My husband was wounded. I nursed him back to health—and—it must be that I marry him."

La Alondra bowed, and swept away, followed by Esteban Martinez, erstwhile captain of rurales in Hermosillo.

"But Paul! You were not *the* Tecolote Pete that the papers——"

Overton nodded.

"But you never told me *that*."

"I thought Martinez was dead. Let's get out in the air, Dorothy, and take a walk."

There is a broad walk under arching pepper trees—a walk that leads to the foothills. As they strolled along, isolated, because so few people actually walked, Overton told his wife of Sandoval and the rurales; of Williams and the renegades, of El Salitral and Sangster.

"And there wasn't any other woman?" queried his wife.

"Oh—a girl—Estrella Escobar; related to Carmen. Estrella didn't like me. What are you laughing at?"

"At Tecolote," said Dorothy Overton, recalling his original accounting for the horse she had loaned to him when he had become a fugitive. Upon his return, possessor of the magnificent and fast bay, he had told her that he had exchanged horses with one of the rurales named Martinez because the bay was the better horse—and Paul had said it in such an offhand and breezy fashion.

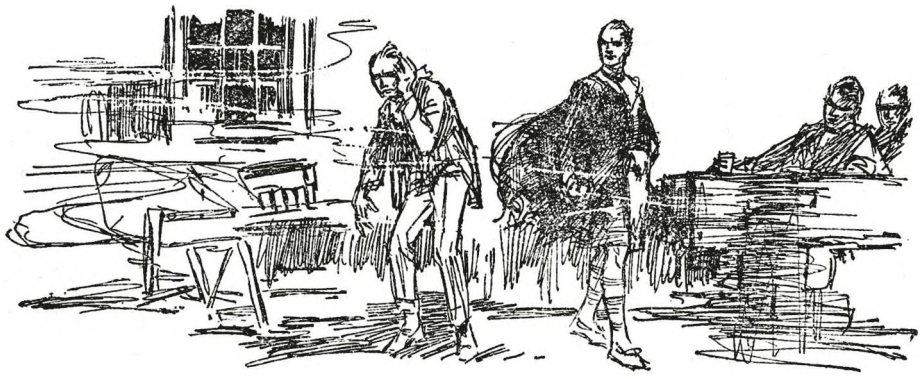
More of Mr. Knibbs' work in early issues.

CHECKING UP ON LADY NICOTINE

EVER since Sir Walter Raleigh did civilization a favor—or, if you happen to feel that way about it, a bad turn—by introducing tobacco to it, there has been a loud and oftentimes ill-natured argument as to its effects on the human mind and body. Nonsmokers have shouted that the use of tobacco shortens human life; smokers have lighted their pipes and replied that it was worth it. American athletic trainers have said that smoking affects the wind; whereupon an English runner strolled to the starting line of an international half-mile race with a pipe between his teeth, put it aside, and before it was cold had soundly beaten the best that America could send against him. As is the case in a good many other arguments, each side can prove that it is in the right—prove it to its own satisfaction, anyhow.

With the object of learning just what effect smoking has on mental efficiency Professor M. V. O'Shea recently conducted extensive experiments at the University of Wisconsin. He has set forth his findings in a book—"Tobacco and Mental Efficiency"—and as he set out to discover facts rather than to prove theories his book is interesting. He is satisfied that smoking is harmful to growing boys. His other conclusions seem to be that smoking is good for the minds of smokers and bad for the minds of nonsmokers—in the experiments smokers did better mental work after smoking and nonsmokers worse work. Tobacco seemed to slow down mental processes, but Professor O'Shea says that in the long run men who like to smoke and who do smoke probably accomplish more intellectually, despite this slowing down, than they would if they were deprived of tobacco. He adds that "men who have used tobacco have achieved as much in every field of activity as the men who do not use it." He found that most literary women smoke, that fifty-five per cent of the congressmen who answered his queries don't smoke, and that sixty per cent of our school superintendents, and a still larger proportion of our university presidents and deans, use tobacco. After making a thorough study of the subject Professor O'Shea doesn't agree with Calverley as to

> How they who use fusees
> All grow by slow degrees
> Brainless as chimpanzees
> Meager as lizards;
> Go mad, and beat their wives;
> Plunge, after shocking lives,
> Razors and carving knives
> Into their gizzards.



The Cauliflower Ear

By W. O. McGeehan

Author of "The Iron Fist," "Champion of Champions," Etc.

Morgan, the fight manager, claimed that the cauliflower ear was the badge of defeat, and the "Dodger" justified the claim for him.

MR. HARRY MORGAN, called by some sporting writers "the Warwick of the Lightweight Kings," was brooding over the dethronement of one of his monarchs. "Bearcat" Hanlon had been knocked from the throne to which he had been elevated through the astuteness of Mr. Morgan by the usual process, a right to the jaw.

Mr. Morgan was standing in a luxurious hotel room which was in much disorder. He was clad in sky-blue pajamas and a purple silk dressing gown, and was peering down at a litter of sporting sheets on the floor. There were the usual headlines which herald the passing of a prize-fight title.

Most of these headlines blared the simple fact that "Knock-out" Ryan had knocked out Bearcat Hanlon in the fourth and had become the new lightweight king. A smaller line in one of these papers caused Mr. Morgan to frown with displeasure. It said: "Harry Morgan Loses Meal Ticket." It was lese majesty to a king maker.

The Warwick of the Resin Dust was of the type that an advertising artist might have chosen as a model for the "clean-cut young business man." An artist at police headquarters would have pronounced him a type of the clean-cut crook. His looks and his manners made him a Beau Brummel in the upper Tenderloin which was his favorite habitat and he had made a reputation which satisfied himself in the sporting world.

There had been something of an orgy in Mr. Morgan's room following the disaster to Bearcat Hanlon. Mr. Morgan was a little pale and drawn from the effects of his participation in this. He noted this and after shaving with great care spent some time brushing his glossy hair and rubbing his face smooth with scented talcum powder.

His countenance was smooth and composed when the time came for him to face the battered and unpleasant countenance of the dethroned monarch of the lightweights. The Bearcat knocked and shambled in dejectedly. The Bearcat had two cauliflower ears of pronounced and different classes. One was crumpled and drawn. The other flapped downward from the top like the ear of a Missouri hound. The effects of sharp blows on the delicate cartilage of the human ear never are the same but they are always grotesque.

Beside these marks of his calling the Bearcat wore fresher marks from his encounter of the night before. A gauze bandage held in place by collodion covered a gash over the right eye and his lips were puffed and swollen. The manager, Mr. Morgan, was unmarked by his long association with the manly art of self-defense. Managers usually remain unmarked.

"Well, Bearcat," said the Warwick suavely, "the breaks of the game at last."

The Bearcat had slumped into a chair. "A lucky punch. It didn't hurt me. Get a return match and I'll murder him."

"No," said Morgan firmly. "They never come back and you ought to know it. You're just an ex-champion and you've got to face it."

"What will we do then?" demanded the broken young gladiator.

"*We* will do nothing," said Morgan and there was an ominous accent on the pronoun. The Bearcat looked terrified. For three years this superior mind had been doing all of his thinking. It seemed as though he might have to face the perils of thinking for himself.

"I made you champion," continued Morgan. "I got you publicity. I showed you the world. In fact I got you everything. Now I've got myself to consider. Already some of these newspaper fellows are giving me the laugh. I've got to make another champion."

To the child mind of the Bearcat this seemed entirely logical though it threw him into utter bewilderment by its sudden cruelty. "Well, I can't squeal," he said. "I'll go back to Pueblo and see what I can do. How much have I got left?"

There was just a shadow of uneasiness in the pale eyes of Morgan as he faced him. "You bet on yourself against my advice," he said. "Then, as you know, we've been living pretty swell. You're just about wiped out. I've figured that all there is coming to you is five hundred. I'll add five hundred for old time's sake. Here's a grand."

Morgan extended a thousand-dollar bill. The Bearcat took it mechanically and crumpled it into a trousers pocket. He had little regard for money.

"We made over a hundred grand at least, all told," he said. "And this is all I got when I quit. Well, it's a hell of a game. Couldn't we frame something together still?"

Morgan knew that he had him conquered. "Bearcat, there's no use," he said. "I can't string along with a failure. You are wearing the badge of failure—the cauliflower ear. Look at you—two of them."

The Bearcat rubbed both ears gingerly. "One I got winning the title. The other I got saving it for us," he said monotonously. "And between rounds you slapped me on the back and said, 'Go on in, he can't hurt us.' "

"Don't get silly," said Morgan impatiently. "It was all in the game. Well, I've got some friends coming. Drop me a line from Pueblo. So long, Bearcat."

The Bearcat slumped toward the door and stopped with the look of a dog that is being driven away. "Well, I hope you never get a cauliflower ear yourself," he said cryptically. He banged the door shut and was gone.

Morgan started and dashed to his mirror. He wagged his head from side to side to view his two small, well-shaped ears that lay close to his head. He was still staring at the satisfactory reflection of himself in the mirror when "Rube" Watson and Mannie Weinstein burst into the room.

The Rube was the most celebrated left-handed pitcher of his day, for he was a left hander with control—over his arm but not over his whims and emotions. The Rube evidently had been celebrating the night before for his eyes were bloodshot and his face flushed. Weinstein, small, dark and rat-eyed, belonged to a trade that permitted no dissipation. He made book on anything and everything.

The Rube immediately sought drinks. "He had a tough time keeping out of the stir last night," said Weinstein. "The Rube certainly was going strong. If he is going to work to-morrow he had better get into shape."

"Did you get the money down?" demanded Morgan, ignoring the pitcher.

"Every dime," said the gambler. "You've got twenty grand coming. 'The Big Fellow' took the tip. He cleaned up forty. When I told him you were laying against your own man he wouldn't believe me at first. Then he said: 'Morgan has enough larceny in his heart to supply the world.' He went hook, line and sinker. You stand high with him."

Morgan smiled. "Got to get it while the getting is good," he said.

"How did you know that your man was slipping?" demanded Weinstein. "Or did you get him to lay down?"

"No, the Bearcat wouldn't know how to take a dive," said Morgan. "Why, he made me bet five grand of his own dough on him. Of course I bet it the other way. I knew that he was through after the other bout. The second cauliflower ear finished him."

Weinstein settled himself on the bed and

drew out a fat wallet. Morgan counted over carefully the bills he received and the Rube began to show some signs of interest. "Let's have a party. Morgan, with all that dough you should give a party."

Morgan fell into this mood. "All right, Rube," he said. "What kind of a party shall we have?"

"Tell you what," replied the Rube. "Let's all go down to Coney Island and ride round and round on the merry-go-round."

It was not a brilliant suggestion but later in the afternoon after he had drunk for several hours with the Rube and some casual callers Morgan yielded to the insistent demand that he come down to Coney Island and ride round and round on the merry-go-round. Besides he wanted to get off his beaten paths.

When the trio alighted from the hired car at Coney Island Morgan was almost as much under the weather as was the Rube. Now, Morgan intoxicated, was a different person from the cool and collected person that was Morgan sober. The other Morgan was cruel, arrogant and quarrelsome.

The joke which Morgan planned then was typical. "Come on, Rube," he whispered. "Get a lot of balls and knock him out of the lot."

The dodger obviously was a white man disguised by burned cork and not very elaborately. His head protruded from a circular hole in a canvas curtain and the distance was short. It was an easy mark for the Rube. He shot the first ball true but the head had disappeared. The dodger grinned and the Rube hurled three more of the missiles with the same result.

"Losing your speed," mocked Morgan. The Rube continued the bombardment and the face in the circular hole laughed. The Rube cursed and bared his teeth. Morgan saw him reach into his coat pocket and produce a regulation league ball. At that distance it would have killed if it had hit. The Rube hurled it with all his force but the grotesque head had disappeared and the ball whizzed through harmlessly.

For an instant the Rube thought that he had hit his target and it sobered him. But the face reappeared with the same smudgy grin.

It was at this point that the inspiration came to Harry Morgan, Warwick of the Lightweights, for a career for "Dodger" Dugan. The name itself was an inspiration. Alliteration in ring names helps. Morgan dragged the baffled Rube from the place into an adjoining restaurant to consider the working out of his scheme.

Somehow the Rube was attracted by the waitress and quickly began to annoy her. Morgan was thinking rapidly and did not notice anything so insignificant. He was busy considering the possibilities of more king making. The girl finally ran into the kitchen with a sob. Weinstein was upbraiding the Rube.

Suddenly a short, stocky young man burst through the swinging doors and approached the table. Morgan saw that it was the Dodger with some of the smudge removed from his face. He came to them with a catlike tread.

"Get up and put up your hands, you big beggar," he said quietly, looking at the Rube.

Before Morgan could interfere the Rube hurled a heavy coffee cup at the stocky youngster. It bruised the side of his head. The Rube had the sugar bowl raised when Morgan clutched his arm. There was a blowing of police whistles and a uniformed policeman entered and took charge of the Rube. Weinstein whispered a name into the ear of the policeman and departed with the pitcher.

Morgan resumed a seat at another table and called the Dodger over to him. "First, I want to apologize for my friend," he said. "He isn't exactly a friend of mine either. You see the condition he's in."

The Dodger was hard to pacify but Morgan was a convincing talker. Had he not once talked a lightweight prospect into deserting a manager who had been a boyhood friend? In less than half an hour Morgan had extracted the life history of this prospect.

Briefly, it was this. The name was George Campbell. The age was twenty-one, birthplace Scotland. He had never fought in a ring but had been in many battles and never had been hit. Yes, he could fight, he thought. He had heard of the great manager, Mr. Morgan. His weight was not much over a hundred and thirty. He would go with Mr. Morgan to be tried out if Mr. Morgan would pay him twenty a week while he was being tried out and guarantee him as good a job, if he could not make good in the ring. He would go now. They shook hands on it.

Before he left he went to say good-by to the girl who had waited on the table. As the two talked Morgan could hear just this from the girl: "No, Geordie, no." This was annoying and Morgan made some mental reservations regarding this young woman. However he said nothing to his prospect. He knew that this would not be wise for the present.

At the first workout at Kelly's Gymnasium Morgan was sure that his inspiration was pure gold. The cunning old trial horse could not hit the Dodger once in the four rounds. And the Dodger seemed ambidexterous. But Morgan looking on with expert eyes was a bit disappointed because none of those punches he landed so frequently rocked the trial horse or brought him down.

The report of the trial horse was reassuring. "He's another 'Kid' Griffo," said the trial horse. "I can't lay a glove on him. He knows what's coming before you think it and his body wriggles like a snake's. There isn't anybody who can hit him and there isn't anybody he can't hit. Look at him—not even puffing. The only trouble is his punches can't sting."

Unfortunately for the trial horse Dodger Dugan heard this last criticism. "Let me try another round, Mr. Morgan," he pleaded. Morgan assented.

In the middle of that round there was an explosive oath from the trial horse. As the latter's left arm straightened out Dugan in some inexplicable fashion hooked his right and the left ear of the trial horse began to bleed profusely. The trial horse was raging at the end of the round.

"He's gone and marked me for life," moaned the veteran. "He's given me a cauliflower ear." And so it turned out. The trial horse never forgave Dugan and would have nothing further to do with his training.

The real work of making the Dodger into a champion began. The primary course in the training of Dodger Dugan is of no particular significance. He was carefully nursed—as the fight promoters say. Morgan picked the "soft ones" for him. He scored a knock-out in his first preliminary bout because the selection of an opponent had been made with great care. The record books show that he subsequently won ten insignificant bouts, all by decisions.

He was being talked about. He was reviving the school of "clever boxing" founded by James J. Corbett. But, while this prize-fight game is called with great persistence the manly art of self-defense, the ring followers do not care for defensive boxers. The knocker-out is the popular hero.

In one point Dugan made up for this. Seven of his early victims carried cauliflower ears as a result of their meetings with the Dodger. There seemed to be no defense for that peculiar hook of his and Dugan emerged from all the bouts unscathed and smiling. He moved on into the semifinal class and the registering of another cauliflower ear in the first of these brought him suddenly into the position where he could be talked about for "main events."

For his first main event they got the Dodger an ex-lightweight champion who had been clamoring for another chance ever since he lost his title. He had done most of his clamoring before bars. Consequently after rushing the Dodger for twelve rounds he collapsed from sheer exhaustion and dropped panting for the count after the Dodger had placed his brand upon him with that peculiar hook. The Dodger was made. He had become what the ring people call a "logical contender."

Then Morgan took a boat for Europe. Morgan had been doing some thinking. He knew that the tradition of the American ring was that a champion must not lose his title unless he was knocked out or badly beaten. He knew that the Dodger could do nothing of this sort to the current champion, "The Native Son."

In a few weeks an aristocratic English sporting club offered The Native Son an unheard-of sum to meet Dodger Dugan in a twenty-round bout in London. The Native Son accepted. He returned to the United States with the purse, many complaints and one cauliflower ear, but without the lightweight title. Dodger Dugan brought that back with him but he brought no money. That was to be picked up later.

After this triumph Harry Morgan started to pry into the personal affairs of the Dodger and to rearrange his life for him. The Dodger listened stolidly. Whenever he felt intensely about anything the Dodger immediately became Georgie Campbell, a stubborn Scot, and lapsed into his Scots bur.

"Aye," he said, "that's what I would like to talk about. It's time Jean and I were getting married. Ye can make all of my other matches, Mr. Morgan, but this is a

match that I make for mysel'. She's a bonnie lass and ye ken that it was for fighting for her that we first met."

Morgan knew better than to remonstrate. The Dodger had his way. In a few months the lightweight championship began to pay large and steady dividends. The Dodger had a home on Long Island constructed to his own notions while Morgan lived almost as luxuriously as he pleased. It was the era of no decisions and it was safe for the Dodger to fight anybody and everybody. He could lose his title only by a knock-out and there was nobody who could reach any vulnerable spot on the Dodger. His reign was long and the patrons of boxing began to long for a new champion who would be a knocker-out. They turned against the Dodger and they booed him in the ring. But the Dodger merely sneered. They were paying to see him knocked out, but they were paying.

Developments in Europe detracted considerably from the interest in mere ring fights there. Finally those developments threatened to put a damper on the enthusiasm for boxing in the United States. The day came when a championship prize fight meant exactly nothing at all. As one prize-fight manager with a large stable of boxers put it: "The damn war almost ruined the boxing game."

Managers scurried to Washington to get their boxers appointments as instructors at the training camps. The incongruity of this did not strike the managers. Neither did it seem to strike the authorities. It was on his return from Washington with an appointment for Dodger Dugan as a boxing instructor that Morgan found his charge waiting for him.

"Harry," said the Dodger, "I'm going over. I've made up my mind. This made it up for me." He handed Morgan an envelope with a Dundee postmark. There was nothing in it but a small white feather.

Morgan was in a panic. He had lived riotously and he had little left of all the purses they had gathered. "Now don't be silly. Don't be a sucker. All of the fighters are getting good jobs here and I know I can fix it for you," he said. "You wouldn't throw me down after what I've done for you. Why, you owe the wife and kid to what I did for you, and you know it."

"I've made up my mind," said the stubborn young Scot ominously. "It's this way. I am not an American citizen, so I went to the British recruiting office. I can go to Canada and I can take on wi' the Black Watch, the Forty-second Highlanders, and I'm going wi' Jean's blessing and all this wee pitifu' game can go to hell."

There was a light in the Dodger's eyes that showed the futility of further argument. Morgan raged within but he knew that it was useless. He pleaded for just one more bout with a man over whom the Dodger already held three decisions. The Dodger agreed impatiently.

"Then make it fast, man," he said. "I want no more white feathers from the lads and the lassies of Dundee."

That bout drew a big house for it was announced that both of the fighters would immediately enter the service when it was over. The Dodger's boxing career ended just before his fighting career began, for that night the Dodger did not dodge at the right time and he went down and out for the count. The new champion immediately left for Washington and became a boxing instructor.

"It's a sma' thing at best," said the Dodger to Morgan the next day. "I've a' the money I need and when I come back—if I come back—maybe we can do something all over again. I want ye to help me put my affairs in order, for you're a fine business man."

Morgan kept his wrath bottled. The Dodger made his will at the office of an attorney friend of Morgan. "And now," said the Dodger, "I want a paper drawn up so that Mr. Morgan can have charge of my business. Jean is a canny lassie, but a man's head is better."

When Dodger Dugan, reverted to George Campbell, took the train for Montreal, leaving a white-faced woman and a baby in the Grand Central Station, Harry Morgan had absolute control of his little fortune. Morgan felt that this was fair, for had he not made Dugan?

Too often a prize-fight manager is a parasite who profits by blows he neither gives nor receives. It was natural then that Morgan, the biggest of the ring parasites, should flock with the larger parasites who saw profit in the bigger fight. There sprang into being on the outer edges of what is called Wall Street the bucket-shop firm of Morgan & Mangan. The Big Fellow was a silent partner.

For stakes Morgan had the holdings of Dodger Dugan over which the power of attorney gave him complete control. With the first flush of success in the new game the ring and the rest of it looked small to Morgan. He would become a financier, a "Wall Street man." He began to drop his old associates, the gamblers—the petty ones—and the fight managers. He had his limousine, his chauffeur and his apartment. Often he wondered why he had been wasting this great talent for finance.

"Fighting," mused Mr. Morgan, "is not a business."

Meanwhile, as the chroniclers of other bouts might have said, "round by round the big fight overseas was being fought to a finish." The finish came abruptly and trouble began to accumulate for the firm of Morgan & Mangan. There was an upheaval in city politics and the Big Fellow passed from favor. The bucket-shop crusade started with peculiar sincerity. The firm of Morgan & Mangan began to get publicity which it did not seek.

The net closed tighter and tighter. The Big Fellow got from under. Mangan disappeared. Morgan began to see bars. He had seen them once in reality when they were holding him as suspect in a certain shooting during a guerrilla war. Finally the firm of Morgan & Mangan disappeared and with it all that Dodger Dugan ever earned in the ring. Morgan the broker became again Morgan, a Tenderloin character and a haunted man.

He was haunted by the vision of a pale woman with a baby in her arms. She had almost found him twice. He had to change his living place many times because of her. She had sent word to him that her home had been sold and that she had been dispossessed. Daily he got letters in a handwriting he came to dread. He tore them up unopened.

Word was sent to Morgan that he was to "lay low." Ordinarily this would have irked Morgan considerably, but he had something sterner than the law to dread and that was the wrath of Dodger Dugan. Morgan feared no ordinary prize fighter. He had bluffed and cowed many of them, but to him this quiet, soft-spoken Scot always had been an enigma.

The notion came to him to leave the country but then, he considered, he did not know where George Campbell might turn up. After all he would be safer among his own gangsters in his own haunts. He decided to pick his own battle ground for the meeting.

The American divisions started to come home. To the haunts that Morgan knew came gangsters returned in olive drab. One of them was wearing several decorations. Oh, yes, the gangsters of New York furnished their quota to the overseas forces. All this time there was no word of Dodger Dugan. One of the returned soldiers gave Morgan a brief spell of relief.

"The Black Watch?" he said. "Oh, that outfit was wiped out many times. If you had a friend in the Black Watch the chances are about ten to one that you won't see him any more."

After that Morgan began to look around for more boxers to develop. He settled upon a welterweight returned from overseas. He would capitalize the war record and the bouts would get him enough to start him all over again. He would make restitution in time to the woman and the baby, assuming that Dodger Dugan was not coming back.

Then Morgan saw something in a newspaper that caused him to go white and shaky. It was a brief notice to the effect that Dodger Dugan, former lightweight champion, had returned unscathed from service with the Black Watch. It was hardly more than an announcement, for ex-champions are only ex-champions.

Mr. Harry Morgan hurried to his lodgings and took an automatic pistol out of his trunk. This he examined with great care and loaded carefully. Slipping it into a side pocket of his coat he drove in a taxicab to Lello's on the East Side.

Lello had been under the protection of the Big Fellow and he owed Morgan a favor, as they say in this society. The favor was the fact of his being at liberty instead of being in the gray place of detention up the river. At Lello's Morgan felt that he would find all the witnesses he might need to give any version of what might happen. The inmates of that place were bound by a common bond, the dread and hatred of the law.

Morgan selected a table where he could watch the one entrance at the foot of the stairs, for Lello's was a basement place. All afternoon he watched furtively, now and then ordering drinks for those who came to talk with him. He had explained to Lello that he was expecting serious trouble.

Lello had telephoned to Harlem and two swarthy youths with caps pulled low came in response. After a whispered consultation this pair took their station at a table flanking that occupied by Morgan. The afternoon wore on and Morgan still waited, smoking cigarette after cigarette.

He dined at the same table as the lights were turned on brightly at Lello's. The orchestra shambled in and the dancing started. The place became crowded but still there was nothing unusual. Here and there a drunken argument broke out which was quickly quelled by Lello, the huge Italian proprietor. The place became misty with smoke, the laughter grew more strident.

Morgan sat watching only that stairway. The liquor he had been drinking had taken the chill out of his heart. He was ready for the kill. He pulled the cap down over his eyes to shade them. Somebody approached his table and he ripped out an oath.

An utterly incongruous figure descended the stairway and even the occupants of Lello's looked up curiously. It was a Highlander in kilts and Glengarry cap. Back against the staircase he stood for an instant and looked quickly from table to table and among the dancers. He saw Morgan and Morgan whipped out the automatic.

Instantly the Highlander threw up his hands and snapped into the pose of a boxer. The automatic barked once and the Highlander seemed to shift his head with the swiftness of a snake's. He crept forward toward the table where Morgan sat panic-stricken.

At the sound of the shot the dance broke up. The music stopped suddenly. Guests began to crawl under tables but the most of them hurried toward the wall where they huddled in a disordered group. Women threw themselves on the floor and screamed. The men, for the most part gangsters, looked on nervously. One or two of them drew automatics and waited expectantly.

Again the pistol in Morgan's right hand barked and still the Highlander crept toward him with his left extended and his right held back.

"It's Dodger Dugan," said one of the men against the wall. "It's Dodger Dugan, dodging bullets. I always said he could."

Morgan heard this. He put his left elbow on the table and resting the pistol on it fired again. Writhing and treading his way toward him came the figure of the Highlander. One woman sprawling on the floor with her hands to her face peered through her open fingers.

"It's murder, cold-blooded murder," she screamed. "I don't want to see it." But still she stared with wild, wide-open eyes.

From the table at the flank of Morgan another pistol barked. One of the swarthy young men had turned loose a cross fire but his companion caught the pistol and turned the muzzle toward the ceiling.

Fear or some deeply hidden sense of fair play had deprived Morgan of his last allies. He sensed the fact that he was being left alone to face his Nemesis. With a shriek he rose and in desperation emptied the automatic at the breast of the Dodger. The bullets spattered into the wall. Morgan stood clutching the empty pistol with his forefinger pressed against the trigger.

The Dodger advanced with his hands in the same position, his eyes boring into the eyes of Morgan. As Dugan neared the table he flung it aside, just as Morgan picked up a knife and dropped the useless pistol. The lookers-on were hushed and fascinated.

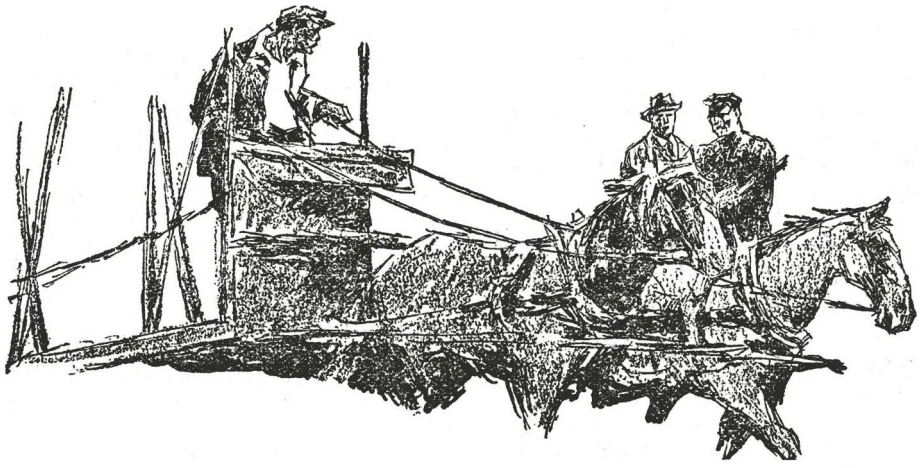
"Now we stand man to man," said Dodger Dugan. "I will not kill ye because ye are not worth it. I have killed better men and I have seen good men die. Ye are not fit company for them."

"But say, Dodger——" began Morgan. He was about to beg in the presence of his own kind. Loss of face meant nothing to him. The Dodger silenced him with a look.

"I'll put the mark on ye," continued the Dodger. "I'll put it on ye so that when you look at yoursel' in the glass, as I know ye do all your life, ye'll think o' me and mine. Put up your hands."

Morgan wildly raised his arms like a bewildered boxer who is about to fall. The right hook of Dodger Dugan went true to the mark and Morgan dropped. He came up screaming. The blood was spurting from the left ear which was lopping over like the ear of a hound. Morgan put his hand to it and stared at the blood that smeared his fingers. He screamed and fell to the floor again, frothing at the mouth. The Highlander turned and left.

"Huh," grunted a battered ex-pugilist in the group against the wall. "The mark of the cauliflower ear."



Flanagan's Get-away

By Henry H. Curran

A New York gangster wrestles with his past.

WHEN Flanagan, of the Woodchuck gang, got married to McGivney's daughter, and then went off to Sullivan County with her for a couple of days, the police of the precinct breathed easier. When he came back to New York they tightened their belts and began to look sharp again. So did Kelly, of the inspector's men. Kelly in particular, whose job it was to keep track of the Woodchucks, knew that a little thing like matrimony was not going to change Dan Flanagan.

"Might as well expect 'Black' Jackson to reform," he said, "an' he's the main guy. No; once a Woodchuck always a Woodchuck—until we stamp 'em out."

All this meant little to Flanagan, as he left his wife at McGivney's place in Bleecker Street and started for the stables to take out McGivney's new two-horse truck for a day's work on the West Street docks. McGivney's place was a saloon, but he trucked a little on the side. That gave Flanagan his job; and Flanagan was working, as became a newly married husband. He was through with the gang—or so he thought.

"S'long, Nell—back at noon for some o' them ham and eggs," he called up the stairs as he left. "Clyde Line docks to-day—right near by."

"All right, Danny." She looked after him as he went and the deep mass of her red hair shone down the dark stairway. Ever since she was a kid they had called her "Red Nell," because of her hair. Brown-eyed and tall, with a "reach that'd wind a masher round a lamp-post" as her father once said, she was a good match for Flanagan. Light lovers had shied away from this limb of big Andy McGivney. And it had taken Flanagan all his years to win her—for he had loved her since they went to school together. When she finally accepted him they were married next day.

"Back at noon," echoed Red Nell, and then, as the door closed below, she caught her breath quickly, with a queer pain of pure joy as she realized how carefully her lover had planned for his noon-day visit.

Outside it was a nippy March morning, as Flanagan tooled the blue roans out of the stable. Their coats shone, their rounded chest muscles quivered and billowed, and their heads swung up and down in great rattling arcs as they felt out the new harness and almost broke into a trot at the turn. Back of the lines and the new red paint of the truck's high seat stood Flanagan, feet wide apart, balancing to the jolting with the grace of a plains rider. A roughneck truckman—but above the broad-shouldered suppleness there was a face that had come from somewhere beyond the lineage of the

water front. The square jaw, blue eyes, high forehead and curly brown hair might be noticed for themselves, but the clean-cutness of the whole was what made people look twice at Flanagan. From somewhere, over the seas of the ages, this young longshore terror had caught a ricochet of a bit of the blood that had made knights and charioteers —blood of the loose-limbed who loved strongly and fought freely, who rode hard, and even, perhaps, snatched chariot races out of the jaws of death in gladiatorial victories. You could not prove any of this by Flanagan. He had a hazy idea about a grandmother in Greenpoint, and there the ancestral curtain fell.

As he swung into Christopher Street Flanagan saw two men on the far curb who started a train of thought, and in a moment his decision was in the reins. He swerved his horses in toward them. Then out of the tail of his eye he saw two other men as he passed, and his face hardened. Patrolman Jameson was swinging his club reflectively as he gossiped with Kelly, in plain clothes, on the corner.

"If he's back he'll be mussin' us up around here before night," Jameson was soliloquizing.

"Sst! There he goes now!" Kelly whispered, as he stood stock-still while his eyes followed the Flanagan equipage toward its goal at the curb. Jameson instinctively clutched his club tighter as he took in the picture. The four eyes went with the truckman and they took in every detail in their policeman's once-over of possible trouble. Only the man in uniform seemed nervous. Kelly was pulling his mustache, thinking. They were both silent. As Flanagan neared the curb he twitched his shoulder blades, just a quiver, as though to shake off the eyes that he knew were boring into him from behind. Then he brought up the roans with a dash and a rattle and the hunted look went out of his face.

"Ee-o-oh—Bill!" The truckman's halloo broke into a wide grin of white teeth and blue eyes. The men on the curb turned sharply.

"H'lo, Dan!" It was the older of the pair who recovered first. "Well, where did yer get the—fer the luvamike, Dan!"

"Big Bill" stared out from under his slouch hat as though there were fairy tales abroad. He was not easily surprised—not he, Big Bill Baker, messenger to the city government and gray in the service. But this was a new one. Flanagan trucking for McGivney—Dan Flanagan working! For a second Big Bill thought the gangster had "lifted" the truck and pair and was flashing them in broad daylight for very deviltry —he had played more impish pranks than that, this tongue of the Woodchucks' flame! Then Bill saw the truck was McGivney's and he knew it was no "job." Nobody jobbed McGivney.

"But——"

"Aw, it's all right, Bill, I'm workin'! Hello, alderman!" Flanagan turned to the younger man, more quietly.

"Hello!" responded the Honorable James van Tassel, cheerily and with lively interest. For three whole months he had been "Alderman van Tassel," and this new world of sidewalks and politics was still a cocktail of adventure to the lad from the silk-stocking district on Murray Hill. He had early heard of Flanagan—for who hadn't? Then he had met him, through Big Bill, and had taken a fascinated liking to this wild thing from the docks. Finally, when Kelly had "turned in" Flanagan only the week before, on suspicion of a "job" of which he was innocent, Van Tassel's testimony as a character witness had resulted in his instant discharge at the hands of a marveling magistrate. That had deepened the friendship into fealty for life.

"Just thought I'd tell yer——" Flanagan rested his elbows on the high seat and looked down, grinning. "Yer see—well——"

"Well what?" demanded Big Bill.

"I got married," said Flanagan helplessly.

Big Bill looked incredulous, then suspicious. Van Tassel, who knew no better, believed it.

"Yes, I did," persisted Flanagan seriously. "I did, Bill. It's McGivney's girl. Nell." He looked so sad that Big Bill's eyes began to twinkle. Then the messenger let go a chuckle. Then Van Tassel laughed outright. And then Flanagan let off steam with a laugh like a megaphone. "Ha, ha, ha!" The roans started forward in alarm. "Hey, you—whoa there! Whoa, now, babies." The sun beat down on the agitated little wedding party, the roans reared and plunged clumsily, the harness rattled, and the March wind wafted the wedding news into electricity. The sparkle of the gayest bulletin of life played about the stone curb in Christopher Street.

"Yer big—yer big—I dunno what!" Big Bill reached up and made a wide swing at the truckman. Under the slouch hat his eyes were shining in a most unusual way for Big Bill.

"Well, that was all—thought I'd tell yer!" Flanagan swung the roans into the street and rattled off toward the docks, laughing as he went. He was pleasant to look upon, was Flanagan—when he laughed.

As he passed the corner something told him to glance backward to the left. On the sidewalk the man in uniform was standing still, gripping his club, and watching him. And, a little ahead, Kelly was walking swiftly along—easily, quietly, with eyes to the front—but abreast of the truck and going in the same direction. Flanagan's sunshine suddenly turned to winter.

"Like dogs, they are," he muttered as the hate spread over his face like a cloud. "Dogs." His lips were shut tight and he stood stiffly, rigidly. "Always on a feller's neck," he mumbled. "Ah, for a good soak in the jaw——" But he felt pinioned, bound and dumb. It was the same old blind alley, already. He drove on. And Kelly followed.

Back at the corner Big Bill was voicing to Van Tassel his own disapproval. "There he goes," he rumbled as he pointed out the departing detective. "Kelly, tailin' him again. Why don't he give him a chance? Battin' him around a whole year now, pickin' him up when he ain't done nothin'—an' when the Woodchucks pull off a real job they get away clean 'cause the bulls ain't there. Only makes 'em worse, that sort o' dumb-bell work."

Van Tassel nodded.

"Well, he won't get nothin' on Flanagan now," said Big Bill suddenly. "Not if I know Nell McGivney—she'll keep him straight!"

Upstairs at McGivney's, some time past noon, Red Nell was watching her husband finish his matrimonial ham and eggs. "With me ears sewed back behind me head," he had declared when she inquired for her lord and master's approval, "I'm divin' in." A moment later he was rolling a cigarette in great contentment, his chair tipped back. He looked across the table and he remembered again the day when the teacher had carried a bunch of black-eyed Susans to school and how he had joked Red Nell about them as he matched up the flowers to her own colorful eyes and hair. What kids they were! And now—he smiled his happiness as he moved nearer.

"Say, Nell, ain't things breakin' fine!" he sighed. "Now if I could just find a way to pay up the alderman for that favor—he's white, that guy! If ever I get a chance—but he'll never need no help from me, with all the money an' friends he's got." Flanagan looked suddenly sober as he thought—perhaps something more than sober. He had forgotten to light the cigarette.

"Ah, Danny, we don't need all that." Her arm was on his shoulder. "We got ourselves—ain't that enough?"

"But it ain't that, it's——" He stopped.

"Y'mean——" She had risen and backed off a step and her brown eyes were looking straight through him and reading all.

"Yeah, I mean the bulls," he blurted out. "I don't mind them boob cops—lookin' leery when I go by, with their toy sticks—but Kelly an' his partner been tailin' me all the mornin'. Then buttin' in on O'Hara at the Clyde Line, with questions like I was framin' a job. Ah, fer one good—I've a mind ter——"

"Danny!" Red Nell's eyes were wide with alarm. "Give up that talk—give it up now! Kelly'll get nothin' if you don't give him nothin'. Let him rubber—let him——"

"An' Jackson'll be around—then they'll be tailin' fer keeps—yeller dogs—Jack's a pal, if he ain't no more!"

"Oh!" Nell's hands went to her face as though to save her from seeing something. "Oh-h—Black Jackson," she murmured. "Yes, he'll be around."

Then her husband was beside her, with his arm about her. "There, girlie——" Flanagan, just married, was in a new kind of trouble—a brand-new kind that he didn't know how to handle. There were tears in his wife's eyes. He stood helplessly.

"Danny," she gulped. "Danny. I want you to promise me. To promise"—her voice was clearer—"if you do anything—if you do—do it to Black Jackson—not Kelly. I know it's hard. They'll hound you. But Jackson—he's worse—he's wrong. Danny, if you go with Jack it's agin' me—it's agin' —Red Nell." Her head was up and she was looking straight through him again. "Are you with me? Or agin'!"

"Ah, I'm with yer, Nell—I'm with yer." He gripped her to him as though he would break her. And then he turned away

roughly and pounded down the stairs and out, seeing nothing.

Red Nell sat long, as hope fought with despair. She knew the ways of the wild things. Once a Woodchuck, always a Woodchuck; the only end was death in gun play or a "ride up the river" to Sing Sing. It was a bad gang. Not yet had one of them turned straight and lived. If he tried he was hounded out of his job by the cops and went back to the gang. Or he disappeared; and the gang was not informative on such subjects. Yes, Jackson would be around—ugh! She shuddered at the thought of the shifty-eyed leader who stopped at nothing to gain an end. He would be tailing her man as closely as Kelly. But Jackson would act, where Kelly could only wait—Dan knew too much to be left unenlisted. There would be a show-down. Then she remembered the hang-out of the Woodchucks in Weehawken Street, the queer little house that the cops watched. Dan would be coming by there on his return trip to the stables around six o'clock. She sat up straight and there was purpose shining in her brown eyes, the glow of deep fires that tuppenny lovers had shied away from. She would be there too—at six. She went about her little housekeeping quietly. The only noise was downstairs in the "store," where McGivney was slaking the afternoon's business in his usual easy, talkative fashion.

As Flanagan jogged his truck into West Street for the afternoon's work, with Van Tassel returning to his troubled thoughts from time to time, it was not the strangest thing in the world that Van Tassel himself should have been talking about Flanagan only a scant block away. Telepathy has turned her eerie tricks at far longer ranges than that. Van Tassel also was bound for West Street, and no less certainly because he was riding in the family coupé of the Skeffingtons, of Washington Square, instead of one of McGivney's trucks. All the way from the old red-and-gray house by the Washington Arch he had come, with Miss Sally Skeffington alone in the carriage beside him, and that of itself was enough to make the trip seem all too short to young Jimmy van Tassel. In a moment now they would be at the ferry and she would be on her way to that wedding in the Oranges. Jimmy was telling the story of his meeting with Flanagan in the morning.

"He's a fine fellow," he said with enthusiasm, "and now that he's married he's sure to go straight!"

"Oh—how much you know about it!" From the dark background of the carriage Sally's profile had turned toward him, just a little. He glanced at the vision of black hair and furs, at the black eyes that danced so mischievously above the saucy pointed nose and the saucier pointed chin. Then he found it impossible not to look a moment longer at the rosy little blessing that winter had placed upon the pretty cheeks of Miss Sally Skeffington of Washington Square. It seemed as though they became a little rosier, as their owner suddenly lowered her dark lashes.

"Why, I don't know so much, but——" Jimmy was laughing. Then of a sudden he was nearly doing more. He caught his breath sharply as he paused, the laugh disappeared and his lips quivered uncertainly; and then—but then the carriage suddenly stopped, caught in a press of trucks backed up from the dock traffic, and the footman was standing by the window asking if they could wait.

"Yes, for a few minutes," answered Sally nervously. She looked away through the window, desperately, for any straw to clutch at that would turn the talk into safer channels. They were opposite an ill-paved little street that seemed to start bravely and then sigh as it suddenly expired only a block away.

"What a funny little street! I never saw it before," she exclaimed rapidly.

"Oh, yes," responded Jimmy vaguely. He was still trembling. "Weehawken Street. Funny little house in there. Oldest house in Manhattan. Quaint little thing, with its curved roof and big eaves."

"Oh, I'd like to see it. Could we?"

Jimmy hesitated. He did not know so much about the inhabitants of the little house. Then gradually a great thought came to him. Sally would be returning from that wedding—at six o'clock, she had said—and the carriage would meet her at the ferry. He could meet her too, and perhaps—why not? Jimmy plunged into the opening with the alertness of a good half back.

"Yes, we could see it—to-day—on the way back! Just leave the carriage at the ferry, right across West Street, and I can show you about in no time, and then we can go back to the carriage, and——"

Sally was silent. The jam of trucks ahead was moving forward again, crunching and venturing, little by little, as ice packs break up in the great rivers. They started to move with the current.

"All right!" Sally suddenly gave a queer little laugh of adventure, and Jimmy joined in, with all the agitated delight that greets an unexpected legacy.

Near the ferryhouse they were held up again, caught in the swirling sea of trucks and drays that covered every foot of the broad sunlit way, from dock to curb, as far as the eye could reach. From the north and from the south came the trucks, from the side streets and from the docks. Near the ferry there was some sort of order, at the hands of a lone traffic cop, but to the occupants of the little carriage the tangle of the squirming truck monsters looked boundless, hopeless. Above them a gallery of masts and spars peered down over the shed heads of the docks. From beyond came a creaking of cranes, monotonously. An outbound liner's hoarse call to the seas spread its penetrating vibration over the whole teeming mass. Yet the truckmen seemed to take the mess easily as they swayed and steered, with a chirrup here, a sharp pull-up there, and periodical volleys of lusty blackguardism as hub crowded hub everywhere. Sally's wondering eye fell upon a figure standing astride a loaded truck newly painted in red. The overalled driver swung his blue roans swiftly into a waiting niche, then relaxed the reins and waited, with an easy grace born of long practice.

"Oh, look at that big fellow!" she exclaimed. "It's wonderful the way some of them handle their horses."

Jimmy looked, then looked again. "Why, it's Flanagan! The very same!" Then they both looked, in silent attention. Out of the jumble of vehicles oozed another man, afoot, who looked powerful and wiry, in his black clothes and dark long-peaked cap. He moved toward the truck quietly and unobtrusively, as a worm weaves the ground. Now, with hands in pockets, he was looking up and accosting the truckman from the pavement below. The pair on the coupé could not hear what he said. But Flanagan heard, every word.

"Well, what's the dope? Have yer quit us?" Black Jackson was asking the question that had waited three days. The eyes that shone like coals against the sallow face shifted to right and left as they searched for the answer.

Flanagan stood in silence for a moment as he looked down. He had not expected such directness, though he knew Jackson's way. Nor was he ready for this tone of unfriendliness; they were pals. He did not know that McGivney had kicked Jackson out of the saloon in Bleecker Street half an hour before, with Red Nell watching grimly from the window above. So he suddenly grinned.

"What's the matter, Jack?"

"That's for you to say."

Flanagan grinned again—this time for a reason. "Come up on the truck. I got some dope for yer." He cocked his head to suggest secrecy. The man on the pavement hesitated, then clambered up as the truckman dropped the reins lightly on the high seat and faced him.

"Now keep yer hands out o' yer pockets," said Flanagan quietly, in a different tone. "Whaddaya want?"

Jackson realized the maneuver at the same time that he sensed the adjacency of Kelly, in plain clothes, wandering with apparent aimlessness among the trucks just a few yards away. "Are yer wid us or agin' us? Y'kin answer that now." He spat out the words in an undertone as he looked about.

"I'm workin'," said Flanagan steadily. The man who had been his pal shifted his body with his eyes. He was spotting the whereabouts of the traffic cop before he should descend. But his right arm, moving backward an inch, looked like something else. There are times when action tarries not on guesswork—not if you know your man. The truckman's long leg suddenly tangled with those of his suspected assailant, while his arm went straight to the gang leader's throat. "Lk!" The dark man gulped and gurgled as he felt the truckman's clutch and bent backward. Flanagan was frisking him for the gun that wasn't there—not yet, he thought—and Flanagan's spare knee was finding good leverage under his opponent's ribs. Jackson suddenly rolled off the tail of the truck and into a muddy left-over of last night's rain that lay pooled on the pavement below. There was a splash, followed by instant recovery as the thrown man floundered to his feet. Two near-by truckmen looked on complacently, with professional approval. Flanagan waited. A mud-smeared face under the cap

that had stuck on tight was looking up at him now, and it blazed with the hate of a wharf rat at bay.

"Yer won't be workin' ter-morrer," spluttered the Woodchucks' leader, and his teeth showed white for a second. Then he slid off through the trucks, swiftly and silently. Kelly, pulling his mustache, was watching from the other direction in plain view.

Flanagan turned with a jerk, in time to see Kelly hesitate, then move slowly away himself.

"The bulls again." He shuddered as he thought of what he might have done. "On yer neck—ev'ry minute." He was white.

"Hey, there—get a move on yer, red truck—wake up!" The traffic cop was bawling over the line of trucks behind.

The jam was in motion again. Flanagan picked up the reins. But his hands shook as he tooled the roans into the clearing ahead. "God help me," he muttered. "Cops everywhere. An' now it's Jack gets me, or I get him, by night. An' either way it's ——" His face turned whiter. "There ain't no get-away," he whispered as he drove on with the current.

In the coupé Miss Sally Skeffington of Washington Square was trembling too. So was Jimmy, though in a different way. They had seen it all.

"Oh, I don't think I like him—your Flanagan," faltered Sally.

"The other man must be a no-good," defended Jimmy. "And what a throw—oh, what a beautiful throw!" He was tingling with it. The carriage moved on toward the ferry.

When the hour of six arrived there had been time enough for a heart-to-heart report from Kelly to the inspector. "Yes, it looks like trouble," that harassed official had agreed. "Another muss and I'll be looking for rooms in Tottenville, the way the commissioner's handing out the transfers nowadays—unless we clean up." He thought a moment, then gave his orders, quietly. "Six men, Kelly. You're in command. Post 'em where you like, and they won't be expected to start saving ammunition if——"

The afternoon had been long enough, as well, for McGivney's new truck to make its delivery downtown and begin its return trip to the stables. But McGivney's driver seemed out of tune with the homeward-bound alacrity of his fine pair of roans. "I'd oughta packed a gun," he was saying anxiously, quite to himself. But his jaw was set, beyond even the joggling power of the West Street cobbles.

And, most assuredly, six o'clock was time enough for a wedding in the Oranges to find its flowery way into family history and even return its radiant guests to the somber confines of brick-bound Manhattan. It was just at the stroke of six that young Jimmy van Tassel helped Miss Sally Skeffington out of the very proper little coupé that stood at the Christopher Street ferry gates, and set his face against the tide of commuters that was trickling through the truck lanes and funneling into the ticket-chopping recesses of the old ferryhouse.

"Look at them!" he exclaimed. "Hurrying, hunted—what a life!"

"But think of the trees and flowers they go to—and we——" She motioned toward the passing trucks and the irregular, squalid line of low buildings the other side of West Street. They could just make out the blurred forms of the brick line in the gathering darkness. Here and there a lonely-looking arc light, high up, shed its garish glow over the scene. To the north the white spars of a coastwise freighter stood out ghostlike against the great piers beyond.

"I didn't know it would be so dark," said Jimmy, "but we can see the little house near by, and perhaps peek in a window, and be back in a few minutes—if you'd like to?"

"Surely. Let's!"

"And I'll show you the trees and the flowers too," continued Jimmy with sudden inspiration as he guided her carefully through the rattling truck traffic.

"Ah, here we are," he proclaimed. "This is Weehawken Street."

They were at the beginning of the little way that starts so hopefully north from Christopher Street and then stops suddenly, abashed, as it meets Tenth Street, foreteller of the deadening desert of numbered streets beyond. "And there's the little house," he added as they strolled in a few feet. "Built before the Revolution, and yet it's all wood. See the old wooden stairs that run up the outside of it, under the big eaves—as though some one had just slapped them sidewise against the face of the house, then nailed them on, slantwise, and left them there. And the other side of the house is West Street itself—it's barely thirty feet between the two streets!"

The small street looked dark and forbidding. The solitary light at the far end made little headway. Only the yellow rays of the hooded saloon windows beside them gave promise of life. But there were no lights to illumine the middle of the short block. It was hard to see the little house at all. Jimmy looked on, dreaming quietly. He knew his old New York and could dream it. But, more than that, he knew now the taste of the seventh heaven that came with the fair presence beside him, and he felt as though they stood there alone, just he and she, in this queer dark world that thrummed with the city's roar.

"Yes, trees and flowers," he mused. "The little house had its maples and its flower garden on the river's edge, once, until they built a prison near by and the convicts——"

"Oh!" Sally suddenly started and came closer. A man coming from behind had brushed roughly against her. Jimmy looked up quickly. There were two of them, in peaked caps, slouching along with hands in pockets. They were young and husky.

"Where d'yer get that convict stuff?" snarled the nearest, over his shoulder. The other stopped and turned.

"Yer big dude, gwan back where yer belong—there ain't no convicts round here." He stood insolently. It began to look like picking a fight. Jimmy started to move away. "I think I'd better take you along," he whispered to Sally. "They seem ugly, as though they were looking for trouble."

"Yeah, yer better get out," followed the voice. "an' take yer bum doll with yer." Jimmy winced as Sally clung tighter to his arm. It was hard to stand this. He walked faster. Then, unexpectedly, the other voice sounded truculently, right in his ear, from behind. "Yer big stiff—where'd yer get the cheesy skirt?"

Jimmy turned as by instinct. There was a line. He shot out his right arm in sudden fury and his athletic suppleness went with the blow from his toes up as he found his mark. The young rough went down in a heap. If the matter could end there, as it should—but Jimmy had the forethought to look for the other man. He discovered him standing uncertainly on the curb, a yard or two away. As they faced each other neither could see the dark figure that sprang out from under the hood of the corner saloon. Only Sally saw it, and even as she gave a cry the figure whipped out a little leather affair and flicked it silently, with a sure twist of the wrist, against the back of Jimmy's head. He staggered, went suddenly limp, then fell with a muffled sound to the sidewalk and lay still. The three roughs broke and scattered, the man with the blackjack helping up the one who had fallen.

Only Sally was left, standing there alone. She moved uncertainly toward Jimmy and then kneeled and bent over him. A white-aproned man from the grocery next the saloon was running up behind her. "I will help you," he was calling. She could not hear him. Only the people running, everywhere—she could hear them all—their feet pounding, pattering, disappearing.

A big man had jumped off the red truck he was driving through Christopher Street, behind her, and he was running too. But, differently from the rest, he was running toward her. "Yes, it's him," breathed Flanagan as he stopped a second beside her, "an' it's Jackson got him." He looked up, started to run on, then jumped wildly into a dark niche in the wall as the crack of a pistol sounded from the other side of the little street. And now there was silence.

Behind, in Christopher Street, a man in uniform was pounding on the sidewalk with his nightstick. Rat-tat-tat! Patrolman Jameson's post was being "mussed up," as he expected. The call of the nightstick came sharply, insistently around the corner. But Weehawken Street was silent and deserted. There were no heads in the few windows that looked down on its ragged roadway. Sally bent lower. It seemed hours before the white-aproned grocer finally picked up Jimmy's limp form and carried him around the corner as she followed.

In the black niche in the wall a whispered conversation was going on that was hardly friendly. "Put up yer hands, Flanagan!" Kelly crouched, with the blue barrel of a pistol shining in front of his plain clothes. The truckman, who had nearly jumped into his lap, put up his hands slowly.

"Well-l?" drawled the detective. Kelly was feeling his way. He had his men on both sides of the little street; and the West Street side of the Woodchucks' house was covered as well. So were the near-by roofs. There would be no easy get-aways this time. And here was Flanagan, in the teeth of the trouble, and delivered into his hands. But it looked bad; Flanagan, running to catch

up with Jackson? Then they were together again! And so soon after that row on the truck in the afternoon? Yes, so soon after that! Once a gangster always a gangster. Kelly knew. They'd stick against a cop every time. Better feel out this guy and keep him close by for a bit.

Flanagan was still panting. "Well, now yer got me, whatcha goin' ter do about it?" He shifted a foot.

"Steady, there!" The barrel came forward an inch in the dark. "Where yer goin', Flanagan?" Kelly asked the question quietly.

"I'm goin' ter get that dog Jackson fer knockin' out the whitest friend I ever had."

"Bunk," cut in Kelly. "Chuck it."

Flanagan started to speak, then stopped as he realized the futility of trying to convince his keeper. A cop was a cop. They eyed each other. Crack! Another shot from the other side of the street. The bullet sang by. Kelly, bottled up with a prisoner to guard, let his eye turn the fraction of an inch toward the spurt of flame that had marked a spot that needed attention.

"Hah!" The truckman's leg shot out with the precision of an old drop kicker. Crack! Now it was Kelly's gun that had spoken—and missed; and Kelly was stumbling sidewise.

Flanagan leaped out of the niche and crept swiftly ahead along the walls, a passing blur as he slid through the shadows. He was headed for the little house. With a silent plunge he pulled up under the outside stairs and flattened himself against the wall. So far so good.

Thinking fast, he muffled his breathing, with every muscle tense as he stood. He knew that Jackson was directly above him, on the landing at the head of the stairs, where the door to the second story opens—and well sheltered behind the solid boarding that fences in the little landing. He knew too that Kelly would be on him from the rear—Kelly, who was a cop and wouldn't believe. Any second he'd come. And Kelly would shoot—like Jackson—and they were both dead shots. The old jam—caught cold between the two. There was no get-away now. If only he'd packed a gun! He listened. There was no sound from above. Jackson hadn't seen him—or else he chose to wait. Uh? Flanagan turned his head. In the dark silence behind there was a rustle, a tiptoe footfall—yes, the faint beginnings of a shadow, coming slowly, close to the wall, pausing for cover at the projections, then sliding ahead. Kelly was taking no chances. But he was coming.

Flanagan looked up and measured carefully the distance to the floor of the landing above him. There was no time to lose. He'd get Jackson now, if he could, and then—ah, well, he might give Kelly the slip. He might! But he remembered with a shiver Kelly's marksmanship. The Woodchucks had learned that to their cost. Anyway, here goes! He reached for the projecting edge of the landing's floor, then sprang up and clutched it with both hands. Carefully, muscle on muscle, he lifted his body silently through the air until his arms were straight and the narrow edge was under his hands below him. He had done it—without a sound. Now, one leg up, then another, and he was there, crouching and balancing, outside on the narrow edge as he leaned against the boarded rampart. Still there was no sound. And Jackson was but a few feet the other side of that board fence, waiting.

Suddenly he started, quivering, and nearly lost his balance. Jackson's pistol had spoken from the other side of the boarding, less than five feet away. The shot had gone down into the street. A flash answered from the darkness below and another bullet sang near—Kelly must be close up. Well, if Kelly came closer Jackson would drill him dead as he stood—there was clear range from the landing. With a glance over his shoulder Flanagan saw the flicker of a shadow moving out from behind a wall. Well—why not? Let Kelly get his. That would leave only Jackson to handle.

But then something flashed through Flanagan's head—a mere streak of a thought, an instinct—but it was a rending, compelling thing and it came straight out of a little new home over McGivney's saloon—"If you do anything, do it to——" or else it came straight out of a thousand years ago.

With a leap like a panther Flanagan vaulted up over the boarding and sprang down at the dark man with the gun on the other side as though he had come out of the trees. Jackson was near the door that gives on the rickety landing, aiming carefully at a moving shadow below. Cr-rack! As he fired he saw Flanagan crashing down on him, and so it was that, by the grace of the turn of an eyeball, Detective Kelly lost a tip of an ear instead of his life. Even so,

Jackson was quick. In the flash of an eye he was at the head of the stairs and plunging down them three steps at a time as he dodged from side to side.

Flanagan sprang after him, with an oath, then as suddenly pulled up, quivering, on the top step. For the fraction of a second he paused. The gang's old get-away—down the stairs and into the dark beyond, with the pursuer an easy target behind, to turn and fire into, point-blank. The old cinch! And Jackson would do it—oh, yes, he would, would he? That had happened once before, to a cop—but not now! Flanagan's wits were working like lightning. As the gang leader reached the foot of the stairs, bounding, Flanagan gripped with his toes and then with one long jump down from the landing fell sprawling on his enemy's shoulders. The two bodies twisted and fell together and again a gun spoke. But this time it spoke true, in the jumble. One of the bodies groaned and crumpled. The other tore itself feverishly away, straightened up to a stoop and, as the peaked cap looked down, the hand that still held the gun pushed it forward and aimed it carefully at the still body on the flagstones.

It was fair enough that the little house should have a door at the foot of the stairs as well as one at their head. After all, the stairs ran up along the outside of the old house just because there was so little room for them inside, and the broad eaves were there to shelter them from the rain and snow that came to Manhattan even in colonial days. The people of the colony had builded well. For Flanagan they builded better than they knew, when they cut the doors through above and below. As Black Jackson stood and aimed for his kill the door at the foot of the stairs opened a crack and a pair of brown eyes shone through. Then suddenly it flew back with a bang and a strange figure, in skirts and with red hair atop its flaming motion, threw itself at the gang leader as he stood. He started, fired wildly, fled. Before he had gone ten feet Kelly's pistol from behind had dropped him cold and lifeless in the gutter. A clean shot.

But, back at the foot of the stairs, Red Nell was taking into her arms and then into her lap the head that had so puzzled Van Tassel with its hint of a heritage that belied the water front. The eyes were closed, and there was a warm wetness spreading through the blue shirt where it opened at the neck.

"Danny—Danny," pleaded Red Nell softly. "Danny—are yer there? Ah, come back—my Danny, my own boy." The glow had faded out of the brown eyes. They were soft and begging; begging for that which returns not once it has gone.

When the little street had been cleared and the reserves had ransacked the neighborhood for the last remnants of the Woodchuck gang that had been defeated and dispersed in fair fight the cops made way for the ambulance that came clanging in from the world outside. "This way," said Kelly to the surgeon, "foot of these stairs." When they lifted him in, Red Nell's eyes looked into the surgeon's, and straight through and beyond, in that way of hers. He knew the question they asked—the old question. "Perhaps," he said hopefully. But he turned his head away.

"He had guts," said Kelly thoughtfully. "And he was straight, at last. But for him I'd be—you'd better go along, girlie. Get in with him." He helped her into the ambulance with a rough kindness. Still he stood looking at the red-haired thing that clung to the surgeon as the ambulance jolted slowly out of the ill-paved street, then went clanging off around the corner. It was not until a cop came up to ask a question that he turned his head. Then he answered in a voice that was curiously husky, for Kelly.

When Jimmy came to, in the grocery, after a few minutes of involuntary dreaming, he found himself prone on a bedding of beets, his head propped up in a crate of lettuce heads that were labeled "Solid," with a piece of penciled cardboard. Also, he felt a bump on the back of his head, that ached and felt very solid indeed. Somebody was feeling of the bump, tenderly. Jimmy's eyes were only half open but he knew it was not the grocer's hand. He sighed and closed his eyes quickly. The hand was withdrawn from the bump. "Please do it again," breathed Jimmy blissfully.

"Come, wake up—sit up!" encouraged the grocer, patting the treasured bump.

"Ugh!" Jimmy sat up. "Leave my head alone, will you?"

But he was rewarded by a ride back to Washington Square in the old-fashioned carriage, after the army of inquiring cops had filed in and out among the beets and the lettuce heads. And, after all, there they were, alone, in the Skeffington's coupé, trundling up the long slope from the river bank

that had seen trees and flowers back in the colony days. Almost he forgot the bump that crowned the aldermanic head. And, strangest of all, as they rode on——

But so many things have happened since those Weehawken Street days that it is hard to know where to begin. After all, it was quite a while ago—quite a little while. One thing comes back in memory when that saucy Sally, who is prettier than ever, rumples Jimmy's delighted head and asks her aldermanic husband if she can feel of his Weehawken Street bump again—just once more, for luck! Then Jimmy steals a glance at his wife and he knows again what it is to be lucky.

At such times they are sure to fall talking of their friends the Flanagans. For Flanagan got well—yes, the old strain—it's as tough as it is fine. It was weeks before Red Nell could take him home to the two-room flat that was waiting. But at last she got him back. And now—why, it was only the other day, of a Sunday, that Kelly, in his new captain's bars, saw them on the other side of the street and came hurrying over, grinning.

"An' how's the big boss truckman?" he laughs, bending down toward the red-haired toddler who looks so small as he stands there between Red Nell and her husband. "Sure, he'll be drivin' the roans himself before long. Haw, haw!"

Then Kelly strikes a pose, as he pulls his mustache and puts the old question. "Dan, when's that corner shindy comin' off, so we can give the other feller a disorderly conduct an' turn him in proper—after you've knocked his block off yourself? Just for good measure! Y'know, we're still waitin' for the day—every cop in the precinct wants the honor."

But Flanagan grins foolishly and says, "No, I'm workin'," just as he always does.

Then Kelly becomes serious. "Dan, you know we're your friends, since Weehawken Street—every cop. You know it, Dan?" It's the same question that Kelly always puts, almost pathetically, when he sees them.

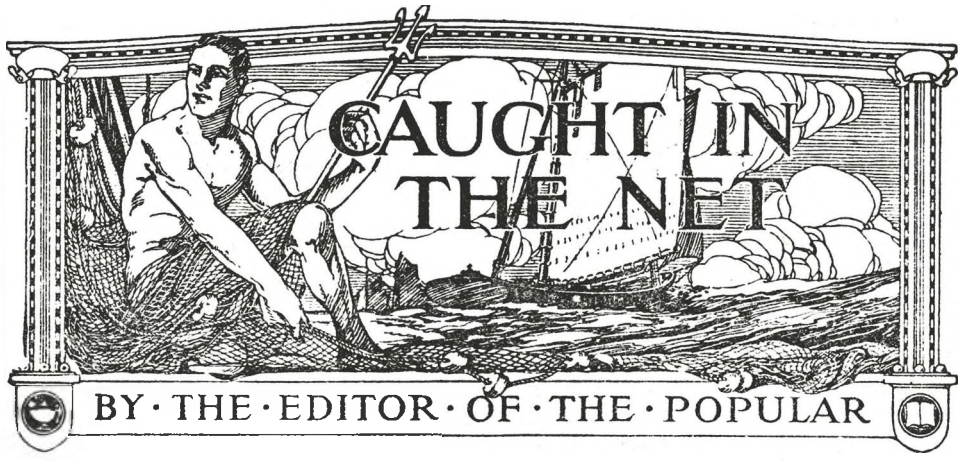
But Red Nell clings a bit closer to her big husband when Kelly speaks of Weehawken Street, and she just looks at him, as though she wants to be sure he's really there. She knows how near it came to being —different.

The complete novel in the next number will be "The Pothooks Porcupine," by Theodore Goodridge Roberts.

LIFE TO BE MADE HARDER FOR CROOKS

TALES of master criminals to the contrary, the life of a crook usually is a hard one, its rewards meager, and eventual punishment almost certain. But the life will be harder and the punishment more certain if the suggestions made at the International Police Conference held in New York City last spring are carried into effect—as they probably will be. To the American policeman perhaps the most important business before the conference had to do with the establishment of a national police bureau under Federal control. This matter was considered by the last Congress and legislation to effect it is expected to be enacted by the next one. The assigning of police liaison officers by each country to every other country to help keep tabs on international crooks also was proposed. A secret international police code was drafted and the advisability of adopting a system for the transmission of the finger prints of criminals by telegraph and radio was discussed.

Control of the sale of revolvers was considered and a law forbidding the importation of these weapons into the United States, and placing a tax of one hundred dollars on every one manufactured here, suggested. The head of Scotland Yard said that there were few gun carriers among British criminals and that the British police are unarmed, which caused Owen O'Duffy, commissioner of Dublin's police, to remark that Dublin's policemen also are unarmed but that "no one else in Ireland is." It seems to us that undue restriction of the sale of pistols in the United States would have a similar effect. The crooks would get them in some way, and the law-abiding citizens would be left without means of protection except for the police, who can't be everywhere at once.



A QUESTION OF VIEWPOINT

THE trouble with most people who want to make money," Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., informs us, "is that they don't stop to think in terms of pennies."

Is Mr. Rockefeller altogether right? Perhaps the trouble with most people who want to make money is that they want to make money. We never yet knew any one who wanted to make money—really wanted to make money—who *didn't* think in terms of pennies. What has evidently escaped Mr. Rockefeller's notice is that only a very negligible fraction of humanity is in the slightest degree concerned with making money. That is why so few people, to Mr. Rockefeller's dismay, do think in terms of pennies. Most people think in terms of the good things of life that pennies will buy. They are interested in exchanging their pennies for things worth while, like beefsteaks and music and books and plays and automobile tires and trout flies. Pennies are dull things. You can't eat them; the music that they make runs all in one key; trout are not attracted by pennies.

"Begin saving with pennies," advises Mr. Rockefeller. "There is no better way to earn money than to save it." True enough. But who cares about earning money? What most of us are intent upon is earning a living. That is a very different thing. Mr. Rockefeller's viewpoint is perhaps obsolete—perhaps eccentric. We don't know whether elder generations were interested in accumulating large bank balances. We never belonged to an elder generation. This generation is concerned with getting a great deal of transient pleasure and enduring happiness out of its brief existence. It believes in liquidating its pennies. It wants three four-sided meals a day, lots of sunshine and blue sky, books, clothes, knowledge, health. It wants these things quickly, while the power to grasp and savor them is still coursing strongly through the young blood in its veins. It reasons that their early acquisition is stimulating, broadening, educating; that living largely, albeit reasonably, generates strength to live yet more largely. The new idea is to invest part of our money in life. Buy big experiences, education, health, enjoyment. You can convert a penny not only into another penny, but into health, happiness, and knowledge which are marketable commodities whose value is infinite. Not many men can concentrate on the saving of pennies and have these as well. Penny saving may become an astringent process.

Here is a voice which has spoken to more generations than even Mr. Rockefeller can recall, the voice of the great French astronomer, Flammarion, who from his eighty-odd years of experience in ideal happiness, deplores the proposition of amassing money.

"There are people," says Flammarion, "who believe we are on earth in order to make money. I knew a multimillionaire who passed all his time counting coupons. He is dead. He was an unfortunate fool. He bored himself more than he bored those about him. If your daily bread is assured be satisfied. Work in that line

which interests you, for your personal pleasure. Enjoy all your faculties. Do not imagine that a time for retirement approaches. Remember that in the long run everything arranges itself. And when you go to sleep on the last night your last hour will be the evening of a beautiful day."

Most of the pennies Flammarion has earned have long since gone into circulation. What few he has managed to save aren't worth much, anyway, with French exchange at something like ten francs to the dollar. But he has a tidy little balance in contentment stored away where the exchange rates will never penetrate. Still the hard fact remains that if you never save any money, you'll never have any.

THE HUB OF THE PACIFIC

CERTAIN gentlemen whose favorite pastime is viewing with alarm have been pointing suspicious and accusing fingers in the direction of London since the British government announced its intention of spending fifty-five million dollars to make Singapore an impregnable base for the British navy in the Pacific Ocean. They hint that this action is against the spirit of the naval treaties signed at the Washington conference last year and demand to know why England should spend several fortunes to safeguard a port that no enemy threatens.

To us it seems that fears that this policy is the forerunner of naval aggression are wasted. As far back as 1905 the British admiralty had decided to abandon Hongkong as a naval base in favor of Singapore, because of the latter port's position at the end of the Malay Peninsula, the hub of the Pacific. It is the duty of naval officials not to form national policies but to make such disposition of the forces at their disposal as will best help in carrying out policies already formed by their government. The first policy of a political body such as the British Empire must be the defense of its far-flung colonies. Singapore, because of its position, is an ideal base for the fleets intrusted with the mission. Australia is but 2,000 miles away, Egypt 5,000, Hongkong 1,700, South Africa 5,000 and India 2,500. Since the end of the World War the center of naval interest has shifted from European to Eastern waters, and as Britain's stake in the Pacific is a heavy one it is but natural that the men who form her naval policy should want to make her position there secure. Both the United States and Japanese fleets now are based in the Pacific, and Britain's fortification of Singapore is no more a threat against the United States than is our establishment of bases to care for our fleet on the Pacific Coast a threat against Australia.

A NEW SPIRIT IN BASEBALL

BASEBALL, we are told by veteran fans, isn't the scientific game it was a half-dozen years ago; admiration of clever playing of the inside variety has been displaced by worship of the Great God Swat and punch has displaced finesse to the great detriment of the national game. We decided to go and see these things for ourselves. We went and we saw. We saw two home runs made in one game and we saw "Babe" Ruth slash out three single-base hits in four times at bat. We also saw some very pretty fielding, and while our knowledge of baseball tactics is not extensive, some playing that impressed us as being pretty brainy. But these were not the things that impressed us most. Nor was the new Yankee Stadium, the ball yard de luxe. What impressed us most was the good sportsmanship of the crowd that watched the game. That is what seemed to us new in baseball. We must admit to receiving our early baseball education in a decidedly tough minor-league city where now and then an enthusiastic spectator took an active part in the game by tossing a pop bottle under the feet of a fielder chasing a long fly near the bleachers, and where it was not uncommon for the umpires to leave the field after the game in considerable state—the state being furnished by police reserves hastily summoned to the scene of battle. Hooting visiting players and hurling insults at the opposing pitcher were so common that they excited no comment. We saw nothing of this sort at the Yankee Stadium. The crowd was anxious to see the home team win,

but every brilliant play of the visitors was rewarded by hearty applause. Perhaps the game that we saw was exceptional, but it gave us the impression that the baseball fan has added a fine spirit of sportsmanship to his many other virtues. That addition should be a welcome one to every one interested in baseball.

SALESMANSHIP TAKES UP ART

FOR years it has been a baffling problem how to put real art in the American home. Many people who could afford it knew next to nothing of estimating the worth of a canvas and therefore hesitated about buying beauty in this form. They felt competent to purchase pianos and books, Oriental rugs and fine furniture, but it has been a dominant impression that paintings were beyond their esthetic evaluation as well as beyond their pocketbooks.

So the recent organization of a great central art-sales gallery, which was inaugurated under most influential auspices in New York last March, is something that commends itself to artists and public alike, inasmuch as it represents an effort to pull down the foolish barriers between them. Its management, comprising eminent painters and public-spirited men and women, have evolved a method of exhibition and sale that promises to be proof against any idealistic failure and temperamental vagaries.

Lay persons who have become patrons of this project have contributed enough money to finance its existence for a trial period of three years, with the paintings of the artist members of the association as material pledge for their money. The financial backers do not expect profit for their support, unless, indeed, a canvas they may choose for their money increases in value as time elapses.

The main gallery, or galleries, of this coöperative society, is located on a floor of the Grand Central Terminal Building, but it is planned that similar exhibitions shall be given in the large cities of the country. And all of them will be widely advertised. Definite prices are to be affixed to canvases hung and a corps of experienced salesmen will devote their energies to elucidation and persuasion.

Is it not to be taken as one of the auguries of our growing culture? Also of good sense? Hitherto the artist has had to, almost entirely, depend upon the sales made for him by dealers, which were mainly passive performances appealing to a very limited circle.

Native American painters only are to be included in this business plan for placing art within the proper appreciation of our average citizen and making it attractive in price. There are hundreds of splendid but comparatively unknown artists in our midst who have never known how to gain the attention of the general public, and the majority of them have languished in little coteries, hopeless of larger opportunity, accepting bread-and-butter tasks that embittered the spirit.

We sincerely hope that this coöperative organization of American art and American business principles will bring about a renaissance of esthetic achievement and on the part of our public a desirable development in the sense of beauty.

PROPAGANDA

THE word is ragged, threadbare, worn-out, decrepit, and disreputable. Its primitive meaning—"the scheme or plan for propagating a doctrine or system," says "Webster's Unabridged"—has been twisted and distorted by loose-wagging tongues until the perfectly innocent term has lost every shred of respectability and has become part of our cant vocabulary of opprobrium and stigmatization.

Back in the seventeenth century Pope Urban VIII. founded "the propaganda," an ecclesiastical college for the training of missionaries. In those days, therefore, the propagandist was an exponent of the doctrines of Christianity. A far cry it is from then to now when the propagandist is a reprehensible disciple of the doctrines of evil.

Almost anybody with an opinion of his own is a propagandist nowadays. If our opinion happens to conflict with the opinion of our neighbor we are as like as not to call him a propagandist. If a man be ever so little conservative in his views on social, political, and moral issues he is pilloried as a "propagandist of reaction and capitalism." If his opinions on these subjects trend but slightly toward liberalism, on the other hand, then he is a "parlor bolshevik and a propagandist of sedition and anarchy."

It is becoming hazardous to hold an opinion about anything. If you believe in Sunday baseball you are spreading propaganda for the Serpent. If you think prohibition is a good thing and that the Sabbath ought to be a day of rest, then you are the spineless lip servant of the "Blues." If you believe that the history of this country should be taught as it really happened and not as we like to think it happened, you are an agent of British imperialism. If you state your belief that there are some few inspiring pages in the story of America and that the founders of the nation were not all and entirely self-seeking and intriguing politicans of the lower order, then you are the tongue-wagging dupe of Bourgeois stupidity. If you think there is something to be said for the case of Labor, you are a crimson agitator. If you concede that the development of the country's resources is furthered and hastened by the concentration of wealth, you are a spy of Wall Street. And if you breathe a word about California—unless it be a fighting word—the entire East will jump on you with both feet and but a single mind, shouting "Propaganda!"

While we are passing laws prohibiting this, forbidding that, and penalizing the other, why not a law branding as a felon any man who shall abuse and distort the ancient definition of the honest word "propaganda?" It is time something was done. Opinion will be smothered and conversation gagged if the march of "propaganda" in the modern sense goes much farther. We shall become dumb and muffle our breathing for fear some canting enthusiast will discover we dare possess an idea of our own and exile us into social outlawry with the stigmatizing epithet "propagandist" branded on our reputations.

POPULAR TOPICS

THE pay envelope grows increasingly important in the American scheme of things. The number of those who work for themselves is decreasing. Corporation ownership of industries is increasing rapidly. Back in 1899, 182 people out of every thousand who worked for a living were employed in manufacturing industries; twenty years later 260 of every thousand workers were engaged in these industries—an increase of 43 per cent. In 1919 only 14 per cent of our industrial workers were employed by firms, partnerships or individuals—over four fifths of them worked for corporations.

THIS change in industrial conditions may be changing us from a nation of individualists to a nation dependent on "big business"—but there are compensating features. The big modern manufacturing plant usually is a pleasanter, safer and more healthful place to work than was the old-time shop or mill. Working hours are shorter and rates of pay higher. All corporations are not of the soulless variety. Many of them are the best sort of bosses.

ONE reason for changed working conditions is that big business has found that good working conditions and healthy workers pay good dividends. Mr. Frank A. Scott, a prominent business man of Cleveland, Ohio, addressing a meeting of the National Amateur Athletic Federation not long ago, said that the men at the head of many large industries are anxious to provide facilities for their employees to engage in healthful games and competitions, and commented on the difference between this viewpoint and that of twenty years ago, when it took considerable argument to

convince certain manufacturers that it would cost them no more to wash their shop windows than to burn the gas all day, and that they would benefit by the increased efficiency of their workers.

IF you spend fifty-eight cents of every dollar you earn for living expenses, forty cents for recreation, and one cent each on alms and education—you are a spendthrift. If you spend thirty-seven cents of every earned dollar for living expenses, and one cent each for recreation, education and alms, and save sixty cents—you are a tightwad. If you spend fifty cents on living and ten cents each on alms, education and recreation, and save twenty cents—you are a thrifty man. All this according to official designations of the government, published in a little book entitled "How Other People Get Ahead" that is being distributed for the purpose of getting more of our citizens interested in the habit of thrift.

LAST year's cotton crop, according to figures of the Census Bureau, was 9,729,048 equivalent 500-pound bales, an increase of almost two million bales over 1921.

SECRETARY HOOVER and other government officials are busy trying to find some way of relieving the present traffic jam in the ether. There now are 588 radio broadcasting stations in the United States and somewhere between a million and a half and two million receiving stations. The trouble seems to be that there isn't enough ether to take care of all the messages that are whizzing about.

IN England the adoption of the wireless telephone has caused airways users to adopt "May-day" as a distress signal in place of the international "S O S." The letter "S" is difficult to distinguish by radio telephone. The new trouble call is from the French *"M'aidez"*—"Help me."

TIMES do change. In just one short year the flapper has allowed both her tresses and her skirts to grow longer, "Babe" Ruth has been readmitted to membership in the human race, and the whir of the put-and-take top has vanished from the land.

POOR ADAM! He must have had a tough time of it—that is if William Jennings Bryan is correct in his opinion that the theory of evolution "ain't so." Doctor Charles W. Stiles recently told the Washington Biological Society that if Adam was the granddaddy of us all he also must have had all the germ diseases that afflict us. Little ailments like typhus fever, hookworm, pneumonia, Jacksonian epilepsy, tuberculosis, Asiatic cholera, scarlet fever and smallpox must have been commonplace to him; and battling yellow fever, mumps, sleeping sickness, three kinds of malaria and various species of cooties the occupation of his leisure hours.

LAST year strikes cost the people of this country two and one half billion dollars —thirteen times the cost of the Panama Canal—this in visible losses. What the bill would be if indirect losses were figured we can only guess. These strikes weren't profitable to employers; we doubt if in most cases they were really profitable to the workers; certainly they didn't do anything to help poor old General Public to a house on Easy Street. Industrial arbitration is a subject well worth thinking about.

A YEAR ago Des Lacs, North Dakota, jumped into prominence by electing an all-woman village administration. It was carried into office by a vote of two to one. After a year of petticoat rule the voters ungallantly reversed their judgment and elected an administration composed entirely of members of the sterner sex.

Ocean Tramps

By H. de Vere Stacpoole

Author of "The Garden of God," "Me and Slane," Etc.

Mr. Harman's philosophy counsels that riches are sweet but revenge far sweeter.

IV.—SUNK WITHOUT TRACE.

THE mat sail flapped against the mast and then hung loose while the chuckle of bow and outrigger died away. Harman, turning his face to the east all gone watery with the dawn, saw the moving moonlit swell silver polished by the calm, then, leaning forward, he gave his sleeping companion a prod with the steering paddle.

Cruising in a South Sea island canoe tries the temper as well as the judgment and two days of this business had considerably shortened the temper of Billy Harman.

For two days and two nights, fed on bananas and island truck and led by the pointing of an indifferent compass, they had pursued the west, chased by the light of gorgeous dawns, broiled by midday suns, raising nothing but endless horizons and consuming sunsets.

"Wind's gone!" cried Harman. "Flat calm and looks like stayin' put."

Davis roused, supported himself with a hand on the outrigger gratings and blinked at the dawn; then he yawned, then he began to get command of speech.

"Whach you want digging me in the ribs like that for?" said Davis. "You and your flat calms! Where's the hurry? Are you afraid it'll run away? Blest if you aren't the——"

"No use quarrelin'," cut in the other. "Fightin's a mug's game and words won't bring no wind. Pass us a drinkin' nut."

Davis passed the nut and then, while the other refreshed himself, leaned, his elbow on the grating and his eyes fixed lazily on the east.

Morning bank there was none, nor color, nothing but a great crystal window showing infinite distance and taking suddenly a reflection of fire and a sill of gold; gold that moved and ran north and south and then leaped boiling across the swell while the sun burst up, hitting Harman in the back and Davis in the face and turning the lingering moon to a gray cinder above the azure of the west and the morning sea.

Away to suthard across the sunlit swell a ship showed becalmed and painting the water with the reflection of her canvas and, wonder of wonders, a mile from her and more to the north stood another ship also held in the grip of the calm and seeming the duplicate of the first in rig, tonnage and design.

They were whalers, two of the last of the old whaling fleet, cruising maybe in company or brought together by chance.

Harman was the first to sight them, then Davis turned and leaning comfortably on the outrigger gratings looked.

"Whalemen," said Harman. "Look at 'em—stump topmasts, tryin'-out works and all. Look at 'em—pair of slush tubs."

Davis said nothing; he spat into the water and continued to look while Harman went on.

"There you are, grumblin' last night there were no ships about and them things only waitin' to show themselves; castin' the canoe in the teeth o' Providence, sayin' you wanted planks under your feet to walk on—planks, b'gosh! If one of them gurry butts sight us we'll be planked. I've been there and I know."

"Oh, they won't bother about us," said Davis.

"Oh, won't they?" said Harman. "Shows what you know of whalemen. If them chaps sighted us they'd yank us on board and set us to work; hands is what they're always cravin' for and our only chance is they'll take us for Kanakas, goin' by the cut of the canoe."

"Oh, they won't bother about us," said Davis, "and if they do you ain't a bad imitation of a Kanaka. But it's cursed luck all the same—planks, yes, I want the feel of a plank under my foot and the feel that there isn't only ten days' grub and water between us and perdition—curse them."

"Now you've done it!" cried Harman. "Look! They're comin'."

Sure enough, as though the last words of Davis had struck life into the far-off vessels, the decks of both ships suddenly swarmed with antlike figures, boats were dropped, and in a flash were making across the sea, two fleets of six boats each and rowing as if in a race.

But they were not making for the canoe. Due north they headed over the glassy swell, while Davis, standing erect and holding on to the mast, watched with shaded eyes.

"Whales," said he. "Whales, they're after, not us. Look at them!"

"I can't see no whales," said Harman.

"No, but they can," said Davis. "Look! They're heading west now. They're on to them."

A clap of thunder came over the sea and foam spurted amid the distant boats. Then two of the boats detached themselves from the rest, skimming through the water without sail or oar, the flash of the foam at their bows clear to be seen.

"They've got their fish," cried Harman. "Look, he's going round to the northard and here's the breeze!"

Up from the southeast it was coming, spreading in great waves like fields of barley. The whale ships had caught it and were trimming their yards in pursuit of the boats and now, the mat sail of the canoe filling out and cracking against the mast, Harman seized the steering paddle and headed her due north.

"Where are you steering for?" shouted Davis.

"North," replied the other. "You don't want to be runnin' into them ships, do you?"

Davis crawled aft, seized the paddle and pushed the other forward.

"Cuss the ships," said he. "They've got their own business to attend to and I'm not going to put her off her course, not for Jim Satan. You don't mind the ships—they're busy."

He was right.

A Swenfoyn gun had put a speedy end to the whale and, as the canoe drew along not half a mile away from the nearer ship, it was being hauled alongside her and the tackles were out. But the remainder of the fleet of boats not engaged in this work seemed occupied in some business of their own which was not whale fishing; they were all surging together, oars were being tossed in the air and the far-away sound of shouting came across the water.

"Fightin'!" said Harman. "That's what they're at. They're both claimin' the fish. I know their monkey tricks. Look at them!"

But Davis was not listening to him. His quick eye had caught something floating ahead; altering the course a point he called to Harman to let go the sheet, then, leaning over, he grabbed the floating mass in both hands, yelling to the other to balance the canoe.

"Get out on the gratings and hold her down," cried Davis. "Our fortune's made! Fish? No, you fool, it's ambergris. Lord send they don't see us!"

"Mind!" yelled Harman, in sudden consternation.

The gunnel lipped the water despite his weight and the outrigger rose a foot as Davis strove, then with a mighty effort he brought it tumbling on board, the water pouring off it and there it lay between his feet a huge, knobby, putty-colored mass,

with octopus sucker prongs sticking in it like tiger claws and a two-fathom strip of pale-green seaweed twined about it as if for ornament. Harman without a word crawled back across the outrigger grating and trimmed the sail while Davis without a word resumed the steering paddle.

He did not mind about altering his course now. He put her dead before the wind while Harman, half kneeling on the stub of the forward outrigger pole, and with his hand on a stay, reported progress.

"No, they ain't seen us," said Harman. "They're all crowdin' back on the ships and the fightin's over. There's never no good in fightin', as I said to you this mornin'—not unless you get the other chap's back to you and belt him on the head sudden. Now if those ballyhoos had quit arguin' who'd harpooned first and kept their eyes skinned they'd 'a' got ambergris instead of sore heads. How much's that stuff worth, do you reckon, Bud?"

"Mean to say you don't know—and you been on a whale ship?"

"Never heard tell of the stuff before nor sighted it," replied the other. "Whalemen don't take stock of nothing but blubber. Where does it come from, d'ye think?"

"Out of the whale," said Davis, "and it's worth twenty dollars an ounce."

Harman laughed. When Bud had worked upon him sufficiently to make him see the truth he first took a look to make sure the whale ships were showing only their topsails above the horizon, then he sat down to calculate the amount of their fortune.

II.

Ambergris, though used in the production of scent, has no smell or only the faintest trace of odor when warmed. It is the ugliest stuff in the world, and as valuable as gold. Harman's bother was that he did not know the weight of the lump. He reckoned, going by comparison with pigs of small ballast, that it might be half a hundredweight, but the table of weights and measures barred him. He could not tell the number of ounces in a half hundredweight.

"Well, it don't much matter," said he at last. "If you're not lyin' and it's worth twenty dollars an ounce, then it's worth twenty times its weight in dollars and that's good enough for us. Twenty bags of dollars as heavy as that lump of muck is good enough for Billy Harman. Say, it beats Jonah, don't it? When you look at that stuff which isn't more nor less than good dinners by the hundred and bottles of fizz by the raft load, and to think of an old whale coughin' it up; makes a chap b'lieve in the Scriptures, don't it, seein' what it is and seein' where it come from and seein' how Providence shoved it right into our hands."

"We haven't cashed it yet," said Davis.

"No, but we will," replied the other. "I feel it in my bones. I've got a hunch the luck ain't runnin' streaky this time. Somethin' else is comin' along. You wait and see."

He was right. Next morning, an hour after sunrise, a stain of blue smoke showed on the southeastern horizon.

Steamers in those days were fewer in the Pacific even than now, but this was a steamer right enough.

"She's coming dead for us," said Davis as the hull showed clear now of smoke. "Brail up the sail and stand by to signal her. What you make her out to be?"

"Mail boat," said Harman. "Sydney bound, I'll bet a dollar. You'll be hearin' the passengers linin' up and cheerin' when we're took aboard, and then it'll be drinks and cigars and the best of good livin' till we touch Circular Wharf. But I ain't goin' in for hard drinks—not till we cash in this ambergrease, and not then, only maybe a bottle of fizz to wet the luck. No, sir, seein' Providence has dealt with us handsome Billy's goin' to do likewise with her. Providence don't hold with the jag, which ain't more nor less than buyin' headaches, and di'mond studs for bartenders and sich. Providence is dead against the drink and you don't forget that."

"Why, you were talking only last night of buying a saloon in Frisco," said Davis.

"That ain't buyin' drink," countered Mr. Harman. "Nor swallerin' it, which is what I'm arguin' against. Look at her how she's liftin'."

They said no more, watching the oncoming boat now showing her bridge canvas distinct from her hull. Then suddenly David spoke.

"That's no mail boat," said Davis. "Not big enough; stovepipe funnel, and look at that canvas. She's not even a B. P. boat. Some old tub carrying copra in trade."

"Not she," said Harman. "Steam don't

pay in the copra business. Bunkers have to be too big, seein' there's no coalin' stations much in the islands."

"We'll soon see," said Davis, and they did.

The stranger came shearing along, showing up now as a five or six-hundred-ton squat cargo boat, riding high and evidently in ballast, with a rust-red stovepipe funnel and a general air of neglect that shouted across the sea.

Then the thud of the engines ceased, a yoop of her siren cut the air like a whiplash, and a string of bunting blew out.

Harman waved his shirt and as the stranger came gliding on to them he got ready to catch the rope that a fellow was preparing to cast from the bow.

As they came alongside, lifting and falling with the swell, a big, red-faced man, leaning over the bridge rail, began shouting directions, while Davis, seizing the ladder which had been dropped, climbed on deck, leaving Harman below to manage the canoe.

The *Oskosh* was the name of the hooker and Billy Schumways was the name of her master and owner. He was the big man on the bridge. The ship was seven days out from Arafata Lagoon with a crew of Chinese and a Savage Island bos'n, makin' down for Isseway in the Paumotus and in a hurry. All of which he roared at Davis from the bridge and at Harman from over the bridge side.

"Clew on and kim up," cried Captain Schumways to the hesitating Harman. "Cut that canoe adrift and come on deck and don't be wastin' my time or I'll ring the injins on. What's that you're sayin'? Am bergrease? What's ambergrease? Ain't got no time to be muckin' about—there, bring it if you want to." He paused while Harman, having fastened a rope flung by Davis round the precious ambergris, came on deck guiding it up. Then when they were both over the rail Schumways, ringing the engines full speed ahead, came down from the bridge.

"Where'd you get that muck?" asked Captain Schumways after they'd given their names and a yarn about having been drifted off an island when fishing. "Picked it up, did you? Well, you can shove it in the scupper if you're set on keepin' it. And now follow me down and I'll show you your quarters. I'm sufferin' for extra help in the engine room and I reckon you've got to work your passage."

He led the way to the saloon hatch and down to the saloon.

The *Oskosh* had been a Farsite Enfield boat running from Frisco to Nome. Cargo, Klondyke diggers and lastly contraband had reduced her from respectability and cleanliness to her present state. The saloon was a wreck and ruin, the paneling split, the fittings gone, bunks filled with raffle and oddments, the table covered with old linoleum showing the marks of coffee cups, and over all a dank, throat-catching atmosphere of decay, cockroaches and dirty bunk bedding.

Schumways inhabited the cabin aft. He pointed out two bunks to port and starboard. "Them's yours," said he, "and there's beddin' and to spare. You'll mess here, bein' whites, and you'll take your orders from me and Sellers. When you've cleared out them bunks and got your beddin' in come along up and I'll show you your job."

He left them and went on deck and Bud Davis sat down on the edge of a bunk.

"Say, Billy," said Bud, "how about those passengers lining up and cheering? How about those soft drinks you were talking of?—or would you sooner have a high ball? And we're to take our orders from him and Sellers! What I'm proposing to do is go up right now, catch him by the hoofs and dump him overside, scrag Sellers, whoever he is, and take the ship. That's how I'm feeling."

"Ain't no use," said Harman. "Fightin's a mug's game, that chap's a sure-enough tough and we haven't no guns. Lay low is the word, more especial as this packet is contraband and we've only to wait to get 'em by the short hairs. Contraband—look at her, guns or opium, with blackbirdin' maybe thrown in, that's all there is to her."

Davis assented. These two old Pacific hands had eyes from which no ship could hide her character for unseaworthiness or disrespectability; Schumways matched his ship and Sellers, when he turned up, would be sure to match Schumways; the crew were chinks and the case was plain. Not that it bothered Bud or Billy. Their one thought as they worked clearing the bunks and settling the bedding was the ambergris.

Schumways knew nothing of ambergris or its value, that fact was quite plain, but it would never do to leave it lying in the scupper. Harman having poked his head up through the hatch and found a clear deck, they got it down, stowed it in a spare bunk occupied by a filthy rug, a suit of oilskins and a paraffin tin, and covered it with the rug.

Then they came on deck and the captain of the *Oskosh,* coming down from the bridge, introduced them to the engine room and Sellers, a wire-drawn Yankee, six feet two, who introduced them to the engines and the stokehold.

"Chinks are firin' her now," said Sellers, "but you'll hold yourself ready to take a hand at the shovelin' if wanted. I'll l'arn you how to shoot the stuff. That's a pressure gauge, you'll get to know it before you've done, and that's an ile can, you'll get to know her, too." He led the way down a passage four feet broad to a transverse passage eight feet broad where under a swinging oil lamp Chinese, naked to the waist, were firing up. He opened the door of a long, blazing tunnel and seized a shovel. The coal came down a chute right onto the floor, and taking a shovelful he demonstrated.

"Stokin's not shootin' coal into a fu'nace, it's knowin' where to shoot it. Every fu'nace has hungry places—there's one, that dull patch up there, and there's the food for it." A shovelful of coal went flying into the gehenna right onto the dull patch. Dropping the shovel he seized an eight-foot bar of steel. "M'rover, it's not all shovelin'—it's rakin'. Here's your rake and how to use it. Then you've got to tend the ash lift, and when you've l'arnt not to stick your head in the fire when she's pitchin' hard you'll be a stoker. Ain't nothin' to the job but the work an' the will."

"But see here, cully," said Mr. Harman, "we ain't signed on for stokin' in this packet. Engine-room fiddlin' is stretchin' a point with A. B.'s, but stokin's outside the regulations. Clear, and by board-o'-trade rules which——"

"That's them on board the *Oskosh,*" said Sellers, producing a revolver which he exhibited lying flat in the palm of his huge hand as though he were showing a curiosity. "Six rules an' regulations, soft nosed —and don't you forget it, son."

III.

Through days of blazing azure and nights of phosphorescent seas the *Oskosh* plugged steadily along on her course. She was square rigged on the foremast and used sail power to assist the engines when the wind held, and always and ever, despite her dirt, her disorder and the general slovenliness of her handling, she kept a bright eye out for strangers. When Schumways was not on the bridge using the binoculars they were in the hands of the Savage Island bos'n, a fact noted by Billy and Bud when those unfortunates had time to note anything in the midst of their multitudinous occupations.

They were not always put to stoking in this horrible ship where things went anyhow and work was doubled for want of method. They would be oiling in the engine room under command of Sellers when, maybe, the voice of Schumways would come ordering "them roustabouts" up to handle the sails; sail handling, greasing, emptying slush tubs, helping in engine-room repairs, "lendin' a hand in the stoke'old," it was a mixed meal of work that did not please the appetites of Billy or Bud. Yet they had to swallow it. Kicking was no use. Harman tried it and was kicked by Sellers and took the injury and insult without retaliating. Fighting was a mug's game, but deep in his soul Billy Harman formulated an oath of revenge, swearing that somehow, somewhere, and somewhen he would be even with the *Oskoshites* to the ultimate limit of their back teeth.

He communicated this darkly to his fellow sufferer, who laughed.

They were seated at breakfast, feasting on the leavings of Schumways and Sellers, and Davis told him to close up.

"You give me the mullygrubs with your talk," said Davis. "Whenever you open your fool mouth something happens wrong way about. This was a passenger packet, wasn't it? and we were to sit in the saloon bein' admired by the passengers, weren't we? and was it Fourth Street or Fifth Street you were goin' to open that whisky joint? and fighting is a mug's game according to you, whereas if we'd wiped the engine-room floor with Sellers first day instead of knuckling down to him we'd have stood on this ship as men instead of being a hog-driven pair of roustabouts begging for scraps and emptying slush tubs. Too late now.

They've got the better of us and know our make, which is putty, owing to you. Even with them! Why, I'll bet twenty dollars to a nickel if you try any of your homemade tricks they'll be even with us. Talking is all you're good for—fighting's a mug's game."

"So it is," replied Mr. Harman. "Fool fightin's no use, hittin' out and gettin' belted's one thing, but stradegy's another, and that's what I'm after, and if I don't get my knife in these chaps' ribs behind their backs and unknownst to them you can take me home and bury me—and it won't be long first."

He was right.

That very evening they lifted Fuanatafi, their destination, a purple cloud in the sunset glow and a cloud of ebony by night as they lay off and on, listening to the far sound of the breakers till dawn revealed the great island in all its splendor and isolation, for Fuanatafi, like Nawra, has no harbor, just a landing beach to westward where boats can put in. Razor-backed reefs keep ships a mile from the shore and make the place pretty useless for trade.

As the light broke full on the island Billy Harman, who had come on deck and was standing with Davis by the lee rail, saw away to southward another island with a peaklike summit and to westward of that two small islets circled with moving clouds —gulls.

"Why, Lord bless my soul," said he, "I've been here before. Six years ago it was and we took off a raft of turtle shell for six cases of gin. Christopher Island was the name they give it and it's head center for all sorts of doin's. That island to suthard is Levisca and it's been blackbirded till there ain't scarcely no Kanakas left on it. Now I wonder what Schumways is landin' here."

As if in answer to his question two Chinese came aft carrying a long deal box between them, which they dumped close by the main hatch.

The fore hatch was open and they could see more boxes being brought up, six in all, and each one, as it came on deck, was carried aft, the whole being stacked in one pile and covered with a tarpaulin. The engines ceased their dead-slow tramp, then came an order from the bridge and the roar and rasp of the anchor chain filled the morning air echoing across the water and lifting the reef gulls in clanging spirals.

IV.

Schumways dropped down from the bridge and Sellers rose from the engine room wiping his hands with a piece of cotton waste; he had put on his coat and wore an old Panama on his head ready for shore. Then at an order from Schumways the starboard quarter boat was lowered, Harman and Davis were ordered into it, and the captain of the *Oskosh* and his engineer took their places in the stern sheets.

Nothing could be more lovely than the morning light on the streets of blue water between the reefs or the view of the great island washed by the calm ponded sea and waiting for the approaching boat, loveliness that left no trace, however, on the minds of Bud and Billy laboring at the oars, or of Schumways and Sellers smoking in the stern.

As they ran the boat's nose on to the beach out from the groves to right and left stepped a dozen Kanakas armed with spears. Casting their spears on the sand they trod on them while Sellers and his companion, walking up the beach with hands outstretched, greeted the chief man, bright with palm oil and adorned simply with half a willow-pattern soup plate worn as a pendant.

The Kanakas and the two whites seemed old friends and the whole lot, after a moment's chatter, disappeared into the groves, leaving Bud and Billy on the beach by the stranded boat.

"They're off to the village," said Harman. "Wonder what they're up to. Bargainin', most like, over them guns."

"What guns?" asked Davis.

"Them cases we left on deck. Them's guns or my name's not Billy Harman. There's six guns in each of them cases, that's thirty-six for the lot, and I expect Schumways will be askin' old Catch-'em-alive-o ten pound apiece for them in coin or shell—maybe in bêche de mer, for that's as good as bank notes. That's three hundred and sixty pounds and the durned things didn't cost him sixty. I'll bet——" He turned. Some one came breaking through the trees; it was Sellers.

"Hike off back to the ship and bring them cases," cried Sellers. "The ones we've left on deck. If you can't bring the whole six, bring four, and you can go back for the other two. Now then, you lazy sweeps, grease yourselves and get goin'."

"Blast him!" said Davis as they pushed off across the inner lagoon.

"No use swearin'," said Harman, "it don't cut no ice. Bud, I've got them."

"What you mean?" asked Davis.

"You never mind," replied Billy. "You do as I'm askin' you and I'll show you. Lay into your stroke now and that's all you have to do at the present minit."

He seemed delighted with himself as he rowed, chuckling and chortling as though he already had the *Oskoshites* down and out. Bud, who knew Billy's mentality from long practice and use, was not so elated. He knew that Harman, among his other mental qualities, was likely to go blind of one eye when seeing red or when ambition was at fever heat and Billy was undoubtedly seeing red. Full of the thirst for revenge at having been made to work, at having been kicked and spoken to with contumely, he was fit for anything just now.

"What is it that's in your mind, Billy?" asked the other as they drew up to the *Oskosh*.

"You wait and see," said Harman.

The Chinese stood by the ladder as Harman went up it, leaving Davis to mind the boat, then on deck he gave the Kanaka bos'n his orders and while the cases were being got into the boat stepped below.

He came up in a few minutes and helped with the last case, then dropping into the boat beside Davis he pushed off and they began rowing toward the shore.

"Go slow," said Harman, "and don't pull hard. The breeze is backin' into the north and I'll have the mast up in a minute. Then we can run for Levisca. We could row there quick enough but it's easier to sail. After we've taken on grub and water there we can push further south."

"What the blue blazes are you talking of?" said Davis "You mean running away in this boat?"

"Yep," replied Harman.

"But, you fool, they'll up steam and be after us before we've got halfway there."

"Not they," replied the strategist. "You wait an' see. You keep your eye on the old *Oskosh* and you'll see somethin' funny in a minute."

He ceased rowing. So did Davis. The boat rocked on the swell. Then as he got the mast stepped and the sail shaken out Davis, whose eyes were fixed on the far-off ship, gave an exclamation of surprise.

"Why, she's lying awfully low in the water."

"Yes," said Harman quite simply. "I've opened the sea cocks."

"You've *what?*" cried the other.

"Opened the sea cocks when I went below. The chinks haven't twigged yet that she's sinkin'. She's goin' peaceful as a dyin' Christian. Look!" A column of steam was rising from the funnel of the sinking ship. "They've twigged it now, but they don't know what's sinking her. If they did they haven't enough sense to know what to do. Besides, it's too late; look, they're gettin' out the boats. Now help me to dump these durned cases and bring the sheet aft."

Davis did as he was told, then as the boat lay over, making a long board for Levisca, he suddenly leaned forward toward Harman, his face injected with blood.

"You've done it, haven't you?" shouted Davis.

"Yes, b'gosh I have," said Harman complacently, his eyes fixed on the *Oskosh* sinking by the head and with her stern high in the air.

"Wouldn't tell me your plans, would you? So full of hitting Schumways you had no thought of anything else, weren't you? Well, you sainted fool, what about that ambergris?"

"What ambergrease? Oh, Lord! the ambergrease," said the wretched Harman, suddenly remembering. "We've left it behind!"

"You've left it, you mean. What would it have cost to have taken two chinks down and fetched it up and stowed it in the boat? Not a nickel—and it was worth twenty thousand dollars."

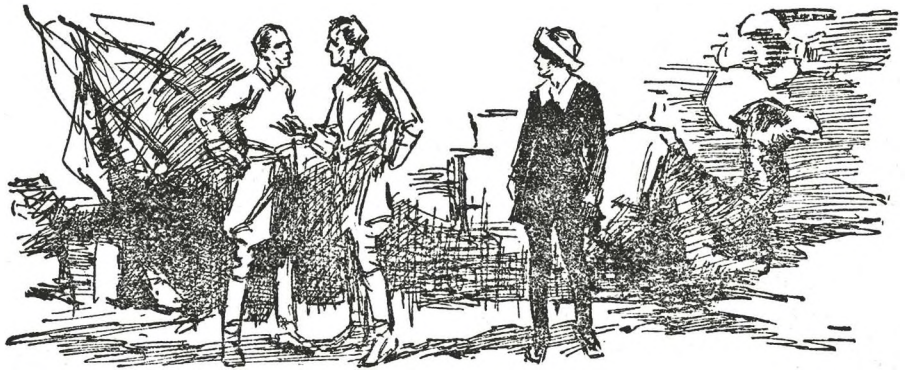
Harman said nothing. The *Oskosh* was making her last plunge and the overloaded boats were making for shore. Then his face slowly brightened as the face of Sellers and the face of Schumways rose before him. The two men who had forcibly introduced him to work.

"It was worth it," said he. "If it was five hundred dollars an ounce, it was worth it."

"What was worth it?" asked Davis.

"Losin' that ambergrease," replied Mr. Harman.

Another story of this series in the next issue.



The Storm Center

By Burton E. Stevenson

Author of "The Buhl Cabinet," "The Fate of Mona Lisa," Etc.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Guards were slamming doors along the crowded Paris-Marseilles express when O'Neill bounded down the steps to the train shed of the Gare de Lyon and waited while his porter sought a seat. "But there are no seats," the man reported. "Pardon," said a voice at O'Neill's elbow, "I have a reservation which I cannot use." And so it befell that O'Neill, ex-consul, vacation bound for the north of Africa, rode out of Paris in the seat reserved for one Monsieur Delage. Which was fortuitous in more ways than one, fortuitous because it provided him with a comfortable niche as far as Dijon, with an opportunity to make the traveling acquaintance of the obviously charming veiled lady who sat at his elbow, and, above all, with the entrée to that labyrinth of mystery and adventure that led him at length to the storm center of the world. For while he and his piquant companion were making themselves better known to each other in the dining car the train pulled into Dijon, with a tired voyager trespassing upon the seat just vacated by O'Neill. When the train steamed southward again that voyager was dead, murdered. He had met the fate intended for Delage, the presumed occupant of the seat. O'Neill, shocked but not dismayed, blessed his own preserving saints and proceeded as cheerfully as might be to Marseilles. On the boat from Marseilles to Algiers he fell in with a second adventure. While he slept he was drugged and his baggage ransacked. Possibly this second incident might have dampened his holiday-going ardor. But his mind was diverted by Landon, the archæologist, and by Landon's daughter, Patricia. A seagoing friendship sprang up between the two and O'Neill, and out of the friendship grew O'Neill's determination to follow them on a projected expedition into the forbidding country of the Berber tribes. Ostensibly Landon was proceeding on an archæological mission. But O'Neill sensed something more urgent that drove the man and his daughter into that land of mystery. And in Algiers Landon admitted as much. He declared his plans embraced nothing less than an effort to destroy the malign force which he believed to be threatening the foundations of Western civilization. What that force was Landon would not say. Was he mad and this obsession the characteristic delusion of his madness? O'Neill sat on the balcony outside his room at the Hotel of the Oasis and pondered. Suddenly he was torn from his thoughts. A hand was laid on his shoulder. A burnoosed and turbaned figure stood beside him. And turning he recognized in the dim light of the north African night a sinister face he had seen on the Marseilles express.

(A Five-Part Story—Part II.)

CHAPTER XI.

A FAIR FIGHT.

"MAY I sit down?" continued the unknown, and seated himself quietly on the bench beside O'Neill and got out a cigarette and lighted it. "We cannot be overheard here?" and he cast a fleeting glance about him.

"No, I think not," answered O'Neill mechanically and continued staring at him, his head whirling more than ever.

"You appear surprised," continued the other, smiling, but there was a hint of savagery under the smile and the voice lost none of its harshness. "You did not think I would come, then? But why not? From you I have nothing to fear, and I agree with

you that it is time we had certain explanations—that we met face to face."

There was an evident menace in his look and in his tone, in spite of the courteous manner.

"It is not the first time," O'Neill observed.

"No. But it may be the last. There is one thing that I cannot understand. How does it happen that you are connected with this affair?"

"I don't know myself," said O'Neill, and rubbed his head. "I seem just to have fallen into it."

"You will permit me to point out that it is very dangerous. Much more dangerous perhaps than you think. I would remind you of what happened to the man on the Marseilles express."

"I have not forgotten it," said O'Neill. He was beginning to recover his self-control. Perhaps if he was sufficiently noncommittal he might discover the key to this enigma.

"The same thing might easily have happened to you last night," the other pointed out. "That—or worse."

"I understand that," agreed O'Neill quietly. "I supposed it was you. I appreciate your forbearance."

The other waved his hand deprecatingly.

"We have no quarrel with you, if you are sensible. We rather suspect that you are being made use of."

"Perhaps," said O'Neill, reddening a little. He had thought the same thing himself once or twice.

"You must realize that the advantage is all with us. You have no chance; we could —ah—eliminate you at any moment. There is absolutely no possibility that your plot can succeed. I have only to speak a word and you are finished. Nevertheless I am empowered to offer you two hundred thousand francs for the map."

O'Neill looked at him without answering, trying desperately to understand. So it was a map they were searching for—but a map of what?

"Two hundred thousand francs in one hand," went on the other, his voice deepening with menace; "and in the other hand —death! It ought not to be difficult to choose."

"No," agreed O'Neill slowly; "no—perhaps not."

"Well, then?"

O'Neill took a reflective puff or two. He realized that he was playing a dangerous game, but there seemed no way out.

"Perhaps you will be good enough to answer a few questions first," he suggested.

"Ask them."

"Was it you I saw in the Place de la République to-night?"

"What was I doing?"

"Having coffee with a French general."

The unknown chuckled softly.

"No; that was my very famous brother, Ali Bey, to whom I am a great trial. But what would you—each family has its black sheep! And after this affair is finished—well, I shall not be so black!" And then he looked at O'Neill sharply. "But you should know that—if you know anything!"

"Yes, perhaps I should," O'Neill agreed.

"Now it is my turn. You say you knew that I was on the boat?"

"I suspected it."

"Why?"

"I couldn't think of any one else who would want to drug me and search my things."

"I must compliment you on one thing—you have the map well concealed."

"Exceedingly well concealed!" agreed O'Neill dryly. He was growing tired of this game—tired of being pursued and bulldozed. He judged it was time to strike back.

"But you did not see me?"

"No—though I looked for you."

"You did not see me come ashore?"

"No," said O'Neill curtly. "I didn't care whether you came ashore or not. I was hoping that I had seen the last of you—but no such luck!"

"Then how did you discover I had taken the room in this hotel just under yours?"

"I didn't discover it," retorted O'Neill. "I hadn't the slightest idea you were anywhere around—I supposed you had sense enough to know by this time that you were on the wrong track."

"But the note."

"Which note?"

"Asking me to meet you here?"

"I never asked you to meet me here—I hadn't the slightest wish to meet you, and the quicker you get out the better I'll be pleased," said O'Neill, and slipped his pipe into his pocket, his muscles tense. Why should he be afraid of this skinny Arab?

His companion glared at him a moment and even in the gloom O'Neill could see how

his face darkened—how his lips drew back from his teeth in an ugly snarl. Well, let him snarl!

"Do you mean," said the Arab savagely, at last, "that you did not write the note—that you did not invite me here—that you did not leave your door unlocked?"

"No," broke in O'Neill; "I wrote no note; I did not invite you here—I don't want you here; and as for leaving my door unlocked, as a matter of fact, I remember distinctly that I locked it before I came out here."

"It was I unlocked it, Mustapha," said a suave voice behind them. "Monsieur O'Neill is entirely innocent."

Even before he turned O'Neill recognized that voice. It was the voice of the Gare de Lyon—the voice which had urged upon him the reservation to seat thirteen—a voice rich and melodious, wonderfully controlled.

But Mustapha was on his feet with a spring like a panther, one hand buried in the folds of his burnoose. And his face was like a wolf's.

"Who are you?" he demanded hoarsely.

"Louis Delage, at your service."

"Ah!" said Mustapha slowly, a world of menace in his voice, "so you are Louis Delage!"

"At your service," repeated Delage with a little bow.

"It was you wrote the note?"

"Yes—for which I beg Monsieur O'Neill's pardon. But I knew it was useless for me to sign my own name—you would not have come."

"No," agreed Mustapha. "No—perhaps not."

"Most certainly not. You would have stationed one of your men at some dark corner. You see I know you!"

The Arab shrugged but his face grew more ferocious.

"And yet it was necessary that we meet," continued Delage smoothly. "As you observed to Monsieur O'Neill, certain explanations are necessary. We are getting in each other's way. Permit me to say that it was very indiscreet of you to take that seat in the train facing mine. The moment I saw you——"

"You knew me?"

"But of course. And I know your ambition also, Mustapha!"

"Ah, do you?" said Mustapha, with a thin smile, relaxing a little. "Then perhaps we can come to an understanding. You must realize that you can never use that map."

"On the contrary," said Delage easily, "I expect to use it very soon."

"It will be certain death. Once they learn it has been stolen they will be on guard."

"How will they learn?"

"I shall inform them," said Mustapha. "That is, unless we can reach an agreement."

"What agreement do you propose?" asked Delage negligently.

"A fourth for you—more than you can ever spend."

"Perhaps you underestimate my capacity," smiled Delage. "But let us say a fourth. And for yourself what? World power, is it not?"

"What is that to you?"

"Nothing, I admit," said Delage, with a shrug. "You or another—what does it matter? But what guaranty have I that I shall receive my share?"

"My word—on the head of the Prophet!"

Delage laughed.

"You must know, Mustapha," he said, "that I am fully aware how little that is worth. No—I shall keep the map!"

A knife flashed in the Arab's hand as he jerked it free of his burnoose but Delage was upon him like a flash and with one savage blow upon the wrist sent it spinning to the pavement. O'Neill could hear the quick gasp for breath as the two men locked, breast to breast. There was for a moment no other sound—just that quick gasp, that sense of strain; but he knew that both men were putting every ounce of strength into the struggle.

The Arab's back was against the stone balustrade, and Delage held him there, rigid for a moment, and then slowly bent him backward above the coping, his arms locked at his side. Once he wrenched an arm free and grabbed at his adversary's throat, but Delage caught it and bent it up and back.

Then, with a mighty effort, the Arab shook himself free, leaving his burnoose in Delage's grasp, and turned and hurled himself upon him from the rear; but Delage, with an instant apprehension of his danger, bent low, snapped upright as Mustapha leaped, and sent him hurtling over the balustrade. O'Neill caught one glimpse of his body, spread-eagled on the air, his hands grasping at nothing, then it shot from sight.

Delage stood for an instant staring down over the balustrade; then he picked up the burnoose, thrust his hand into the hood, drew out a packet of papers, and threw the burnoose over the balustrade after its owner.

"It was his life or mine, Monsieur O'Neill," he said a little hoarsely, and drew out a handkerchief and mopped the sweat from face and hands. "You saw that?"

O'Neill nodded. His heart was beating so that he could not trust himself to speak.

"I cannot stay here," went on Delage rapidly. "His body will be discovered in a moment or two. I will arrange his window so that it will appear he fell from it by accident. There will be no reason to suspect you. Besides, the police will not inquire too closely—they will be glad that he is dead, in whatever fashion. Take my advice and know nothing about this affair. Forget what has passed here. It will be simpler," and he picked up the Arab's knife and slipped it into his pocket.

"You forget," O'Neill pointed out, "that when they search the body they will find a note from me inviting him to meet me here. That will take some explaining, it seems to me."

"One moment," said Delage, and stepped to the light from the open window and ran rapidly through the papers in his hand. "Here is the note, Monsieur O'Neill," he added, and handed it to him. "There is absolutely nothing to connect you with this affair. What do you say?"

"I don't know," replied O'Neill, taking the note mechanically. "Only I am getting enough of this. Why should I be the goat for——"

"You will not be troubled further, I promise you," broke in Delage. "For that man, the earth is well rid of him—he but got what he deserved. As for myself, I step out of your life to-night—I swear it."

He paused, his lips open, as though hesitating whether to say something more; then, with a little shrug, stepped through the open window into O'Neill's room.

"Good-by, Monsieur O'Neill," he said, opened the door and passed from sight.

For an instant O'Neill stood staring at the door. Then he went to the balustrade and looked over it. Five stories down, in the street below, a group had gathered—he could hear excited voices.

They would be coming up in a moment. He must decide what to do.

And with sudden resolution he hurried back to his room and snapped out the light. Then he struck a match, held it to the note, and watched until it was quite consumed. Finally he undressed hastily and tumbled into bed.

It had been a fair fight. It had been Delage's life or the other's. Why shouldn't he keep silent?

Besides, there was something about Delage which fascinated him—a finish, a power, an adequacy, an aplomb. What was it he had said? "I step out of your life to-night."

Undoubtedly he ought to be glad if that were true—and yet—well, life would be less picturesque with Delage out of it!

CHAPTER XII.

THE HOUR STRIKES.

The sun was just rising over the eastern hills when O'Neill threw back the tent flap and stepped briskly out into the fresh morning air. He stood for a moment looking down upon the scene which had grown so familiar during the weeks they had been encamped there, but which had never lost its interest—the brown, arid plain, flecked here and there with white, stretching away to the northern horizon; the rugged chains of bare, deep-chasmed hills to west and east, the scattered heaps of ruins at the foot of the slope where the tent stood, and just beyond them the caravan road with its varied and bustling life.

It had never ceased to fascinate O'Neill, this busy road—busy, that is, as compared with the solitary wastes through which it ran; this ancient highway which carried the traffic of the Aurès and the far Sahara to the markets of the picturesque, invulnerable old city of Constantine. To watch it was to step back two thousand years; and, watching it, O'Neill often had the feeling that it could not be real, that it was some sort of magic panorama, a series of pictures by Tissot, even a glorified movie from which a director would presently emerge to rearrange his puppets. For the caravans moving along it varied in no slightest detail from the ones upon which the Romans had levied tribute.

One was passing at this moment—a small one with a dozen laden camels, followed by two lean and ragged men on foot and a third bestriding an ass so small that his feet

would have dragged the ground had he not held them rigidly stuck out in front of him. O'Neill smiled as he looked at the camels, they were so calm, so contemptuous, so remote from man and his little affairs; beings of another world transmuted into this queer shape and set to work here by the spell of some demon; creatures out of some long-forgotten past, moving at a pace as slow, unhurried, and unchangeable as the finger of time itself. They drifted by like shadows of prehistoric days.

O'Neill shook himself out of his thoughts and turned toward a rude little hut built against the neighboring hillside out of fragments of stone.

"Hi, Belayèd!" he shouted.

There was no response, so he strode on to the hut over the rough ground, stooped down and looked inside. It was empty.

"Now I wonder——" he began and then his eye caught something moving toward him down the hillside. It was Belayèd, bending under a distended goatskin slung across his shoulders. He descended rapidly, in spite of the uneven and rock-strewn ground, with a sure-footedness which told of his native ancestry. With a last scramble he was at O'Neill's side.

"Bon jour, Monsieur O'Neill," he said, with a wide smile displaying his white teeth, swung the heavy skin from his shoulders and placed it carefully between two boulders. It was dripping with water, for Belayèd had been to the spring half a mile up the hillside to lay in the daily supply—a spring which at one time had watered a whole countryside, but which, choked during long centuries with sand and weeds and débris of every kind, had dwindled to a mere trickle.

"Good morning, Belayèd," O'Neill answered. "Do not forget that Monsieur Landon wishes you to catch the diligence when it passes and to bring back the horses, with provisions for four days."

"I have not forgotten, sir," said Belayèd.

"You understand that Monsieur Landon has made all arrangements with the commissar, and that all charges are paid?"

"I understand, sir," said Belayèd, and glanced at the sun. "We are to move on then, it seems?"

"Yes; to-morrow."

"I have still ten minutes," Belayèd observed, drew some water from the skin into a broad pan, set it on a rude stove made of slabs of stone, and blew into flame the smoldering coals of juniper roots heaped beneath it.

O'Neill watched him with an interest that never lessened, though he had seen this same performance many times. It was in just such a fashion that the servants of the Bible patriarchs must have set to work to get a meal. Besides, he had grown to like this clever, good-natured, uncomplaining half-breed, educated in the slums of Constantine, a hard and bitter school, and speaking not only French and Arabic, but all the dialects of the Aurès; with the history of every family at his finger tips, a profound knowledge of feuds and superstitions and native habits of thought; an invaluable man, recommended by the governor of the province and deserving everything that had been said of him. He had his faults but they were negligible beside his virtues.

He watched the fire until it was burning clear and bright, then he got a coffeepot from the hut, rinsed it out with water from the skin, and set it ready to hand.

"Now I must go, monsieur," he said. "The water will boil in a minute. I have just opened a fresh bag of meal."

"Very well; I'll find it," said O'Neill, and Belayèd, saluting respectfully, hurried away down the hillside toward the road, along which the diligence which ran daily from Batna to Tebessa could be seen approaching in a cloud of dust.

He had picked up somewhere a cast-off uniform of the Foreign Legion, of which he was very proud, and O'Neill noted how quickly its yellowish drab mingled with the yellowish drab of the desert. He watched the diligence stop and Belayèd scramble aboard it, and then he turned back to the preparation of the breakfast.

Six weeks before he would not have known how to go about it, but it is extraordinary how much, under the pressure of necessity, can be learned in six weeks. Now his proceedings were unhesitating and thoroughly workmanlike. First he put some coffee in the pot, filled it with boiling water from the pan, and set it on one corner of the stove. Then he poured a measure of the semolina flour from the bag which Belayèd had indicated into an earthenware bowl, and placing it on a stone beside the stove, began stirring it slowly and carefully into the bubbling water which remained in the pan.

Those six weeks since he had left Algiers had done much more to O'Neill than give him a knowledge of cookery. He was thinner, harder, deeply tanned. His face had a different look—a mature look, a look of competence and self-reliance, the look of a man who had matched wits with the world and with nature and learned that he had no reason to fear either. He had lost a certain appearance of boyishness; he had been made over mentally as well as physically—and the mental change was greater, more radical, than the physical one. His outlook on life was entirely altered. Six weeks away from civilization had taught him how little civilization really mattered. He looked back upon it with astonishment and contempt—upon its silly intricacy, its wasted effort, its endless creation of false needs. He felt that never again would he be the slave that all his life he had been.

"What ho, the cook!" shouted a voice. It was Pat's voice, but the figure which he saw approaching when he turned his head was that of a slim and sun-browned youth, in shirt and breeches and puttees. "Why didn't you call me?"

"Why should I? I know how to get breakfast," said O'Neill proudly.

"Oh, *do* you! Well then I wouldn't let that coffee boil over!"

O'Neill removed it hastily from the fire.

"Look at this mush," he said triumphantly. "Not a lump in it!"

"Splendid! I'll wash my hands and then I'll help."

O'Neill watched her draw some water from the skin into the earthen bowl which served as the wash pan—not very much, for in Africa one soon learns that water is precious and that to waste it is a sin—dash it over her face, then carefully wash her hands. It was difficult for him to analyze his feelings for this girl. At first, in the inevitable intimacy in so many things which tent life involved, in these primitive surroundings which swept aside so many of the veils which convention had created, he had had moments of embarrassment; but she apparently never. For one thing, of course, this was not her first expedition—it was her fourth or fifth; for another thing, he learned something he had never before suspected—that women are much closer to primitive realities than men and accept them much more easily.

She had donned her male costume as naturally as any boy might have done; there had never been any consciousness in her eyes or in her actions of any difference of sex; she seemed to consider it something so natural and well understood that it was not worth wasting a thought on. Neither did Landon ever appear to be conscious of it, and very soon O'Neill found that it had passed from his consciousness also. Had she been more of a woman, had she been anything of a coquette at heart, it would have been less easy; but she laid aside all feminine wile with her petticoats, and she was so like a boy in figure and in movement that at times he quite forgot that she was not one. Sometimes he fancied that her father had never really realized that she was a girl.

"Now," she said, "I am ready to help."

"Suppose you finish this mush while I get washed," O'Neill suggested, and gave her the wooden spoon with which he had been fabricating it.

"All right," she said, and sifted in the rest of the native semolina—the basis of the kus-kus which is the staple dish of all north Africa—a whole-wheat flour, yellow and coarse as cornmeal, and a splendid substitute for the breakfast cereal.

Landon appeared while this was in progress.

"Did Belayèd get off?" he asked.

"Yes," said O'Neill. "I made sure he understood your instructions."

Landon nodded and performed his ablutions while O'Neill set the table—a broad, flat stone laid across two uptilted ones. It bore a deeply incised inscription, for it was really a votive tablet dedicated by one Maurusius to a beloved son who had gone to Rome eighteen hundred years before, at the age of seventeen, to be a notarius or secretary, and had died there. The inscription interfered somewhat with the stability of the dishes but this was more than counterbalanced by the pleasure which Landon got from contemplating it as he ate. He was never weary of expounding the old Latin:

Memoriæ
Prætoriani
Fili Dulcissi
mi Homini
Ingeniosis
simo nota
rio V. An. XVII
M.VIII.D.XVII. Romæ
Decessit. XV. K. NOV. A. P.
CLXXVI.
MAVRVSIVS FILIS

It was, as Landon explained, just one of those simple records of family life and affection with which the Roman ruins of north Africa so abounded and which made them of such entrancing interest to the archæologist.

The meal was a simple one—oranges and dates, the semolina mush and coffee sweetened with honey. It was eaten with the appetite which life in the open gives and was soon over.

"Belayèd ought to be back by noon," Landon observed as he arose. "This afternoon we will get everything packed for an early start to-morrow. I wish you would come down with me to the villa, O'Neill," he added. "There are a few tracings I want to complete. Pat can clean up."

And O'Neill, who had developed an unsuspected talent for making tracings, of which he was very proud, arose with alacrity.

What they had been excavating and clearing of sand, with the assistance of a gang of Berber laborers brought down by Belayèd from the hills, was the ruin of a dwelling, the home of that same Maurusius who had been stricken so deeply by the death of his son and who had evidently been a person of great wealth and importance. To be exact, it was the baths only they had been working on, for the baths were all that remained of what had once been a great establishment where life had moved in a leisured and cultured round.

The storms of seventeen centuries had obliterated all the rest but the baths had been built so solidly that they defied the hand of time, as Roman baths had a way of doing, and they were truly astonishing, with their tesselated pavements, their series of chambers and corridors in which the bathers passed through the various degrees of heat, with floors raised on massive brick pillars so that the heat might come from below, with apartments for conversation, for meals, and for all those dalliances and refinements which made the bath one of the greatest and most complicated pleasures of ancient life. Beyond this series of chambers was an atrium or promenade, its carved columns prostrate and broken, opening upon a great swimming pool, now drifted deep with sand; and all of them were paved with mosaic and covered with fragments of marble and stucco ornaments.

As this work had proceeded, as Landon had explained step by step the meaning of the various discoveries, O'Neill's astonishment had steadily deepened. It was his first glimpse into the splendor and stateliness of that old existence and he was fairly dazzled. If these were the baths, what must the dwelling itself have been! And what wealth, what inexhaustible resources, must have been necessary to erect and to maintain such an establishment!

"But where did it go?" he demanded one day when some fresh wonder had been cleared of débris. "What happened to all that wealth when the Vandals and the Arabs came? Did its owners succeed in carrying it out of the country or did the Arabs get it?"

"Nobody knows," Landon answered, and for a moment there flashed across his face that glimmer of excitement which O'Neill had first seen that night in Algiers. "That is one of the mysteries of history. Some of it, of course, was carried away, and some of it the Vandals and Arabs got; but the great bulk of it—and the bulk of gold and silver and precious stones must have been very large, for their wonders fill the pages of the old chroniclers—all that simply vanished without leaving a trace. All these ruins, like the tombs of Egypt, have been searched and rifled and despoiled for fourteen centuries—Tunis is built out of the stones of Carthage; but what happened to the treasure which existed here no one knows!"

"But it couldn't have been destroyed," said O'Neill. "It must exist somewhere."

"Yes," Landon agreed, with that strange flicker in his eyes. "It must exist somewhere. O'Neill, that is the mystery I have come to Africa to solve!"

"But how to go about it?" O'Neill stammered. "Surely many others must have searched for it."

"They have," said Landon; "but they did not have the key to the mystery."

"And you have?" O'Neill queried incredulously.

"I think so," said Landon, and with that he fell silent, and O'Neill knew from the compression of his lips that it was useless to question him further.

Try as he would, O'Neill could not make a pattern of the various scraps of information which Landon had vouchsafed—they refused to fit together; and at last he gave it up. He was more than half inclined to

think that it was all just a lot of wild talk on the part of a man possessed by a harmless mania.

As the work on the ruins progressed and each day's discoveries led to others of which there seemed no end, O'Neill had realized that to complete the excavation and to remove the treasures would require many months. He did not object. The idea of quitting, of returning to civilization, did not even enter his head. The importance of choosing a career, of deciding upon his future course in life, which at one time had seemed so pressing, had diminished to the vanishing point. He was content to let each day take care of itself. The work was in itself entrancing and it seemed to him that the whole panorama of the Orient passed at his door along the caravan road which skirted the ruins. The drivers of every caravan paused to pay them a visit and to stare at the strange foolishness of these *roumis,* who wasted time digging in the sand.

Belayèd bargained with these people for dates and oranges from the deep Sahara, for apricots and peaches and melons from the hills, for chickens and eggs and a joint of fresh-killed kid, for a bowl of milk fresh from the goats. And word of the presence of these madmen, with minute descriptions of their manners and appearance spread back among the hills, just as Landon intended it should, and even into the desert beyond. For the desert people are fond of gossip and nothing is too small for their interest and attention.

So it seemed that months were to pass here and O'Neill was content that it should be so. Then suddenly, the day before, Landon had paid off the Berber workmen and dismissed them, and they had trudged away toward their homes in the Aurès, understanding the madmen less than ever.

"The time has come for us to be moving on," was the only explanation Landon gave; and O'Neill, with a little quickening of the pulse, realized that the hour was at hand for the great adventure, whatever it might be, which had brought this strange man to Africa.

CHAPTER XIII.

INTO THE MYSTERY.

They were off betimes next morning as Landon had planned, and made a caravan almost as picturesque as any that passed along the road—far more picturesque, indeed, to the native eyes which stared after them as they rode along.

Landon had purchased at Batna four small and nervous but hardy and sure-footed native horses, one for each of them including Belayèd, and four shaggy, diminutive donkeys to carry their food and equipage. O'Neill had been surprised at the extent and completeness of this equipage; he had not supposed that the outfitting of a little expedition like this one would be such a formidable affair, but Landon explained that he believed in being as comfortable as possible even in the desert and had brought along nothing which he did not deem necessary.

There was one small mystery connected with the outfit—a wooden case some eighteen inches long and perhaps half as wide and deep, heavily bound with iron and securely padlocked, which, whenever they moved, Landon always strapped with his own hands upon one of the donkeys, and which, in the tent, he kept under the head of his cot. Concerning this he had offered no explanations and O'Neill had asked no questions, confident that its use would be revealed in time; for as the days passed the resources of the outfit and the usefulness of every article included in it had been gradually revealed and O'Neill had reason to congratulate Landon more than once upon his foresight. Nothing had been forgotten.

As they turned their horses eastward along the caravan road O'Neill took a last long look at the spot on the hillside where their tent had been pitched and where he had spent six happy weeks. He knew that only by a miracle would he pass that way again and he was conscious of a real tenderness for the place. Then his eyes traveled down across the pile of sand and rubble which marked the excavation.

"It seems a pity," he remarked, "that the sand should drift over those ruins again and that all our work should be wasted."

"It won't be wasted," Landon answered. "We have our drawings and I have made a report to the director of the Société Archæologique. He will arrange to complete the work and to remove everything of value to the museum at Algiers. He has even asked me to return next year to reconstruct the villa."

"Shall you?" O'Neill asked.

Landon shrugged his shoulders.

"Next year!" he said. "Who knows

where I shall be next year! But yes, perhaps—if I am still alive."

"Of course you will be alive!" protested Pat.

And Landon smiled and said, "Of course!" and let it go at that.

They rode on as briskly as the stubbornness of the donkeys would permit along the wonderful road which the Romans had built two thousand years before to connect their great military outposts guarding the mountain passes. Its concrete was as hard and smooth as when it was first laid down; certainly it would never wear out under the soft tread of the camels which now carried the traffic over it—this road which had felt the shock of the marching legions!

The air was soft and warm and yet with a certain exhilarating quality which kept man and beast alert and active. To their left the arid plain stretched away to the horizon. To their right rose the foothills of the Aurès, bare of vegetation save for some scattered groves of dwarfed junipers, bleak and forbidding, deeply fissured by the torrents of the rainy season. It was among the fastnesses of these mountains that the native Berber tribes had defied successively the Roman, the Arab and the French—only to be conquered by each in turn.

They met a slow-moving caravan headed toward Constantine, whose drivers saluted them gravely and chattered one to another that the mad, sand-digging *roumis* were on the move again; and then a herd of goats on the way to the same market, kept in line by three incredibly tattered goatherds; and then the diligence for Batna rattled past, and its three or four passengers stared out at them while the driver saluted them with his whip as old acquaintances.

And finally, about the middle of the morning, they came to a place where the road forked, one branch running straight ahead to the east and the other turning southward into the hills.

Landon reined in his horse and looked at O'Neill.

"That is the road to Tebessa," he said, and pointed to the east. "One can reach it by nightfall on a good horse."

"At present it has no interest for me," remarked O'Neill lightly. "I am going with you up into the hills. Later, perhaps."

Landon looked at him for a moment longer, a curious expression in his eyes.

"As you will," he said at last, spoke to his horse and turned its head to the south. Almost at once the road began to mount steadily between the barren hills. It was no longer the main Roman road, but a narrower one, less carefully made, though still anything but bad. O'Neill could see no sign of any human habitation though later on Landon pointed out to him some caves, high in the side of a steep cliff and apparently quite inaccessible.

"They are abandoned now," he said; "life is more secure. But at one time almost all the inhabitants of these hills lived in holes like that. It was the only way they could be safe."

They stopped at noon for lunch and to rest the horses and then pressed forward again. At the end of an hour they came to another fork in the road and Landon, who seemed to know the way well, turned his horse along the narrower branch which mounted steeply toward the southeast between two mighty crags. Up and up it went, and then quite suddenly they crested the summit of the ridge.

Before them lay the vast panorama of the Aurès, that mighty mountain chain which separates sea and desert—peak behind barren peak, the loftiest ones still swathed in snow, the arid plain on either hand littered with boulders and scarred with ragged watercourses, which, far ahead, converged into a little stream, the Wed Bouzina. The sun, sinking toward the western hills, painted the crags with fantastic colors, strange combinations of lavender and purple and orange and green, while the snow-clad peaks turned to a deep crimson shot with yellow. And again O'Neill had the sensation of moving in an unreal world—a painted travesty of the world he had always known.

Here on the ridge they were shaken by a cold wind sweeping down from the fields of snow, and Belayèd, who brought up the rear, hustled the donkeys ahead of him with renewed vigor.

"We must get down out of this before it gets dark," said Landon; "and darkness comes very quickly."

It seemed for a time that the darkness would catch them in the open, but they found a crevice at the junction of two bluffs where they were sheltered from the wind and here they pitched the tent; and Belayèd by some wizardry got a fire to going, and served a highly seasoned stew of mutton, flanked by a pot of piping hot coffee.

Next morning they pressed on again, down a long slope ending in a deep gorge at the bottom of which the Wed Bouzina, now a stream of quite respectable proportions, brawled among the rocks. O'Neill had never imagined that any country could be so forbidding and desolate—it reminded him of a landscape by Doré—and in spite of himself he grew more and more depressed. He began to suspect that Landon was really mad. Surely no sane man would venture into such a place.

"Do you mean to say," he asked at last, "that there are people who actually live among these hills?"

"Oh, yes," Landon answered; "many thousands of them. This is the home of the Berbers—has been since before the beginning of history."

"But why on earth should any one want to live here?"

"Well, they were safe, for one thing. It was very difficult to conquer this country."

"I should think so!" agreed O'Neill. "And they still live here?"

"Yes; the land along the watercourses is very fertile—you will see. There are hundreds of towns tucked away in the valleys—some quite large ones. In fact," he added with a smile, "there is one in sight at this moment."

"There is?" said O'Neill incredulously and strained his eyes in every direction but could see nothing that looked like a town or even like a house. "You are joking!"

"No, he is not," laughed Pat. "I can see it quite plainly."

And Belayèd, who had caught the drift of the conversation, also chuckled at O'Neill's bewilderment.

"Here," said Landon; "take the glasses and look at that conical hill in the distance yonder."

Through the glasses O'Neill finally descried tier on tier of tiny stone houses, apparently built in circles around the summit of the hill, which was crowned with the square tower of a mosque. It reminded him of nothing so much as the pictures he had seen of Chinese pagodas.

"That is Bouzina," Landon explained. "The houses are built of stones taken from the hillside, and are half buried in it, so that they look like part of the hill itself. Almost all these villages were built on a hilltop so that they could be more easily defended from the nomads of the desert, who would come regularly to steal the grain. Of course there is no reason for it any more, but no Berber would ever think of building in a valley—it is against all his inherited instincts."

And as they rode on again Landon explained how ineradicable race instinct is—how the Berbers, for example, always built their houses of flat stones laid one upon the other, while the Arabs used only mud brick, dried in the sun and plastered together with more mud, and neither would ever try to use any other material.

"We will stop at Bouzina to-night," he said, "and pay our respects to the headman. I want to be sure that the news of our coming goes on ahead of us."

So they kept on down the winding road into the valley and at last close beside the little river. Here for the first time O'Neill began to understand how life in the Aurès might be endurable, for the river was bordered by groves of fruit trees—apricots, peaches, pears—and figs and olives; and there were gardens of vegetables—a striking contrast to the arid country they had been passing through. And presently Landon pointed out a long seggia or irrigating ditch cut in the solid rock by the Romans and still in use after twenty centuries.

"That is racial instinct, too," he added. "It would never occur to a Roman to cut an irrigating ditch anywhere but in solid rock. Whatever he built, he built for eternity! I think there is a *bordj* at Bouzina," he went on, and Belayèd, being appealed to, confirmed this. "Then we will stay there—it will be warmer than the tent and more comfortable."

"What is a *bordj?*" asked O'Neill.

"A *bordj* is a building put up by the French government to shelter visiting officials or stray travelers. The Berber houses are so filthy and full of vermin that they are impossible for a white man. Know you the name of the headman of this village, Belayèd?" he added in French.

"Yes, monsieur; he is named Basha Bashir."

"You will say to him that we are archæologists and that we go to examine some ruins near Tijdad."

"Good, monsieur."

The road wound around the base of the hill on which the village stood and as they reached the spot where it forked to ascend the hill they saw issuing from the village

gate a little procession of white-burnoosed figures.

"It is Basha Bashir, monsieur," said Belayèd.

So they drew rein and waited.

Basha Bashir proved to be a white-bearded old man with a benevolent face, who greeted the travelers with a courtesy almost stately and begged them in halting French to dismount and be his guests for the night.

"Thank him for us, Belayèd," said Landon, "and say that we will pass the night at the *bordj*."

"He will conduct you to the *bordj,* monsieur," announced Belayèd after a short interchange with Bashir; "but he prays that you will do him the honor to be his guests at dinner."

"We will do that gladly," said Landon, and the old chief's face broke into a smile of gratification.

The *bordj* proved to be a low stone building near the base of the hill. It was as usual built around a court where their beasts could be stabled, and there were three bedrooms, where their bedding was spread by Belayèd and the old caretaker who also soon had some water heated and who was almost hysterical in his desire to be of service. A chill crept into the air as the sun went down and he would have lighted a fire in the stove in the living room, but Landon forbade him to waste the precious wood. And as darkness came they set forth under the guidance of a servant to the house of the headman.

It too was a low, rambling structure, forbidding enough from the outside, but as they passed through a low doorway into the interior court, O'Neill was astonished by its beauty. A graceful colonnade ran around three sides of it and O'Neill could see in the flaring light from the torches that the principal columns were of marble, with delicately carved capitals, torn centuries ago, no doubt, from some Roman temple. From this colonnade all the apartments opened; all save one were in darkness and O'Neill had a sense of lifted curtains and whispered comment and half-smothered laughter as they crossed the court toward the spot where Basha Bashir and a group of his retainers were waiting expectantly to receive them.

And he was conscious that at last he had stepped into the mystery of the East.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ARABIAN NIGHT.

Their host's face was shining with what seemed unaffected pleasure, for to the Moslem guests are always welcome. They are a means of grace. Hospitality is the first of the duties enjoined by the Koran and to him who exercises it are promised twenty of God's most precious blessings. It is a tree planted in heaven, whose branches touch the earth, and he who receives his guests well mounts by these branches to the Gates of Paradise, where a bevy of beautiful maidens will be waiting to welcome him.

Old Basha Bashir, who knew that his own appearance before the Gates of Paradise could not be long delayed, had evidently determined to do the utmost possible to please the Prophet, and O'Neill had never eaten —or at least attempted to eat—such a meal as was set before them as they sat cross-legged on little cushions around a cloth of snowy wool spread on the tiled floor of the long apartment. Landon had warned him to partake of everything and to simulate enjoyment even if he did not feel it—not to do so would be to affront their host; and at first he chewed away industriously, but his efforts grew fainter and fainter as the meal proceeded in the midst of that religious silence imposed by Moslem etiquette—a silence broken only by the crunching of sturdy jaws, the smacking of lips and an occasional muttered "Bismillah!"

There were twelve courses which it is needless to enumerate here, except to say that they culminated in a *mechwi,* or lamb roasted whole over a bed of glowing coals—the supreme delicacy of every Aurès feast, the greatest compliment that a host can offer to his guests. It was brought to the table standing on a great platter on the stumps of its legs, and each guest tore off with his fingers the piece which most appealed to him—the natives always with that pious "Bismillah!"—"In the name of God!" —which precedes nearly all their actions. Under Landon's guidance O'Neill selected a strip of the crisp flesh along the back, and found it truly delicious.

For dessert there was a sticky sweet whose components O'Neill could not even guess, and fruits of many kinds, and then, after a much-needed ablution in a hand bowl, came the coffee, the music and the dancers. The coffee, served in tiny cups,

was thick and sweet, but unexpectedly pleasant to the taste; the music consisted of an oboe, a fife and two tom-toms, one long and slender, fashioned from the trunk of a young palm tree, the other large and shallow, and both played with energetic fingers which never seemed to tire; the dancers were picked specimens of the Ouled Abdi, the tribe which furnishes all the dancers for the Aurès, just as the Ouled Naïl does for the desert.

The dancers were swathed in voluminous skirts standing out stiffly from the ankles, and were loaded with bangles, bracelets, anklets, earrings, brooches and little silver boxes containing charms, suspended from their necks by silver chains; they were tattooed across the forehead, deeply rouged on cheeks and lips, with eyes heavily darkened and hands stained a bright red; and they followed one another in a monotonous ceremonial which O'Neill thought would never end. The smelly oil lamps were making the room hotter and hotter and more and more difficult to breathe in, and more than once O'Neill caught himself nodding in what seemed the first stages of asphyxiation.

But it was over at last, the dancers and musicians were suitably rewarded and dismissed; and Basha Bashir, his duties as host thus scrupulously performed, turned to what, perhaps, was the underlying motive of the entertainment—a catechism of his guests; not a direct catechism, of course—nothing so obvious and vulgar!—but one adroit, oblique, and none the less searching. Belayèd acted as interpreter.

Basha Bashir expressed the hope that these so-welcome travelers would honor him by spending some days as his guests. There were many things at Bouzina worthy their attention. Travelers did not often pass that way, so it was a rare and peculiar pleasure to receive them.

Landon expressed his appreciation of this courtesy, but unfortunately they must be on their way to-morrow.

"You are going far perhaps?" suggested Basha Bashir.

"No, not far; at least not at present. Only to a place near Tijdad, where there are the ruins of a Roman castellum which I wish to examine."

"Yes," nodded Basha Bashir; "I know those ruins. They stand on a hill not far from the road. But what can one hope to find in ruins such as those? Treasure, perhaps?"

"If there was ever any treasure there," said Landon, "some one has found it long ago. But in such ruins one can discover how that ancient people lived."

Basha Bashir shrugged.

"Why bother about that?"

"It is my profession," Landon explained; "a foolish one, I admit. I am an archæologist."

"I have heard of you," said Basha Bashir. "It was you, was it not, who has been camped beside the Batna road for many weeks?"

"Yes—we were examining ruins there, also. A waste of time you would say?"

Bashir waved his hand deprecatingly.

"No, not a waste of time; assuredly not a waste of time. I have been told that among the Christians many wise men devote themselves wholly to the study of the past. But for the followers of the Prophet that is unnecessary, since there is only one source of wisdom, which is the Koran. No man, even in a long lifetime, can comprehend all of it."

"It is truly a marvelous book," Landon agreed courteously.

"While you are at Tijdad," continued Basha Bashir, apparently warming to his subject, "you must not fail to visit a very holy man who lives there, a marabout, Ahmed ben Mohammed Ammar. You have heard of him, perhaps?"

The question was accompanied by a swift flash of the eyes, surprising in so old a man; but Landon shook his head. No, he had never heard of Ahmed Ammar. And Basha Bashir went on to describe this holy man, a descendant of the Prophet, revered by the Faithful, who might even one day be Supreme Imaum, their spiritual head.

His *zawia* was just outside the village of Tijdad, and visitors came from all over Islam to do him honor; yes, and from other countries too, to sit at his feet and learn the wisdom of the Koran. He turned no one away; all alike were welcome, whatever their faith, and his pupils were renowned for their piety and for their learning. To have studied under Ahmed Ammar assured one a respectful hearing anywhere. A very holy man; a very, very holy man, whose influence could not be measured. And Basha Bashir's native hearers nodded their heads in solemn agreement.

Landon, who had listened to all this with a peculiar alertness, assured his host that he would not fail to visit the marabout. He might even ask him to receive him as a pupil, since his reverence for the teachings of the Koran was very great, and he desired much to know more of them.

And Basha Bashir bowed his head piously and murmured a prayer, and remarked that perhaps it might please Allah to give the Prophet another follower; and Landon said "Who knows?" and every one appeared much impressed, though, as he looked at old Basha Bashir's grave and venerable countenance, O'Neill found himself wondering whether he was really the pious old simpleton he appeared to be. Did he really suppose that there was any chance of making a Moslem out of Landon?

"It seems strange to me," said Landon, "that a man so distinguished and so powerful would choose to live in so inaccessible a place."

"It is his character," Bashir explained. "He has no ambition for worldly power—none whatever. He spends much time in solitude and meditation. And however inaccessible he may be, those who really wish to see him will find the way to him. As for the others—the frivolous, the curious—they do not disturb him here."

"True," Landon agreed. "That is a great advantage."

After which there was a little silence, for every one seemed to realize that the subject was exhausted.

"There is another visit you must make," continued Basha Bashir at last; "that is to the Hamadsha—that strange sect. Of them you have of course heard."

"Yes," said Landon; "but I should like to know more concerning them."

"They are worth a visit. Teniet is their capital and it is but a short way from Tijdad. There, on the first day of every week, they hold a great religious ceremonial, with the sacred rite of self-mutilation. It is wonderful and fearful what those people do; yet perhaps there is virtue in it. Who knows?"

"Many of the saints of the early Christian church believed there was virtue in self-torture," said Landon. "Indeed it is still practiced by some of the religious orders."

"But these people!" continued the headman, and rolled his eyes. "I sometimes think they are possessed by a devil. They run themselves through with swords and when the swords are pulled out of them there is not a drop of blood nor any wound. They kill themselves and come to life again when the priest so commands."

"Is it true!" commented Landon. "But it seems impossible!"

"I have seen it with these eyes."

"We shall certainly attend this ceremonial, if it is permitted," said Landon. "I am most curious to see these things for myself."

"Oh, yes; it is permitted," Bashir assured him with an eagerness which O'Neill wondered at—though perhaps it was just his desire to be of service. "It is quite easily arranged. I myself will send a messenger to the head priest."

Landon thanked him and then the conversation languished again. Bashir pulled meditatively at his beard, lapsing into thought—or perhaps into the somnolence of extreme age—with closed eyes; his native attendants were plainly drowsy from the effects of the heavy meal they had eaten. And so Landon and Pat and O'Neill made their adieus—a long and ceremonious process.

Basha Bashir insisted on accompanying them to the gate.

"I shall not forget to send a messenger to the Hamadsha," were his parting words.

"Well!" said O'Neill, with a deep breath of the cool, fresh night air. "That was the most strenuous evening of my life! I feel like a Strasbourg goose!"

"So do I!" laughed Pat. And then after a moment, "I wonder if he knew I am a woman? He looked at me once or twice almost as though he did."

"He is a very crafty old man," said O'Neill. "Suppose we ask Belayèd. He will know."

"No," interposed Landon quickly. "Do not do that. There is no question about it—I am quite sure he knew. Basha Bashir is by no means such a simple old man as he appears—you are right in that, O'Neill!"

They went on in silence down the rough path toward the *bordj;* and there was something in Landon's manner which showed that he was worried.

He came into O'Neill's room next morning as the latter was dressing.

"I want you to carry this in your pocket

from now on," he said, and placed an automatic in his hand. "Do you know how to use it?"

"Oh, yes," said O'Neill. "I was in the army. But what——"

"No matter; we can't talk about it here; but we are on dangerous ground. Do not let any one see that pistol or suspect you have it; and you won't use it, of course, except in case of absolute necessity; but if the necessity arises don't hesitate," and he opened the door and went out.

O'Neill slipped the pistol into his pocket and completed his toilet. Yes, Landon was disturbed, deeply disturbed—there could be no doubt about it. Something had happened the night before, during the banquet, to upset him. Perhaps some purpose underlay Basha Bashir's questioning—a purpose concealed from O'Neill but which Landon understood. Could it be that the old fox suspected that it was not really to explore ruins they were going to Tijdad? But why should he suspect? And what were they going for?

"Well, whatever it is," said O'Neill to himself, "I shall find out before very long!" and joined his companions at breakfast.

An hour later they had taken leave of Basha Bashir, who insisted on accompanying them, with his native *goumiers* riding front and rear, for the first mile of their journey, and proceeded on beside the Bouzina, now grown into an important stream in spite of the irrigation requirements of the fields above. These fields extended only as far from the river on either side as water could be carried through the seggias; there all greenness abruptly stopped, and barren waste, except for an occasional thicket of scrub juniper, stretched upward to the summits of the gaunt hills.

They passed through a tiny village overrun with dirty children; but underneath the dirt O'Neill could see that this was indeed a white race, yellow-haired and blue-eyed —only unfortunately many of the eyes were incrusted with sores. Blindness was very common, Landon said. For the blind girl there was only misery and death; but a blind boy had no especial reason to repine. He could get an earthen bowl, take to the road, and become a beggar. There was no disgrace in that, nor any hardship. Beggars were respected, and every one gave within his means, for such gifts were grateful in the sight of Allah.

They stopped for a brief lunch and then pressed on again at a livelier pace for Landon was anxious to reach their destination and get the tent in place before nightfall. At the end of an hour they overhauled a slow-moving caravan, the first they had seen upon this road. It also was headed southward, and consisted of only six camels, pacing sedately along, regarding the world through half-closed, contemptuous eyes.

The rearmost camel was ridden by a black, who grinned down upon them with a great display of teeth; then came three baggage camels, lightly laden; then a third carrying an *altatouch* piled deep with cushions, among which a veiled woman lay indolently back. Only her eyes were visible through the narrow slit between headdress and veil—very bright, dark eyes, as O'Neill could see. They glanced carelessly down at Landon and at Pat, then they met his own.

They fixed themselves upon him with a stare of astonishment almost as though they recognized him. And then he had passed—and when he ventured to look back he saw that she had turned her head away.

A moment later he was abreast of the first camel and raised his hand to return the salute of the gorgeously dressed Arab who bestrode it. But his hand stopped in mid-air.

For in spite of the turban, in spite of the sun veil, in spite of the flowing burnoose, he recognized the dark-bearded face into which he had looked on the platform of the Gare de Lyon and which he had seen again one eventful night on the terrace of the Hôtel de l'Oasis.

Yes, it was Delage.

And suddenly he knew that the startled eyes which had stared down into his a moment before were those of the lovely woman whom he had last seen in that dirty Marseilles slum.

CHAPTER XV.

THE WORLD WRECKER.

"Those are very fine camels," he heard Belayèd saying, as his horse carried him on. "Very, very fine camels, such as one sees not often here in the hills or indeed anywhere. They are *mehari*—racing camels of the best strain. They go like the wind, one day, two days, even a week, without stopping. The man who owns them must be very rich."

O'Neill learned afterward that Belayèd

was speaking in the usual exaggerated native fashion, for the mehari, even the best of them, do not go like the wind and cannot keep going for a week; but for long-distance desert work they are unapproached and unapproachable both for speed and for endurance. And they are, of course, very expensive luxuries—the Rolls-Royces of the animal world!

"What do you suppose he is doing here in the Aurès?" Landon asked.

"He has without doubt come from afar on a pilgrimage to Ahmed Ammar, the holy man of Tijdad," Belayèd answered promptly. "He is not of this country, as one can see, but from the East. He could have no other business here."

Landon rode on with head bent in thought, while Belayèd dropped behind again and devoted his attention to encouraging the donkeys to greater exertion. O'Neill's brain was in a whirl. Could it really have been Delage, he asked himself? It seemed preposterous to suppose so. Why should Delage, in the guise of a pilgrim from the East, be riding among these hills?

Besides, O'Neill told himself, he had been deceived once before by a fancied resemblance. These dark-bearded faces, under their turbans, had a curious similitude. And yet he could not be mistaken—that vivid countenance had been imprinted too deeply upon his memory.

There had been not the faintest glimmer of recognition in the man's eyes, yet that was easily understandable, for O'Neill realized that he was an entirely different person from the white-faced office diplomat who had boarded the Marseilles express six weeks before; and about *his* appearance there was nothing distinctive or memorable—he was just an American like any other. But the woman had known him—how else explain that startled look?

And then O'Neill shook his head impatiently. It was really too preposterous! What could that lovely and distinguished woman possibly be doing in such a masquerade? Her eyes had dilated—yes; undoubtedly she had been startled; but most probably it was only with the forbidden excitement of gazing into the eyes of a stranger.

Yet, somehow, he was not convinced. Delage, a pilgrim to the shrine of Ahmed Ammar, holy man, teacher of the Word—well, why not? They also, it seemed, were to make that pilgrimage! And the flicker of a question flashed into O'Neill's brain: was it to see this recluse, this sainted marabout, that Landon was making this seemingly senseless journey into these lonely hills? If that were true, then he and Delage were on the same errand—whatever that might be! And Delage had not stepped out of his life—nor had the woman of the veil. It was an exciting and arresting thought—O'Neill's pulse beat faster under its stimulus.

An uncontrollable impulse compelled him to look back. The little caravan was far away; it had stopped and the two leading camels were standing side by side. He could see the man and woman bending toward each other in earnest conversation. Was she telling him that there ahead rode the man of the fateful seat?

When he looked back a second time the caravan had passed out of sight around a curve of the road. And with it some of the brightness seemed to have dropped out of the sunshine, some of the warmth out of the air!

It was mid-afternoon when Landon at last drew rein, cast a rapid glance about him and then turned his horse's head from the road into a stony field.

"This is the place," he said and urged his horse forward among the boulders.

Some hundred yards ahead, on a spur of the hills which here crowded down closely into the valley, O'Neill perceived some fragments of shattered wall above a heap of débris—all that was left of the fortress which had once stood guard above this pass.

Landon made a quick survey of the field.

"We will pitch the tent here," he said, and indicated a stretch of fairly level ground close to the hillside.

They hobbled the horses, unloaded the donkeys and set to work. As they were spreading the tent upon the ground, straightening it out preparatory to raising it, the little caravan drifted past along the road, the camels, now going at a lively pace, looking like grotesque ghosts in the distance and gathering dusk. They all paused for a moment to watch it. Where was it going, O'Neill wondered. Would it really stop at Tijdad? Would he ever see her again? And suddenly within his heart something came to life which had lain concealed and dormant

for many weeks. He realized that he wanted to see her again very, very badly! He must see her again!

The camels faded from sight like phantoms behind a spur of rising ground.

"Well, suppose we get the tent up!" said Landon in a matter-of-fact voice, and fifteen minutes later it was firmly in place.

"For what time do we stay here, monsieur?" Belayèd inquired.

"You can plan for a week at least," Landon answered.

"Good, monsieur," said Belayèd, and proceeded to install his own quarters against the hillside and to build a rude shelter for the larder.

The other three unrolled rugs and blankets, set up the primitive folding furniture and made the tent as comfortable as might be. As usual, Landon placed the mysterious case which he guarded so carefully under the head of his cot, and threw a rug over it. The tent had become a sort of second home to all of them and there was a peculiar pleasure in arranging it and putting everything to rights in its accustomed place.

It was almost dark by the time this task was finished and they were very tired and very dirty. But Belayèd, who by this time knew their habits and foresaw their needs almost better than they did themselves, had hot water ready for them—plenty of it, for he had driven a donkey down to the river and brought back two bulging skins full; and presently, cleansed and refreshed, they were seated in the tent around the little folding table, with the spirit lamp shining bravely and the steam from one of Belayèd's savory stews mounting to their nostrils.

"We will go to Tijdad to-morrow," said Landon after the first edge had been taken off their hunger, "and pay a visit of ceremony to Ahmed Ammar. He will be expecting us, for I am sure that old Basha Bashir has already sent him word that we are here. It pays to be punctilious with a saint! Besides I shall have to have some laborers to help us with the excavation, and he can probably arrange it."

"What are these ruins, anyway?" O'Neill asked. "There doesn't seem to be much left of them."

"There isn't. They have been a quarry for the whole countryside. But at one time there was a Roman outpost here to guard this pass and levy tribute. It was an important one—the commander of the Third Legion, Julius Martialianus, even lived here at times. You understand, of course," he went on in another tone, "this excavation is merely a blind. It is not in the least what I have come here to do."

For the past six weeks Landon had been to all appearances an entirely normal and sane individual, interested only in his work, in which he was undeniably an expert. His eyes had perhaps not been quite symmetrical but the difference was not great and O'Neill had soon forgotten to notice it. Now, quite suddenly, it was all back again —that mad look he had seen once before in the hotel room at Algiers, the face thin and tense; and he knew that the mania, if mania it was, had returned.

"The time has come to tell you," continued Landon, his voice hoarse with emotion. "Yes, the time has come. But first we must——"

And he sprang to his feet and strode to the door of the tent.

O'Neill glanced at Pat and she gave him a little nod, as though to say that her father must be humored.

"We must be sure there is no one outside," she said and together they stepped out into the cold, fresh air of the night. Landon was there, peering up and down; then he shouted for Belayèd, who came from his quarters under the hillside and cleared the table.

He went away with the dishes and presently they could hear him singing at his work.

The night was bright and clear. All about them lay the empty silent waste.

Landon took a long look around.

"It seems all right," he said, led the way back into the tent, resumed his place at the table, and filled his pipe again. "You may remember," he went on, "that I told you at Algiers that my real purpose in coming to Africa was to take the first step toward saving Western civilization—our civilization."

"Yes, I remember," nodded O'Neill.

"Perhaps you thought it rather an exalted statement?"

"It did seem so," O'Neill admitted.

"And yet it was not in the least exalted —it was literally true. That first step, as I see it now, will be to destroy this man, Ahmed Ammar, and the place in which he lives—destroy them utterly, blow them into

bits—him and his disciples, if need be; annihilate them——"

His voice trailed off as though he had strength for no more words. O'Neill could only stare at him. Then he glanced at Pat and was astounded to see that she seemed quite unperturbed.

"But how——" he began, and stopped. It seemed so futile to ask questions.

"I have everything necessary there, in that case under my bed. I suppose you have wondered about it. Well, that is what it is for. It will be for him a dose of his own medicine."

"But what has he done?" stammered O'Neill.

"It is not so much what he has done as what he is planning to do," answered Landon slowly. "You have heard or read something, I suppose, of the unrest which is shaking the world and threatening to destroy it—of the movement to wreck our civilization, to overturn it?"

"You mean bolshevism?"

"That is one name for it. But the menace comes not alone from Moscow, as many people suppose, but from Berlin, from Vienna, from Cairo, Constantinople, Peking, Calcutta. If it were Russia only there would be no great reason to worry; the whole East is seething against us, but we might survive even that. The danger lies in the fact that the poison has crept into every nation. Even America is shot through and through with it. The underworld everywhere is tense and expectant. Everywhere there is a feeling that the decisive hour is at hand, that the word is soon to be spoken which will unleash all these forces. And this is true. Only, when it *is* spoken, it will not be in Moscow or Calcutta—neither Lenine nor Ghandi will have anything to do with it, except to pass it on. It will be spoken in the *zawia* of this man, Ahmed Ammar, here at Tijdad. This is the storm center."

"But—but——" O'Neill began, and stopped again.

"Yes, I know it sounds like the dream of a madman," Landon went on more quietly. "It seemed so to me when I first got an inkling of the truth two years ago. I could not believe it—neither could any one else. I was laughed at when I told certain people of what I suspected. Since then I have kept my theories to myself; but many things have happened to confirm them. Now I am here to make sure—I am going to make sure at any cost—and once I *am* sure——"

He closed his jaws with an ominous snap. Then he caught O'Neill's astounded look. His face relaxed and he laughed softly.

"I am not mad," he said. "I can assure you of that. I have a sort of mania, perhaps; but most of us have manias of some sort. I am not mad. It seems to me sometimes that everybody else is mad to go on, as they do, with their eyes shut, and disaster just in front of them!"

"Tell me more about it," said O'Neill. "Why should this obscure Arab have so much power? How did he get it?"

"He got it naturally enough," Landon answered; "and he is not obscure. He is venerated by more people than anybody else in the world. He poses as a direct descendant of Mohammed—perhaps he really is. At least the followers of Mohammed believe so and consequently he is the holiest man on earth in Moslem estimation. He is the one man and the only man whom all of them would follow."

So it was a holy war that Landon feared; and O'Neill's thoughts went back to the Frenchman on the *Lamoricière* who had said there was no danger unless a great leader should arise; but in that case——

"Ahmed Ammar has had for years at Tijdad a great *zawia* to which people come from all over the world in the guise of pilgrims," Landon went on. "That *zawia* has been there for centuries and comes down to Ammar in the direct line of his ancestors. During all this time its influence has been increasing; but it is Ammar who has gained the widest power—perhaps because it is only now that the time is ripe for its use. What I want you to understand is that this is not a thing of yesterday or last week. It is something which has been planned for many generations."

"But what is it that is planned?" asked O'Neill.

"Civilization is to destroy itself," said Landon, "and the Moslem world will raise its banners over the ruins. Oh, the plot has been well managed. The pilgrims come and go—nobody questions them, nobody suspects them. A *zawia* is a holy place, a sort of university where the Koran is the only textbook and the teachings of the Prophet the only study. Believers in Mohammed are not confined to Asia and Africa by any

means; they are scattered all over the world, and it is to this spot they turn as the real fount of wisdom. So Ahmed Ammar is the center of a great web which spreads to the four corners of the earth; all nations are enmeshed in it. He keeps himself aloof; he takes no part in the quarrels of sects and of parties, of young Turks and old Turks, of activists and passifists and possiblists. He is above them all."

"But even then," O'Neill objected, "I don't see that there is any real danger. All the Moslems on earth couldn't conquer the world. Modern methods of warfare would blow them off the map."

"So there is to be no warfare—not of Moslem against Christian. The warfare is to be of Christian against Christian—of the underworld against civilization. It is that which he is laboring to bring about—which he *has* brought about. His influence is not confined to Moslems; it extends to revolutionists of every creed or of no creed. Lenine has no religion; Trotsky is a Jew if he is anything; Ghandi is a Buddhist; Cachin is an atheist; Heywood professes to be a Christian—but it makes no difference. Their motto may be 'Neither God nor Master!' but as a matter of fact they all bow to one master, and his name is Ahmed ben Mohammed Ammar!"

"Why should they?" O'Neill demanded. "How can he have any power over them?"

"There is only one possible answer to that question," said Landon slowly. "I have thought about it for two years; I have explored every hypothesis. There is only one which is even tenable; but it is so astounding, so unbelievable——"

"Nevertheless we shall listen to it with pleasure," said a suave voice at the door, and a tall figure wrapped in a white burnoose stepped into the tent and let the flap fall behind him. "I wish you good evening, messieurs," the stranger added, changing into French, and he stood close above them, looking down at them with a smile.

And O'Neill saw that it was Delage.

CHAPTER XVI.

EXPLANATIONS.

Landon was on his feet like a flash, his automatic in his hand, his finger trembling on the trigger, his face hardened into a ferocity which astonished O'Neill; but Delage's pleasant smile did not waver.

"Do not do anything rash, I beg of you," he said calmly. "I could have killed you from the doorway had I wished—indeed I came here with the idea that it might prove necessary for me to do so," he added, with a deprecatory gesture. "Happily it is not necessary, as I discovered after I had listened for a few moments to your most interesting conversation. In fact, I even think that we can be of service to each other."

"Who are you?" demanded Landon, keeping him carefully covered.

"I beg Monsieur O'Neill to introduce me," said Delage, with a little bow to the American.

"Do you mean to say you know him?" Landon asked.

"Yes," said O'Neill, who had recovered somewhat from his astonishment and who began to perceive the humor of the situation. "I have met him twice. This is that Monsieur Delage of whom I have told you."

"Delage?" Landon echoed blankly.

"Such is indeed my name," said Delage, with another bow. "Louis Delage."

"But that name means nothing to me," began Landon violently, the color mounting to his face. "I warn you this is no time to be——"

But Pat, who had been looking from O'Neill to Delage, burst into a sudden peal of laughter.

"Yes, dad!" she cried. "Don't you remember? It was Monsieur Delage who gave Mr. O'Neill that seat on the Marseilles express."

At the sound of her laugh, so fresh, so incontestably girlish, Delage had turned his eyes upon her with a new expression.

"Even so, madame," he said with a low bow. "I did not suspect there was a lady present—I would have been less abrupt. I offer you my apologies; I trust you will pardon me."

"But of course!" said Pat, looking at him frankly and still smiling. "I find you delightful!"

He pondered the adjective for an instant, not entirely pleased. Then he dismissed it with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Now that I have been introduced," he said, "I trust that Monsieur Landon will put away that very dangerous weapon and permit me to sit down. I see there is another chair."

There was no resisting the wizardry of his manner. Involuntarily Landon lowered his

pistol, but he kept it in his hand. Delage drew up the fourth stool and sat down.

"You permit me to smoke, madame?" he asked, and drew a cigarette from the pocket of his tunic and lighted it. He took a deep puff, exhaled it slowly, and looked smilingly around from face to face. "I have not the pleasure," he reminded them, "of knowing the name of my host, or that of madame."

"My name is Landon," said the archæologist shortly, "and this is my daughter Patricia."

"I am most pleased," murmured Delage, and bowed to Pat with a look in his eyes which told how unusual he found her.

"But I did not know," Landon added, "that O'Neill had seen you twice. When was the second time?"

"He did not mention it then?" asked Delage. "That was wise. The second time was on the first night of his arrival at Algiers; the place was the terrace in front of his room at the Hôtel de l'Oasis. We had a most interesting meeting."

"Why didn't you tell me?" queried Landon, looking at O'Neill with lifted brows. "It seems to me——"

"Permit me, monsieur," Delage broke in. "He was wise to tell nobody, not even you, because it was my painful duty that night to dispose of a scoundrel named Mustapha ben Chenouf."

"Dispose of him?" echoed Landon. "What do you mean? He was found dead beneath the window of his room from which he had fallen."

"The fall was from the terrace of Monsieur O'Neill's room," Delage explained. "Which reminds me that, for the first time in my life, I have broken my word. I promised Monsieur O'Neill that night never again to disturb him—yet behold me here. There is a fate about this affair, Monsieur O'Neill, which is too much for me!"

"Oh, I pardon you," laughed O'Neill. "In fact I am glad to see you. It saddened me to think that we should never meet again."

"Monsieur is too good!" Delage protested.

"But I don't understand," said Landon, impatient of this interchange. "What business did that fellow have with O'Neill?"

"He had no business with him," Delage answered. "But if monsieur will permit, I will tell him that story later, in its proper place. First, in order that everything may be clear, may I inquire, monsieur, the purpose of your visit to this country—the ostensible purpose, I mean, since the real purpose I already know?"

"I am an archæologist, sir," Landon answered. "For the past six weeks we have been excavating the ruins of a villa near the Batna-Tebessa road."

"Ah, yes," nodded Delage; "I have heard of you."

"Everybody in this part of Algeria has heard of me by this time, I trust," said Landon, smiling grimly.

Delage looked at him with his intelligent eyes. Then he too smiled.

"So," he said; "yes, I understand. Permit me to say, monsieur, that it was very clever—very clever indeed. But Monsieur O'Neill is not an archæologist. He is, if I mistake not, a diplomat."

"An ex-diplomat," O'Neill corrected. "I met Mr. Landon by accident on the boat and he permitted me to join him."

"Ah, yes," said Delage again. "Now everything is entirely clear—and it is my turn to explain."

"I might suggest," pointed out Landon dryly, "that this scarcely seems to be a safe place for confidences."

Delage laughed.

"We shall not be interrupted," he said. "My man, Souffi, is on guard outside."

"But he can overhear."

"He understands only Arabic and Berber, Monsieur Landon."

"We also have a man," remarked Landon, "who understands French very well."

"He has betaken himself to the town, riding one of your donkeys, monsieur. He perhaps has a fondness for the cafés."

"He has," said Landon, and settled back into his seat. "You seem singularly well-informed, Monsieur Delage."

"We saw him departing and waited for him to pass," explained Delage with a shrug.

There was a moment's silence while the allies, or adversaries—whichever circumstance might make them—contemplated each other.

"Now for my explanations," began Delage at last. "I came here to-night, as I have said, with the idea that perhaps it might be necessary for me to take extreme measures—very extreme measures—not knowing, of course, of mademoiselle's presence. I had reason to believe that I had been recognized by Monsieur O'Neill when he passed me on the road this afternoon and I did not doubt that he would tell you of his discovery."

"He said nothing to me," remarked Landon and looked at O'Neill accusingly.

"It seemed too preposterous," O'Neill explained. "I thought my eyes had deceived me."

"I did not know that of course," Delage continued, "and in any event I could take no chances. One whisper that I was not what I appeared to be and my life and the lives of my companions would not be worth that!" and he clicked the nail of his forefinger against his teeth.

"How many companions have you?" inquired Landon.

"Two; my man Souffi and a lady with whom I believe Monsieur O'Neill once had the pleasure of dining. It was she who recognized him," Delage added.

"It appears there is still something else that has not been told me," Landon observed, his eyes on O'Neill.

"But it was of such small importance!" O'Neill protested, his face flushing in spite of himself, and he related briefly the encounter with the beautiful unknown—only he was careful not to use that adjective and to keep his tone careless and impersonal.

Landon listened with the gloomy air of a man who has not been treated fairly, while Pat's eyes searched O'Neill's face with a peculiar intentness. Neither of them made any comment.

But a great question was growing in O'Neill's heart—a question which burned and rankled. What was the relationship between this woman and Delage? What were they doing here in the desert together? There seemed to be only one possible answer, and it left him shaken and miserable. He had the feeling that he had been betrayed.

"Now everything is understood," began Delage when O'Neill had finished.

"Pardon me," interrupted Landon, "but I would point out that the death of Mustapha ben Chenouf has not yet been explained."

"In a moment," said Delage, with a smile. "First tell me this: from what I heard of your conversation, Monsieur Landon, as I stood at the door of the tent yonder, I infer that the real purpose of your visit here is to suppress Ahmed Ammar. Is that correst?"

"To obliterate him," corrected Landon; "and his *zawia* with him."

"Well," said Delage, "that is also my purpose—at least it will no doubt be incidental to my purpose; and so it occurred to me that it would be most wise if we could assist each other."

"Why do you wish to suppress him?" Landon inquired.

"Strictly speaking, I do not wish to suppress him," Delage explained. "I have nothing against Ahmed Ammar, but he may get in my way and it would then be necessary to suppress him in order to carry out my purpose—a purely personal and selfish purpose, as you will see presently. He may be plotting as you believe—indeed I have every reason to know that he is; but that is nothing to me. I am not in the least concerned about the civilization of Europe; I care not what happens to it. Indeed I have often asked myself if it is worth saving. I have spent so much time in Africa that a great deal of what we call civilization appears absurd to me. But I have in hand a project—a project of such magnitude——" He broke off and looked at Landon curiously. "The last thing you said, monsieur, before I broke in upon you, was that you had been able to discover only one hypothesis which would explain the wide power that this marabout possesses, but that this hypothesis seemed too preposterous to believe."

Landon nodded.

"May I inquire the nature of that hypothesis, monsieur? You may trust me," he added as Landon hesitated.

"There is no reason why I should not tell you," answered Landon slowly. "The hypothesis is this: To bring about such a world revolution as I believe Ahmed Ammar contemplates will require a vast sum of money—for propaganda, for bribery, for the equipment which must be assembled, for organization, for the support of the revolutionists, for carrying on the campaign which will be necessary to win complete victory. There is no longer any money in Russia—any real money; it has all been squandered. There is none in India; there is none in Constantinople or Angora. War has eaten it all up. But it exists somewhere; we know it, because it is being used."

"You are quite right," Delage agreed. "Please continue, monsieur."

"It has therefore seemed to me," said Delage, "that the only possible explanation of Ahmed Ammar's power is that by some miracle which I cannot understand he has

come into possession of a treasure so vast that it compels obedience—that it renders world revolution possible—and that Lenine and Longuet and Kemal Pasha and the rest of them know it. But it seems too absurd!"

Delage took a final puff of his cigarette and ground out the end beneath the heel of his slipper.

"It is not in the least absurd, Monsieur Landon," he said quietly. "It is the truth. Ahmed Ammar has this treasure and I have come to the Aurès to take it from him. Now do you understand?"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TREASURE OF AHMED AMMAR.

"Yes, Monsieur Landon, I have come to take it," repeated Delage, and in the moment's silence which followed he lighted another cigarette and glanced from face to face. "Furthermore I shall succeed."

"You speak of a treasure," said Landon slowly; "but I wonder if you realize how vast it would have to be to give Ahmed Ammar the power he seems to have?"

"Perfectly," answered Delage. "It is so vast that it may be impossible for me to take all of it—though I have brought three camels. Still," he added laughingly, "that will be enough!"

"You are certain that it exists?"

"Quite certain."

"Have you seen it?"

"No—but it has been seen."

"What shape is it in?"

"It is in gold coin, gold ingots, and precious stones."

A sudden comprehension sprang into Landon's face.

"Gold coin?" he inquired.

"Yes, monsieur—Roman coins, Byzantine coins, Greek coins—all the coins which were in use sixteen centuries ago, at the hour the Arabs conquered Africa. I am sure that you suspected it," he added.

"Yes," admitted Landon, "I did. At least it was evident that if Ahmed Ammar really possessed such a treasure it could have no other origin. It had been swept together by the conquerors of this country."

"By one of them—Sidi Okba, the founder of the sacred city of Kairwan," Delage corrected. "It was while searching among the records of his mosque in that city that I found the first clew. His dream was the conquest of Europe—of the world; and the vast treasure which he collected was hoarded for that purpose."

"But that it should still exist——"

"He safeguarded it with such curses that no Mohammedan would dare touch it for any other purpose," Delage explained. "It remained safely in the treasury of his mosque at Kairwan for nearly four hundred years."

"Yes," said Landon; "and then?"

"And then, as you doubtless know, the Hilalides swept over Barbary like a swarm of locusts. Kairwan was attacked and destroyed. The faithful Berber tribes were driven back into these hills. But they brought the treasure with them and it has remained here ever since."

"Just what do you mean by 'here?' "

"I mean," Delage answered, "that for a thousand years there has been a *zawia* where that of Ahmed Ammar now stands, and that the first one was built to guard the hiding place of the treasure, just as the present one still does. And during all that time this *zawia* has been to the Moslem world what Sidi Okba's mosque once was—the center toward which all their eyes were turned."

"If what you say is true," commented Landon, "it solves one of the great mysteries of history. Some such explanation had occurred to me, but it seemed too wild—too fantastic."

"Believe me," said Delage earnestly, "I know of what I am speaking. The treasure is in Ahmed Ammar's keeping and it is guarded by the Hamadsha who were organized by Hamdushi sixteen centuries ago at Sidi Okba's command for no other purpose."

"And yet you expect to get it?" queried Landon.

"Yes, monsieur."

"You alone?"

"I and my two companions."

"But unless you know its exact hiding place——"

"I do know it," said Delage calmly. "It is in a chamber—an underground chamber—reached only from Ammar's private apartment."

"The apartment is guarded, I suppose?"

"Doubly guarded at every door; and there are pitfalls and traps."

"And you expect to get past them?"

"Yes—I shall succeed. I know them all. A plan was made of all this when it was

built," Delage explained. "That plan is in my possession. One man knew that I had obtained it—Mustapha ben Chenouf. He has been plotting for years to succeed Ahmed Ammar; he had gained an ascendancy over the Hamadsha; he set himself to put me out of the way, since I was in his path. So I lured him to the terrace of the room of Monsieur O'Neill and—he fell to the pavement below and was killed. It was a fair fight, was it not, Monsieur O'Neill?"

"Absolutely on your part," said O'Neill. "He tried his best to murder you. But tell me—why did you wish me to take your place on the Marseilles express?"

"Because as I was about to enter the compartment I caught a glimpse of the man who had the opposite seat. It was Mustapha and I knew instantly that if I took that place I should in all probability never leave it alive. Besides, it was necessary to throw him off the track. So, since fortunately he did not know my personal appearance, I sought a substitute. Monsieur O'Neill presented himself—I had no time to choose," and he shrugged his shoulders. "Happily—most happily, as I now think—it was not he who was killed. As for me, I was able to reach Africa undetected and join my companions. You perceive," he added as he looked around at them, "that I am very much in earnest."

But in spite of the fact that this man had deliberately placed his life in danger O'Neill felt no repulsion nor resentment—admiration, rather, for an adventurer who played calmly for great stakes, who risked everything, who did his utmost to win, but who was not afraid to lose.

"Mustapha was a brother of Ali Bey ben Chenouf, was he not?" inquired Landon.

"Yes, monsieur; and Ali Bey will waste no tears over him. Ali Bey is entirely loyal—he is a great man and the French do well to trust him; but his brother spent his whole life plotting against him and against the government."

"There were others in the plot?"

"Oh, undoubtedly."

"Then the government should be warned."

"If you wish—afterward. It is nothing to me who rules over Africa. As for the civilization of Europe, about which you are so much concerned—well, I have said already that I have no very high regard for it. However, there is no reason to be alarmed. If you suppress Ahmed Ammar and I get the treasure the danger is past. You think me callous, perhaps? Ah, well, I speak my mind. And I say frankly that I cannot afford to fail. For years I have been preparing for this moment. But I shall not fail. My plans are too well laid. Come," he added in another tone; "I have placed my cards on the table. Are we partners in the game?"

"You are asking me to be a partner in a robbery," Landon pointed out.

"Oh, not at all!" protested Delage quickly. "The robbery—I thought I had made it clear—the robbery is entirely my affair. Quite possibly there may be more gold than I can carry away. You are welcome to what is left; but I offer you no share. As to taking it, I have no compunctions. It belongs rightfully to no one, since we cannot resurrect the people from whom it was stolen more than a thousand years ago. I suspect," he added with a smile, "that you did not propose to leave it there intact."

"No," said Landon, "I proposed to destroy it."

"So I inferred. But that seems much worse to me than what I intend. I at least intend to use it. Why should it be lost?"

"It will prove a curse."

"I am ready to take the risk!" laughed Delage. "But I am not asking you to share it. You have my permission to destroy what I leave. All I suggest is that we time our efforts together. Otherwise we should defeat each other. It seems to me the only sensible course."

"Perhaps it is," Landon agreed. "I shall think it over. And I promise not to betray you. Where are you staying?"

"I am staying at the *zawia* of Ahmed Ammar," answered Delage. "I am even an honored guest there—a disciple who has come all the way from Alashehr. My arrival has been expected for some time; for more than a year I have been preparing the way and rehearsing my part. You will no doubt be presented to me when you pay Ammar a visit, but unfortunately we shall be unable to converse, since I know no French or English. You will, of course, take care not to betray that you know me."

Again O'Neill felt within himself a glow of admiration at the audacity of this man, and he could see that even Landon was impressed. Pat was staring at the handsome, virile, colorful face as though fascinated.

For a moment Delage permitted himself to return her gaze, to look deep into her eyes; then he threw down his cigarette and rose.

"In an affair of this sort the boldest course is always the safest," he said, drawing his burnoose about him. "Think it over, Monsieur Landon. I am sure you will decide that to succeed you must have me for an ally. We will have a second conference before long. I bid you good night, messieurs; and you, mademoiselle."

He bowed above her hand and an instant later the tent flap fell behind him.

It was almost as though the curtain had fallen upon some tense drama of the theater.

"Do you believe it?" asked O'Neill at last, with a long breath.

"About the treasure?" said Landon. "Yes, I believe it. It was the only explanation I could find."

"But to remain untouched for sixteen hundred years!"

"If Sidi Okba put a curse on it, it would be safe from Mohammedans. There is a legend that he really did contemplate a conquest of Europe, but died before his plans were ready. All Mohammedans, of course, contemplate such a conquest. One of the strictest injunctions of the Koran is that all unbelievers shall be exterminated. But every sensible Moslem recognizes the folly of a holy war—even if one could be started. Ammar's plan is the only one with any chance of success."

"You haven't asked my opinion," said O'Neill, "but I think you would better combine with Delage."

"So do I," chimed in Pat, her face still aglow. "He is the most wonderful man I ever met."

"He *has* got a way with him," Landon agreed, glancing at her curiously. "Probably you are right. Just the same I want to sleep on it. Suppose we turn in now and consider this later."

But O'Neill was not ready to turn in. The turmoil in his brain made sleep impossible. So he filled his pipe again and went out into the night and walked up and down under the stars—strangely bright and near they seemed—and thought over the details of the extraordinary story he had just listened to.

Yet it was not for this he wanted to be alone; it was not this story which had so upset him—he admitted it to himself at last.

There was a question which must be settled before his mind could be at ease: What was the relation between Delage and the lovely woman of the Marseilles express?

Again he told himself that there could be but a single answer. They were adventurers both. How else explain her presence here, his partner in this desperate enterprise? For it was desperate. One false step, one faintest glimmer of suspicion and there would be no escape.

A sound behind him brought him around with a start; a strange monster was advancing toward him from the direction of the road. Then he saw that it was Belayèd astride one of the donkeys. He rode up briskly, greeted O'Neill no whit abashed and swung himself to the ground.

"Ah, Monsieur O'Neill," he said; "such a night—I would not have believed it!"

"Believed what?"

"That there existed anywhere in Africa a dancer such as I have just seen!" He was plainly still under the stress of deep emotion; his tongue was loosened like that of a drunken man; his face was flushed, his eyes shot with blood. "And that she should be in a dirty little café like that back yonder—ah, no, I do not understand it! But wait—monsieur shall see for himself. Monsieur will go with me to-morrow night?"

"Is she really so wonderful?"

"Ah, wait till monsieur sees her! Never have I known one to approach her—never!"

"Very well," said O'Neill. "I will go."

"And her favors are for no one—no one!" Belayèd went on in a kind of ecstasy. "I know—I—for I tried—yes, and so did others much richer than I. But it was of no use. When she had finished she gathered up the money that had been thrown to her, smiled and disappeared. That was all she gave—a smile. Nothing more! One would almost think—but no, that is impossible. One knows not what to think! Good night, monsieur," he concluded abruptly.

"Good night," O'Neill answered and stood looking after him as he led the donkey away to tie it up with the others.

Certainly it seemed that there was to be no dearth of excitement back here in the Aurès!

To be continued in the next issue, September 20th.

The Peak of Presentiment

By Calvin Johnston

Author of "The Invisible Flagman," "The Agent at Ghost Station," Etc.

The railroad detective arrests the hand of Fate—and Fortune smiles.

THE round red moon of the small hours dusted the railroad yards with a level ray as the switch crew ranged themselves along the bench against the shanty—all the station lists worked out, locals made up, and only a failing engine down the line to crawl in on what remained of the night trick. The yard engine simmered across the tracks and chirp of the metallic crickets came through the open window of the dispatcher up the line; the crew lounged enjoying the sight of this busy man in his shirt sleeves, five pipes glowing in a row beneath the shanty shadow.

"Sure, a night like this——" began young Hogan.

"Hush," said the old switchman. "What can a lad the likes of ye tell me of nights or days either? Sixty years of them I have seen, arriving one after the other——"

The very simplicity of this statement roused the foreman from drowsy comfort. "And how else should nights and days arrive?" he demanded truculently.

"Had ye but waited till I finished," returned the old switchman sourly, "ye would have heard me answer Hogan that I remember plainly once a night like this arrived on the P. D., with an old blood-red moon making a danger light over the Barlow yards. And it was not that night but the one after when Dan Monahan, as was Grogan's, the special detective's friend, reached the peak of his presentiment. But it was under the red moonlight that Grogan, who had taken his friend under police protection, planned to arrest the presentiment."

"Is it arrest a presentiment that Grogan would do?" demanded the foreman, thoroughly awake. "First I ask you, where would he arrest it?"

"At its peak," explained Denny patiently; "and if ye will but listen to one who knows, that and many other things will be made plain."

It was late on a summer morning in '94 that Grogan with no thought of presentiment or the moon walked along the street of Barlow to eat his twelve-o'clock breakfast at the depot lunch counter. And to begin with, you must not suppose Grogan a late riser or lazy, for never a man or locomotive on the P. D. called on their energy as he did to be on schedule. But, patrolling the night yards as was the duty

of him till daylight when, of course, a night watch loses his job, automatically, Grogan was rising early to get breakfast by noon.

A fine figure of a detective he was, heavy set, with a strong jaw and sharp eyes spying from under the brim of his big derby hat. He could spy the twinkle of stolen brass in a thief's hand the darkest night that ever blew in the Barlow yards, and he had such an ear for pilferers that mice did not dare gnaw inside a sealed car till they heard it set in a train.

"This is all true," he would reflect when thinking thus of his record, "but what is my reward? A detective is thought little of by the other railroad men, and Mary Monahan will not think of one at all."

So on this summer morning, coming from the room he rented up the street from Engineer Monahan's house, he stopped to look at Miss Mary who was reading in a hammock swung between the porch and the gatepost.

"I have not stolen any brass," she said with sarcasm, and Grogan, knowing how useless it was, exclaimed again for the sake of looking at her:

"Every man must follow his talent, Miss Monahan, and my talent is all for the police. What kind of engineer or conductor would a man make who would run his train in the ditch after a trespasser or a thief?"

"Ye have no ambition," said Mary, reading her book.

"Is it not ambition for a detective to hope he will catch the biggest thief in the world?" Grogan asked her.

"In that case," said Mary, reading her book, "it is the thief has had the greater ambition and so made himself the greatest thief in the world, while ye are only one of the failures who could make a reputation by catching him. Ye could easily overcome the low taste for policing if you would, and become a man among railroad men. See the confidence I have in your ability if you will only try."

"And you would help me and back me up?" said Grogan with sentiment.

"I might," said Mary, with a blush.

"Still I am a criminal myself to listen to you," said Grogan, stern for the first time. "For not many men are born with the indignation of the lawbreaker which I have. And if the men nature intends for policemen will not work at it, what will become of honest people? You may laugh with sarcasm, Miss Monahan, but you and all honest people go about the streets or sleep in your houses with safety because of policemen born to scheme back at the crooks and shoot back at them too, if need be. And I bid ye good day in all politeness, though sorrow the hour I met ye, with yer blarneying tongue which would tempt me to desert Superintendent Rivets at the time when the P. D. is overrun with the box-car and train robbers and wreckers," and Grogan walked on leaving Mary with her face close to the book but her eyes looking after him over the top of it.

She raised her voice: "You need not stop again——" she began, but as Grogan went on a tear shone on her red cheek in the angry fear that she had lost the last word in the quarrel.

And the detective, walking on, presently came to the station platform where a man stood apart, looking first at the drumming locomotive waiting across the main line and then at the yard and the shady streets beyond with long glances and a mutter to himself. And then he looked at Grogan.

"Whist," he said, and held out his hand, giving Grogan a peculiar shake like a corpse reaching out of his coffin to a friend.

"Whist," he muttered and no more, gazing at Grogan as if fond of him and holding his hand in the cold, lingering grasp. And this man was Monahan himself, the passenger engineer, waiting in his clean blue overalls and jumper to take out No. 2 on the run to Sundog on the Foothill Division.

Now, as you know, there is divil an intimate a special officer has on a division except the superintendent himself; for the officer being suspicious by necessity is suspected by everybody in turn, which goes to show there is a lawbreaker waiting his opportunity in every honest man. And Grogan, surprised by the friendliness of the engineer, waited some confidence from him after Monahan's mutter of caution. But Monahan reflecting, "Sure, it is Grogan, the bull, I am talking to, and he will report my confession, which is a crime at headquarters," dropped the other's hand and turned his back.

So Grogan plodded on to the lunch counter, only stopping to shoot a glance over his shoulder from under the brim of the big derby. And he saw that Monahan had not stirred from his tracks after turning, but was gazing in a trance past the

locomotive to the shady street where his home was and Mary read in her hammock.

"He has guilt on his mind," reflected Grogan, who could read the signs of a stricken conscience like finger prints, "and I could get his confession by giving the second degree—but he is Mary's father! Do I want it?" And a struggle began between sentiment and duty, which was going on when Monahan came to the door of the lunch room and beckoned. Grogan nodded and went along, carrying a doughnut, so as to make plain to an observer that the conversation was not official. "Who ever heard," reflected Grogan, "of an officer giving the third degree with a doughnut in his hand?" and followed Monahan to the end of the platform, where they stood far apart from every one.

"Whist," said Monahan, "I have something to say to you."

"Hold," said Grogan, and warned that whatever he confessed might be used against him.

"I have thought of that," said the engineer, "but before a report of what I say can be made it will be too late to use it against me."

"Then speak."

"It is only to say good-by," explained Monahan, and again he shook hands as a man reaching out of his coffin. "Grogan, I will never bring back my run. I have the presentiment, which is a dangerous thing for an engineer to take aboard his engine, and Rivets would retire me on the spot if he knew, saying I had lost my nerve or gone crazy."

"There is yet time to get a relief engineer," said Grogan, but the other raised his hand and the whistle of No. 2 was heard in the distance.

"Do I look like a man who would send another into danger in my place?" asked Monahan. Again he looked around, taking in every little thing as if telling it good-by. "Never before did I know how much a man leaves behind when he passes out," said Monahan. "To think I will never see the ugly old station, or walk this platform, which is a disgrace, again. Whist—Grogan—Mary, the saucy colleen thinks more of ye than you know and has a snapshot of ye on her dresser. But she will never marry a detective. After I am brought back do you get a transfer from Rivets back to the station office where you started and tell her I left my blessing to the both of ye. Here it comes." The two watched the passenger train pitch and roll at the grade crossings and as it drew up to the platform Monahan gave his companion the high sign and walked over to his engine for the last run.

The blood had chilled in Grogan while hearing the quiet talking of the engineer, and under the summer sun he watched Monahan move away into the skirt of a gray shadow. "Faith, he is a doomed man," said Grogan in awe, "and it is the Fiend's work, for never was there an honester than Monahan." And Grogan, who looked to the law to right every wrong and protect every honest man, of a sudden realized that divil a mortal policeman could use his nightstick on the Father of Night himself. The switch was made, the engine of Monahan coupled on, and from the cab window he beckoned Grogan to the gangway step.

"You will make the transfer and claim Mary!" he said, with hand half raised for a blessing; distant and still were the tones of him already, and his rugged face so peaceful under the gray shadow that Grogan felt it would be a sin to call back and disturb the spirit that, except for Mary, had forgotten the world already.

"I promise," said Grogan. "The hand one moment stretched above his head, fell to the lever and the driving rod crept on the first round of the wheels.

"The shame of it all," said Grogan, "is that the law cannot protect honest Dan Monahan from the danger which the fiend has dispatched to meet him along the line."

He was repeating it in mind when he went into Rivets' office with a report, and more and more impressed that the doomed man had chosen himself to tell good-by. Himself and nobody else—Grogan, special detective, whose sworn duty it was to protect all honest men.

"Grogan, here is another holdup of the station beyond Sundog," said Rivets, passing a wire.

"Send me after them, Mr. Rivets," requested the detective, ambitious to have one great capture to his credit before transferring as he had promised.

"They are crafty, Grogan. 'Twill require psychology to catch them. You are a good man among box-car robbers, but have no psychology."

"And what may that be?" asked Grogan.

" 'Tis the ability to think as the thief thinks and so know how to lay for him."

"Is it myself must think like a thief to be a policeman, superintendent?"

"Do not unsettle your reason by attempting to think out of the rut," answered Rivets. "Nobody else on this division does. I must find a psychologist outside to outfigure the Sundog gang."

Grogan nodded and having made his report went into the dispatcher's office. And there he sat all afternoon against the wall listening in as station after station reported No. 2 in and gone till at six o'clock there was only one more station to pass, and the sweat beaded his forehead. " 'Tis here Monahan gets it," he muttered, and jumped to his feet with a cry when the train was reported in at Sundog.

"Glory be," said Grogan aloud. "Monahan has till to-morrow night before he starts the return end of the run," and as the dispatcher stared in surprise he went out about his duty of patrolling the yard and stations. For hours he was satisfied because Monahan had escaped on his outbound run, then he was troubled again. "Sure, Monahan said he would never bring back his run," reflected Grogan, "and it is after leaving Sundog on the return trip that the presentiment will strike him down." Again he was impressed with the thought that Monahan, with so many old friends, should have confided in only himself.

"Grogan, special officer of the law," said Grogan, and the late hours of the night being come he began listening to its mysterious sounds and searching for some sign which would explain why he had been chosen for Monahan's confidence.

A half moon there was that night, like a red and wicked eye with the lid drooped over it; a thin little wind was keening among the cars and the shadows were black as purgatory.

On and on prowled Grogan, listening and searching and in the end came out suddenly on a spot which he never covered in his beat by reason of there being nothing to steal. It was even beyant the shops, and there on a spur stood three dead and rusty locomotives. Wrecks they were, and mangled and dismembered, with loose rods and splintered cabs and the pipes of the boilers protruding like entrails where the plates had been torn away. The big Mogul directly in front had killed its crew; well he remembered when it had been brought in with bell clanking hollow as the bell of a burial, and dour old Rivets, looking down from the window of his office with a tear in his eye for the engineer and fireman who had signed for their last orders.

The graveyard of the wrecked engines was dank with the tall weeds which grew along the spur, but there was a deadlier chill than that of desolation and night that crept along Grogan's spine as he saw the shred of tattered crape, which still hung to the cracked bell, blow out in a flash of red light. Then a muffled pounding of iron and a strangled muttering came from the Mogul as if a dying man still struggled and called for help under the wreck.

"Saints above!" gasped Grogan. Then a voice thin and harsh piped up and he made out the muttered answer to be a hoarse laugh, and again the muffled pounding as if fiends were celebrating in the tender. Now, never a law of the land has been passed against fiends and it was only the moral bravery of Grogan which upheld him in swinging up the gangway and looking into the empty tender.

And there by an ember of a fire he saw a swarthy wisp of a man leaning over the outstretched hand of the fattest, frowsiest, raggedest bum ever known on the P. D. And when the swarthy one spoke the big bum laughed his husky horse laugh and pounded the side of the tender with his fist in glee.

"What is it all about, you divil's trespassers?" demanded Grogan with a sudden and fierce curiosity of such a scene at the end of his search.

The fat bum, not a whit abashed by the name of divil's trespasser, touched his dirty hat in mock salute. "Sure, my bunkie here is a gypsy and is reading my fortune," he explained in his bullfrog voice.

"What does he predict?" growled Grogan.

"I am not a gypsy, but an astrologer fallen on evil days," snarled the little man; "and I say this big brute will be hanged."

The frowsy scoundrel laughed till the tears came and pounded with his fist so the tender rolled like a drum. "The professor has told a lie on the face of it," he explained. "How can they hang a man who has a seventeen-inch head and a nineteen-inch neck?"

"I ought to run you both in," said Gro-

gan, but could not be unmindful of the importance of meeting an astrologer in such a crisis, and stood for a moment thinking rapidly.

"Answer me a question to show your honesty and I may think better of it," he told the swarthy one.

The other who had taken out a puzzle made of wire, which he was working by the light of the ember, nodded with a snarl.

"I have a friend with a presentiment that he will be killed in the next twenty-four hours," went on Grogan. "Can it be avoided?"

"The presentiment can be arrested and the man saved," replied the other, working his puzzle.

"Arrested!" exclaimed Grogan. "Where?"

"I should say toward the end of its course," said the astrologer. "I should say that the best time to arrest a presentiment is at its peak."

"Glory be! Arrest a presentiment," reflected Grogan. "I never heard of such a thing. Still, it is not for nothing Monahan made his confession to a law officer.

"But how can I arrest something which I cannot lay hold of at all?" he demanded, bewildered by the turn the business had taken, and silenced with a tap of his revolver butt the fat bum who was chuckling and pounding again.

"That is up to you," replied the astrologer more politely, with his eye cocked at the revolver butt. "If you are on the job you can arrest it.

"Such a night it is," added the astrologer suddenly, his natural bad temper getting control of him; "a cast-iron floor for a bed, a frowsy bum for a comrade, and now I must explain to a policeman how to make an arrest! It is too much. Is that the dawn I see over yonder? Then I will be on my way to Mars." And putting his puzzle in his pocket, hopped down the gangway.

"No matter to me where he is going or what he is," reflected Grogan, trudging back up the yard, " 'twould be flying in the saints' faces to neglect the hunch. And if a presentiment is to be arrested at all, I am the officer to do it."

At the office he arranged to be relieved of his watch that night, and went home in the hope that No. 2 would arrive on time at noon. He had determined to ride this train to the station nearest Sundog and there, unbeknown to Monahan, if it could be managed, board the tender of his engine for the night run back.

Now, in boarding the engine of a man who was doomed to die, Grogan took the same risk upon himself; and 'tis not to his discredit that he was cast down by the reflection that he had received the instructions of the astrologer in a wrecked engine with a piece of crape hanging above.

Nor is it to be wondered at that he forgot his pride on his way back to the station to catch No. 2, and loitered at the Monahan gate for a last gaze at Mary. Sitting in the hammock with her book, she did not raise her eyes or answer his greeting, because of the quarrel of the morning before, and Grogan, replacing his big derby over his eyes, went on out of her life. "And yet she has the picture of me on her dresser," he thought. " 'Tis little we know."

All the long afternoon's ride on No. 2 he did not push back the hat or talk to the conductor, but sat looking back in his mind at Mary reading in her hammock, much as poor Monahan had looked from the Barlow platform on the scenes he was never to see again. At the nearest station to Sundog he left the train and sat on the end of a truck till dark. Then the eastbound mail with Monahan at the throttle rushed in, and after dodging the headlight Grogan ran from behind a box car and clambered up between tender and engine.

Not a plan or notion he had of the duty undertaken, except to keep an eye on the engineer and see that he ran cautiously; and a bare hope that the presentiment would show up in some form which could be recognized and manhandled. Half buried in coal, he kept watch, and when the speed seemed too reckless for a man in Monahan's dangerous situation he pulled down the engineer by the bell rope which crossed the tender in easy reach.

Because of this an argument broke out between Monahan and the conductor, which grew more bitter at every station with the conductor denying that he had pulled the rope at all.

"Then the cab is haunted," said the fireman, and Monahan throwing up his hand in agreement climbed back into the cab. The train had lost time but the engineer ran cautiously as if he felt some mysterious power working for him, and Grogan high up on the coal pile saw a light through the trees of a curve and pulled him down again.

So that the speed was not above twenty miles when the pilot smashing into a pile of ties on the track scattered them without ditching; and Monahan, instead of throwing open his throttle and racing from the danger on a clear track, shut her down. The brakes ground. The presentiment was at its peak.

And as two masked men running alongside jumped into the cab and yells were heard with a battering on the express-car door, Grogan came down the coal pile shooting. "Get going, Monahan. The presentiment is arrested," he said, reloading and kicking aside the two men on the cab floor. The lever came forward, the wheels spun and once again Grogan was shooting from the gangway into the group of men at the express car. Then they were left behind.

A conference followed on the engineer's seat in the cab; a conference which lasted all the way into Barlow, and still the two men could make nothing of what had happened or what they were to report to Rivets.

"To report the presentiment would be the ruin of me," said Monahan. "And unless we report it, how account for your leaving your job as watchman to ride on the coal pile of my engine?"

"We are up against it," agreed Grogan.

"There is nothing else to be done," said Monahan. "We will leave it to Mary."

Rolling into Barlow, the two dropped off, telling the fireman to register in the book for Monahan; and an hour after midnight the two stood in the parlor of the engineer's home waiting for Mary to come down.

"What is the matter now?" she asked.

"It is detective business," said Monahan and she sniffed with scorn of it.

"I will take your hat," she said politely to Grogan who had forgotten to remove it from his head. "What is this?" she demanded with a start, putting her finger on four holes in the crown.

"Bullets," answered Monahan impatiently. "But listen and you will learn how they came there."

A half hour she listened, nibbling her lips, and when she had all the facts inquired of Grogan: "Had you ever asked to go after the Sundog gang?"

"Once," he answered, "but Rivets said I had no psychology."

"Psychology and presentiment and astrology," she said with interest, and the telephone ringing she found Mr. Rivets on the wire demanding a report of the ties on the track and two dead men in the cab. Ten minutes later they were all three in the superintendent's office and, after the story of the holdup, came the fatal question:

"Grogan, how did you happen to plant yourself in the tender for the holdup?"

Monahan turned pale and Grogan, at his wit's end, put on his hat with the holes in it. But Mary answered with pride. "'Twas psychology." Rivets started violently, repeating the word.

"It is so the best detectives work," explained Mary. "And by putting himself in the place of the Sundog gang Mr. Grogan was able to decide on my father's run tonight as the time and place for robbery. It is a long story and does not matter, except that his psychology was right."

Rivets eyed her with suspicion, but after a time nodded his head. "You are right; the story of how it came about does not matter. Only the result matters."

At last Grogan found his tongue and in accord with his promise he asked for the transfer back into the station department.

Rivets shook his head but said: "Grogan, after the job you have done this night I can refuse ye nothing. But think it over; think a long time before transferring from a department which will treasure your brave example for many years. You may yet be the head of it."

"Faith—and he will, Mr. Rivets," said Mary.

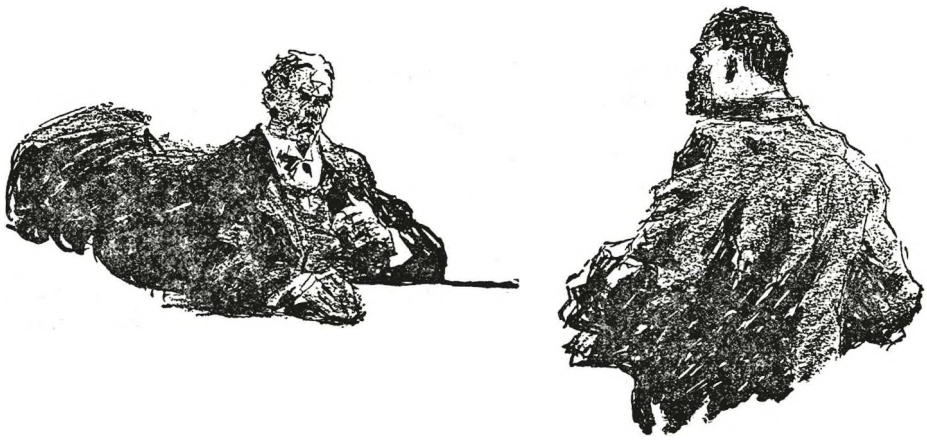
A moment later on the platform Grogan said, bewildered: "But I thought you wanted me transferred?"

"And lose the glory you have won? Never. Besides, between the two of us we will make a great detective." And then a sob and a laugh came into her voice. "Oh, Detective Grogan," she said, "what in the world would have become of me if you had not boarded your friend's engine to share his danger? And arrest the presentiment?"

"But I did not do that," confessed Grogan.

Mary, laughing at his puzzlement, held close to his side and pressed her cheek against the hat she carried, with four holes in its crown.

Another Johnston story in the next number.



Page Mr. Scandrel

By C. S. Montanye

Author of "The Count of Mont and Cristo," "The Merry Wife of Windsor," Etc.

Mr. Ottie Scandrel builds a beautiful fight club in Spain.

THE party who once made the crack about it being a wise father who is acquainted with his own son said something for a certainty. It's a cinch he never was employed in an orphan asylum or had met Ottie Scandrel. There's nothing on the records to show that Ottie intended to back that boy's famous statement but fate gave him a break and when the orchestra played the exit march Ottie had proved the father and son one to everybody's satisfaction. However, it took young Wilbur, Elaine Fortescue, the niftiest of blondies, a baby who advertised himself as "Wildcat" Hogan and several others to help him put the thing across.

Here's the score and orchestration.

One morning last June about the time the wage slaves were turning off their alarm clocks and figuring out possibly another ten minutes on the pad I got up to the gym in the Bronx to open up for the day. Just as I was reaching for the front door key I spied Ottie warming his dogs on the pavement near the employees' entrance. The former welterweight and screen star featured his ice-cream make-up, a bamboo cane with more spring to it than the Great Bear, a stiff straw skimmer and eleven dollars' worth of silk in the form of a shirt, collar and tie. Ottie looked quite the boy—from the rear.

I got the front door open and was picking up the mail when he flashed me and came up.

"Well, what a fine gymnasium *you* keep, Joe!" he bawled. "I've been waiting for a little action since ten minutes of seven. All I seen from then to now was the night watchman waking up and checking out!"

"We never open much before nine," I explained.

Scandrel barked like a beagle.

"Nine? So this is the level to which box fighting has sunk, hey? I suppose all the future champeens who hang out here roll down about ten in their limousines and stop off with their sociable secretaries to read their mush notes and sign a few checks. Ha-ha! Nine o'clock, eh? What does the gang train on now—cream puffs?"

We went upstairs to my private office. Ottie was afraid to take a chance with his Palm Beach suit on any of the dusty chairs until he had first spread out his handkerchief.

"How is your trouble?" I queried.

The big clown grinned like a chorus girl with a wreath of roses.

"Never better. Listen, O'Grady. I suppose you're wondering how it comes I'm the early worm after the bird? It's this way. Later on I got a date to see a big Wall

Street shark about getting some jack for the Coliseum Athletic Club. I didn't want to oversleep and so I come up here to kill an hour or two with you."

This was my cue to curl an eyebrow. Ottie and the Coliseum Athletic Club were as close as Park & Tilford. A dumb bird, so thick that he imagined quicksilver was swift, he had gotten the bright idea of pulling a Tex Rickard and becoming the promoter, owner and manager of a gigantic metropolitan sock emporium to be known as the Coliseum Athletic Club. It had cost Ottie a long piece of change to have the plans drawn and for printed literature. With these in his pocket he spent the day calling on money barons who he believed would be interested in staking him to enough to put the contemplated venture across.

Scandrel was persistent if nothing else. Being flung out of half a dozen offices in one afternoon was less than nothing to him. He figured that inasmuch as Barnum was correct all he had to do was to keep on looking until he had found his come-on.

"Who's this morning's victim?" I asked.

"Magnus Boyd," he explained with a smirk. "Equal that one if you can without going up into Ford's class."

I registered surprise. Magnus Boyd, commonly referred to as the Copper King, was a financial giant who could have bought half of Europe for cash and then have given it away without having to slap a nickel's worth of mortgage on his Park Avenue homestead. Believe it or not, Boyd was so wealthy that he got writer's cramp from writing checks and skin disease from counting money.

"Boyd, eh?" I murmured.

"How'd you like to run down to Park Avenue with me about ten o'clock, Joe? I'll need you around in case I break something or pull a bone. Honest, this sociable stuff is poison to me. I couldn't like it if it was spread on bread and that's a fact."

"How did you happen to run into *him?*" I continued.

"Who said I did?" Ottie asked. "It was like this. When I used to be knocking them over the jumps and pasting them cold in the ring, old man Boyd was usually holding down a front-row seat and cheering me like a kid. Well, when I first got the idea of building the Coliseum Athletic Club in my nut I snapped around to see him but found out he was away in Europe or France or some place on a vacation. His secretary, a cuckoo of a blondie with a pair of eyes that would knock you dead on the spot, heard what I had to say. She promised she'd tell Boyd about me the minute he come back and see to it that I got a chance to chew the rag with him."

"And she forgot all about it?" I cut in.

"If you had to guess for a living you'd starve to death!" Scandrel snarled. "How could she forget it when I was the one concerned? About half past four yesterday afternoon the blondie give me a bell, said Boyd is back and that I should be down at his private house at ten a. m. o'clock this morning if I wanted to see him personal. This here is the chance I've been waiting for. Leave it to me! I'll talk a million out of him, no fooling. I'm the kind of a baby that could make a German like that French song—you know—the 'Mayonnaise!'"

"You say so," I murmured. "What time do we leave?"

"I got the car around the corner," Ottie explained. "We'll slip out in about twenty minutes. What harm will it do if we are an hour early? Besides, Joe, it ain't only the tea-drinking stuff I need you to tip me on. If Boyd makes a promise I'll need a witness. I wouldn't trust none of them dollar hounds. They're all crooked. It stands to reason that if they *did* keep their word they wouldn't be millionaires. Smile that away and let's step. The car might give some trouble in starting."

Really, it was curiosity more than anything else that made me follow Scandrel downstairs and around the corner. His car, a pretty little roadster that had been built for General Grant to review the troops in at Richmond, was tied to a lamp-post at the back of the gym. Ottie, at one time, had gone in for the most expensive gas carts that could be purchased. After three of them had been stolen he had combed the city for something that was thief proof.

The chariot he bowed me into was the answer!

It took Scandrel three quarters of an hour to wind it up with a crank. He took off his collar, coat and tie. Without getting a sigh out of the boiler he churned like an organ grinder. Finally, when it looked like there was nothing doing the thing went off with a bang and shook like a line of wash in a gale. Scandrel dashed away some

perspiration, picked up a dozen nuts and bolts that had been shaken off, climbed in beside me and stepped on it. The bus had no top and only a piece of a windshield but that didn't stop it from shooting away from the curb. We left the crowd that had gathered behind and nodded into the boulevard like Man-o'-War on the rail.

"This boiler's a little rusty," Ottie admitted. "Once I warm her up more she won't tremble so much. Honest, when she's right there's nothing sweeter on four wheels. For a fact, she runs the same way a marken bird sings!"

One decided advantage was that no horn was necessary. All the way down from the Bronx we had clear sailing. The car might not have been much to look at but it certainly made itself heard. We reached Park Avenue at twenty minutes after ten with no mishaps outside of losing the carburetor twice and dropping a tire once.

When we pulled up in front of the house of Magnus Boyd and got out, the basement door opened and a big tramp with ears on him and a red face walked over to give us a knowing eye.

"I sye, m' good man," he said to Ottie, "you cawn't stop 'ere, y' know. Hif the marster or the moddom should be goink hout they'd be 'orrified at the spectacle of such a conveyance stoppink 'ere."

"How many?" Scandrel asked, puzzled.

The big boy got red.

"You 'eard me!" he hissed.

Ottie looked at me.

"I think this bird has been in the sun without his hat, Joe. Shall I smack him one for luck?"

"Maybe you'd better do what he says," I advised. "How do you know you can park cars here?"

"Ain't this Park Avenue? Listen, fellar," Scandrel went on, addressing the other. "That boat anchors where it is. You 'eard me. Open your peep and I'll knock the soles of your shoes through the sweat band of your hat!"

With that we started for the stoop. Three steps and the big bird with the ears was on us.

"Tyke that car away!" he roared.

"Take this away and don't bring it back!" Scandrel retorted, swinging around and slipping over a short right that caught on the end of a jaw that stuck out like a porch on an Arverne bungalow.

"That's the way to make 'em like it," Ottie chuckled as we went up the stoop steps and rang the bell. "He acted like a duke so I gave him the count. Ring the bell, Joe."

A minute later the front door opened and a servant looked out.

"Sir?" the man said.

"Whom are you?" Scandrel demanded.

"The footman, sir," he answered.

"Tell Mr. Boyd we're here to see him and avoid bearing the marks of my feet!" Ottie hissed.

We were shown into a room that was full of furniture. My boy friend looked around with the greatest of interest. He took off his hat, put it on again and sighed like a whistle.

"Sweet mamma! What a nifty layout this is! All that's needed is a couple of the long bamboos and there ain't a opium parlor on Pell Street that can touch it for class. I hope I don't break nothing!"

He had just finished speaking when steps sounded in the hall outside. Somebody gave the curtains a push and one of the three best-looking girls in the world wandered in. She was a custard blonde with a figure that could only be termed statuesque and beauty that made the Times Square musical-comedy queens look like a bunch of acrobats after a tough day on the rings. She had lashes a foot long and a pair of sky-blue eyes that said, "Come hither!" and "What do you want?" when you got there. Really, her lips knocked the roses cold and compared with her skin satin was sandpaper!

While I was helping myself to a second look Scandrel came out of his trance, took off his hat and rushed across to greet her.

"Well, well!" he hollered. "So the two of us meet again! I'm surely much obliged for you not falling down on your promise, Miss Fortescue. Naturally, I knew you wouldn't. Eh—this here is Joe O'Grady, a friend of mine. Joe, meet Mr. Boyd's secretary—the little wren I was telling you about."

"Mr. Boyd," Elaine Fortescue murmured in a voice that was a steal from grand opera, "will see you in the library, Mr. Scandrel. Will you follow me, please?"

"Through fire and water!" Ottie chirped.

We went down a hall that was two blocks long and stepped into a trick elevator that was run by buttons. The blondie shut the door and pushed two of them. The cage went up to the second floor and stopped.

We were piloted down another hall and then into a library where Magnus Boyd, the celebrated Copper King, was taking a fall out of his morning newspaper.

The second we got in Scandrel began to cluck like a hen. Honest, Magnus Boyd was worth a laugh from anybody. He was a little, dried-up antique who had enough wrinkles for an old ladies' home with a few left over. He featured a pair of eyebrows as fluffy as the summer furs the gals wear and a gold watch chain. His other article of jewelry was a safety pin that held his vest together.

Sitting in his chair, he looked like something that had fallen off the end of the bread line and was ready to have the hat passed.

"If this is wealth," Ottie whispered, with a nudge, "give me poverty and plenty of it. Flash the safety pin, Joe. Safety first, hey?"

The blonde Miss Fortescue announced us and Magnus Boyd looked up from his paper. It was then that we got a glimpse of his eyes. He had a gaze that was sharp enough to put points on lead pencils and went through you like a bullet through a paper bag.

"Umm!" he said. "Mr. Scandrel, you say? Very well, Elaine. I'll ring when I need you. You're late!" he barked at Ottie.

"Yes, I got a watch too," my boy friend answered. "We come down from the Bronx in my car and she wasn't running just right. Meet Mr. O'Grady, Mr. Boyd."

The Copper King shook hands with me and asked us to sit down. Ottie took off his hat again, put it under his chair and lighted a cigarette.

"Just what did you want to see me about?" Magnus Boyd questioned.

"About financing the Coliseum Athletic Club," Scandrel began. "I used to lamp you in the old days when I was pushing them around and so I know that prize fighting is your long suit. All I want is a chance to convince you that I got a good thing up my sleeve. I ain't worrying about that neither because I'm one of these here babies that could borrow fifty dollars off you and then talk you into paying me the interest on it. Leave me have about twenty minutes and I'll have you sold on my idea."

"Proceed," the millionaire murmured.

At this Ottie began to hand out a line of fast chatter. He reeled off facts and figures with the speed of a Cuban bartender serving a crowd just in from New York. The remarkable thing was that I felt sure he didn't know what he was talking about. After he had built the clubhouse he paid Magnus Boyd a verbal one hundred per cent on the investment and then spoke in glowing terms of some of the fights that were to be staged there. According to Ottie Dempsey, Firpo, Greb, Dundee and the rest of them would be crying their eyes out if they couldn't have the honor of a scuffle within the portals of the Coliseum Athletic Club.

"Very interesting and instructive," Magnus Boyd murmured when Ottie finally had a heart and laid off. "I don't doubt but that you have a sound proposition to offer. Personally, I'm rather a person of impulse. That is to say if I like an idea I'm willing to gamble on it regardless of figures and whatever chance there is of failure. Coming right down to facts, I'll make *you* a proposition. If you're successful with it then I'll stand back of your venture and interest two or three other friends of mine to make it a go."

Ottie gaped.

"Eh—how do you mean?"

Boyd pulled a cigar out of his pocket and snapped off the end of it.

"I have a son," he explained. "His name is Wilbur and he was twenty-three years old last month. Now, I have a career cut for the boy in my office but is he interested? He is *not!* The darn fool went to college and got his F. O. B., learned to play the ukulele and how to dress but outside of that education and common sense passed him by. You can understand better when I tell you Wilbur's sole ambition in life is to become a pugilist! The boy would rather knock a man out than assume full charge of my business. Can you picture such a thing?"

"I get you!" Ottie chirped. "You want me to take charge of Wilbur." Boyd nodded and he went on:. "Fair enough. I'll shape him up and get a couple of matches for him with bolognies who will roll over and take the count for seventy-five cents in money or a hundred and fifty coupons! Don't worry a thing about Wilbur, Mr. Boyd. I'll see to it that he wins *all* the fights I put him in and gets his picture in the paper——"

"That's the very thing I *don't* want you to do!" Boyd roared as the good-looking Elaine Fortescue tripped in with a sheaf of letters.

"Eh!" Ottie mumbled.

"I want you to see to it that this idea of Wilbur's is knocked completely out of his head!" Boyd bellowed, pounding the arm of his chair with his fist. "I want him to lose and lose until he is through with prize fighting forever! I don't even object to him being severely pummeled if he eventually regains his sanity! Do I make myself clear?"

"Ha-ha!" Scandrel chortled. "This is a horse of a different odor—so to speak. So you want Wilbur to get cuffed a few, eh? Ain't we got fun? I'll fix it so that if he wants to be a box fighter a month from today I'll stiffen him myself. Beaten up, hey? Nothing but losing fights? What could be sweeter?"

The blonde knock-out laid down the letters on the desk and looked at Ottie with parted lips. She seemed about to say something, thought better of it, coughed and made a hasty exit.

"I see that you have grasped my idea, Mr. Scandrel. Sit down and we'll talk this over," Boyd continued in a voice that would have made honey taste bitter. "Wilbur is stupid in some things but bright enough to suspect a plot if we don't lay wary plans. I have an idea how I can send him to you without making him suspicious. Draw your chair up closer and I'll tell you about it."

Two mornings later Ottie showed up at the gym. He came over and joined the crowd watching Wildcat Hogan, the latest thing in welterweights, doing his stuff. Hogan, a furious mixer and a two-fisted fighter, had been picked up by Looie Pitz in some slab down on the Jersey coast where he had been cleaning dishes for a living. Hogan was rough and tough. He was made of cast iron and carried dynamite from his elbows to his wrists. Pitz had worked him twice against two hustling second-raters in order to get a line on him and Hogan had displayed pleasing wares.

The general consensus of opinion was that the Wildcat was destined to make a name for himself.

Hogan had just finished making one of his sparring partners like it and was looking around for his next victim when Looie Pitz nudged me.

"Who left the door open!" he guffawed. "Look what blew in!"

Ottie and I swung around together. The door at the far end of the gym had opened and framed the well-built figure of a curly-headed youth who had a pan on him that would have made Adonis send out for a tube of arsenic. The stranger was tricked out in some comic-strip clothes that would have gotten him two curtain calls in any burlesque show. He wore knickers, a sport shirt open at the throat, golf stockings that were shot with lightning, shoes that were full of chuckles, and carried a knitted jacket over one arm.

While we were looking around for his caddie he sauntered languidly across the gym and waved a nonchalant hand at those who were looking at him speechlessly.

"Hello, bunch!" he said.

"What do you think we are—bananas?" Scandrel growled. "Don't be getting so familiar unless you want to get your chin wiped off!"

"That's clever repartee," the other laughed. "By the way, can I trouble you to direct me correctly. I'm looking for a Mr. Scandrel."

The statement rang up a snicker with the crowd, who let their ears out another foot.

"I'm him!" Ottie said uncomfortably. "What are you advertising?"

The newcomer looked puzzled.

"Advertising? Nothing, really. If you're Mr. Scandrel I had better introduce myself. My name is Wilbur Boyd. My father suggested I come up here and see you. He said that he had spoken to you about me on the telephone and that I would be expected. I hope this is quite all right."

"Well, well!" Ottie yelped. "So you're Wilbur Boyd? Yes, your old man was telling me—eh—about you. He said that—eh—you wanted to get in the box-fighting game and knock a few for a Swedish curling iron. Sure, you're expected. Meet the boys."

He introduced him around to the stupefied crowd. After Boyd had shaken hands with Looie Pitz, Wildcat Hogan furnished an interruption.

"What's this a rehearsal for?" Hogan snarled, pushing a way forward. "Does this cake eater get all the attention here or not? Listen, Looie. Let that lounge lizard wait outside to do his turn and lock the door. I want you to hold the clock on me for a couple of frames. Beat it, Helen!" he growled at Boyd. "Take your embroidery out in the hall and make it hasty."

The Copper King's son stared at Hogan haughtily.

"If you are addressing me," he stated, "kindly lower your voice. I'm not used to being shouted at, really!"

This put the crowd in stitches. The biggest laugh was Wilbur Boyd's face. He was perfectly serious and for all he knew the bystanders were handing Hogan the snicker. Pitz's wallop trader became aware of this and gnawed his lip.

"Hey!" he bawled. "Are the whole lot of you riding me? Outside, mule skinner, before I make a jackass out of you! Step on it, will you? We ain't got all day in here to play rings around Rosie or Brooklyn Bridge's falling down!"

"I positively refuse to listen until you address me in a civil tone," Boyd said, turning away.

Hogan took two steps forward. He would have gone the rest of the way if Ottie hadn't grabbed him.

"Behave yourself!" Scandrel requested coldly. "If you're looking for free fights buy a ticket to Belfast. This here Wilbur Boyd is being took care of by me. Lay a hand on him and I'll paste you myself, you cheap tramp!"

"Like heck you will!" Hogan screamed. "Don't be giving me none of that guff. Your own manager told me that when you were in the ring you were a sucker for the world! You couldn't lick the rim of an empty glass!"

Ottie wheeled around to poke over his right but Looie Pitz stepped in. When it came to settling quarrels the little manager was as diplomatic as a shipping clerk out with a strange stenographer for the first time.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" Looie cooed. "This will never do. The proper place to settle quarrels is in the ring where you're paid for your punches—not here, brawling like hoodlums. You'd better leave, Ottie. My boy has the gym for the next two hours."

Ottie walked away with young Boyd. I followed—out of curiosity.

"What an uncouth person!" Wilbur exclaimed when we were in my office. "Would he actually have indulged in fisticuffs, do you suppose?"

"He'd have indulged in handcuffs!" Ottie growled. "Sit down, Boyd. Your—now—old man was telling me you want to become a box fighter. What's the idea—don't he give you spending money enough?"

Wilbur looked at me and shook his head.

"No, that isn't the idea, really. I think that every man has his own life to live. We all have our own inclinations and desires. Father wants me to go into Wall Street and dedicate myself to a world of stocks and bonds, chattering tickers, blackboards—that sort of thing. I have other ambitions. While in college I became interested in boxing and won several bouts. Pugilism of to-day is a profession no man need be ashamed of. I have tried vainly to convince father that if I am given careful preparation it is almost certain I can work my way up the ladder. My weight places me in the welterweight division and what I lack in ring technique I am happy to say I make up in gray matter. Really, I have weighed each fact separately and I see no reason why, eventually, I should not become a champion in my own right. Will you or will you not take charge of me, Mr. Scandrel?"

Ottie made a show of thinking it over.

"All right," he said finally. "Show up tomorrow morning about nine o'clock. Bring your ring costume with you and I'll take a look. Of course it wouldn't be worth my while nor yours neither if I find out you're a set-up that any limburger can slap for a mock orange. If you got the stuff that's O. K. for the K. O. I'll see you get plenty of work. How's that?"

"Fair enough!" Boyd replied before he shook hands and breezed.

"What was the idea of stalling him?" I inquired.

Scandrel grinned like a trained seal.

"His old gent told me to go easy. Personally, I'll handle Wilbur if he has to go in to fight on crutches! The worse he is, the better he is—for me! I'll kid him along and get some tough egg to crack him at the first asking. The quicker he gets box fighting out of his nut the sooner I'll be building the Coliseum Athletic Club!"

And this was that.

Wilbur showed Scandrel the usual amateur line. While at the dear old university some one who knew leather pushing wasn't made up in the kitchen had schooled young Boyd in the art of socking and covering up. However, the Copper King's son was as slow as a five-ton truck on a steep grade. He had a kick but left himself as wide open

as a subway entrance and was as fast on his feet as a paralytic.

Wilbur was just another battler. The one thing in his favor was that he kept on trying. If ambition had been nickels young Boyd would have made the Automat look sick!

Ottie tipped the lobby loungers at the gym to lay off. No one so much as snickered when Wilbur strolled in, dolled to the brows in a fifty-eight-dollar sweater. And if he had been some champ training for a tough go he couldn't have worked harder or with more enthusiasm. Honest, it was sad but amusing to see him smacking the bag, shadow boxing or stepping with "Kid" MacInsky, a mediocre middleweight that Scandrel had picked up and was using as a sparring partner. The only one around the premises who didn't get the humor of the million heir's presence was Wildcat Hogan.

Pitz had to threaten *him* with a club before Hogan promised to be good!

"Boyd's crazy to go!" Ottie said one morning a few weeks after the lad had gone into training. "He thinks he's in shape now to pick a quarrel with *anybody*. It's something terrible the way he pesters me to get him a fight. I've been shooting at 'One Round' Thomas. Thomas is just the party, who could half murder Wilbur and get me my athletic club. The only trouble is that Thomas has been laughing off all my propositions and now I see he's dated up for a big bout in Ohio next month."

"There must be any number of local boys who can stiffen Boyd," I said.

"Sure, but do I trust 'em? I ain't taking no chances. Wilbur's one of them mockies that don't know enough to roll over and play dead when he's beaten. I got to get some one to half kill him because if he loses I know he'll quit like a dog and be glad to hold down a desk in his old gent's office. For a fact, the head of the house was almost sobbing on my shoulder yesterday. He wants the kid to quit the game that bad!"

The office door opened before I could speak and Wilbur marched in. He had on something in pale-gray flannel and a nifty cravat pierced with a diamond stickpin as big as a thumb. He looked high class enough to go to bed with a high hat on.

"What ho!" he chirped blithely. "I see by the papers that One Round Thomas has gone out West. That is decidedly in opposition to all my pet schemes. I had every expectation of flooring this individual and conquering him. Who now, may I ask, do you intend to match me with, Mr. Scandrel?"

"Ask me something easy—like why is a woman!" Scandrel growled. "When you speak about matches don't be looking at me —I'm not sulphur!"

Boyd flicked out a delicately shaded lavender handkerchief and touched his brow with it.

"But really," he persisted, "I must insist that you arrange a bout for me in the immediate future. I find myself in an extremely fit condition and I have no desire to become stale. I dislike being severe but father has asked me several times when I am to make my début in the ring and if you cannot find an opponent for me then I will be forced to seek another manager."

"Ha-ha!" Scandrel laughed. "Don't you know I was only kidding you along? Sure I'll get you a fight right away. Don't it mean scratch for me to uncover a coming champ? You'll get yours—er—I mean I'll slate a fight for you. If I don't I'll give you leave to gate me."

"With whom?" Boyd queried curiously.

"Don't be asking so many questions!" Scandrel retorted indignantly. "You do the fighting and I'll do the talking. Get inside now and put on your pink panties. I want to see you give MacInsky the sleeping sickness!"

As happy as a ball player after clouting one over the fence, Boyd made for the door. As he pulled it open Looie Pitz and Wildcat Hogan piled in. The three came to a stop.

"Why, it's little Goldilocks!" Hogan guffawed. "One side, Bright Eyes, and let me pass!"

He attempted to shoulder a rough way past Wilbur but got fooled. Boyd stood his ground. Eye to eye, they glared at one another like a couple of alley cats.

"You heard me! One side!" Hogan roared.

"You insufferable blighter!" Boyd snapped. "What an incorrigible roughneck you are! If it was not that I dislike soiling my hands on you I'd pummel you this instant!"

Before anybody could interfere Hogan poked over a right hook. Wilbur saw it coming, blocked it crudely and uppercut with his left. This blow caught the ex-

plate cleaner an inch below his ear. Boyd attempted to close in but Ottie jumped him and hurled him back.

"He hit me!" Hogan mumbled. "The cake eater hit me!"

"In self-defense!" Wilbur flared. "And I glory in my own depravity! You abysmal brute, you attacked me first and with scant provocation!"

"Here, here!" Looie Pitz yelped. "You two birds give me a pain—the way you're always picking at each other. If you got differences to settle fight them out in the ring and get a few dimes at the same time. What's the sense——"

"Sugar papa!" Ottie Scandrel interrupted with a bellow. "Here's your fight on the half shell for you, Wilbur!"

"You mean——" Boyd stammered.

"Don't be asking questions!" Ottie went on quickly. "Hogan is in your weight class and even if he ain't a One Round Thomas he can make you push yourself! The winner of the scuffle will get a good boost because it will be a tough fight. How about it, Looie? As representative of—now——"

" 'Tiger' Boyd!" Wilbur cut in briskly.

"I'll match my boy against yours for any number of frames at any split out of the purse!"

Pitz flapped his ears at the latter remark.

"We'll fight you for ninety per cent of anything we can get!" he shot back.

"You're on!" Ottie replied as rapidly.

"Pardon me while I laugh a little!" Hogan cut in. "Tiger Boyd, hey? After I get through smacking you you'll have to change your name to 'Humming' Boyd! And ninety per cent of the purse, eh? So much the better. I'll drop you with the first punch—you pin-headed, apron-string grabber!"

Stung to fury again Boyd made a leap at him. A flurry of blows was exchanged before they were pried apart.

"Be yourself!" Scandrel said to Wilbur. "Ain't you wise that this sapolio is just giving you a jouncing so he can cop your money? Come on, act natural and let's frame this thing up like gentlemen and not no deck hands!"

Immediately the agreement was made Ottie buzzed the sport writers with the result that he got more newspaper publicity than three Broadway successes. Being the son of Magnus Boyd was enough for the press bunch to snap out illustrated articles which showed Wilbur in more poses than a chorus girl. The stuff that went with the pictures was the hop for a fact. The newspaper boys called Wilbur "The Millionaire Welterweight" and jazzed up wild tales of his boyhood life as well as his college days. A lot of the junk burned Ottie up but his protégé was delighted.

Wilbur kept all the clippings and pasted them in a scrapbook!

In the meantime Looie Pitz had fixed it up with the matchmaker of the Casino A. C.—a charming little retreat in mid-Harlem near the banks of the East River. The club put on a Friday-night card and Ottie and Pitz drew number three on the ticket—a six-round prelim with a hundred-berry purse attached to it.

"Make out I'm a half-wit," Scandrel said a few days before the night of Wilbur's Waterloo. "I couldn't have picked out a better boy for my purpose without getting Jack Kearns' ear. Figure it yourself. Hogan likes Boyd the same as a chauffeur does night work. Of course the purse is a chuckle but what difference does that make when Hogan's all steamed up to polish Wilbur off? I seen the kid's old gent last night and he's happy like a child with *two* toys. The old man had tears in his eyes and already figures that Wilbur will be down at the office next week pulling tape out of the ticker. Hot tomaso! Ten minutes after Wilbur flattens him the biggest real-estate firm in this slab will be out buying a site for the Coliseum Athletic Club! The gravy, what, Joe?"

Kid MacInsky strolled in at this minute.

"A lady to see you, boss!" he said to Ottie.

"Which?" Scandrel asked. "We don't want no books because there's a free library around the corner and vacuum cleaners are out. Hand her the air and don't be coming in here when I'm busy!"

"Just as you say," MacInsky murmured. "It ain't money out of my pocket but—*phooie*—what a sweet number this doll is! One of them dreams——"

"Send her in!" Ottie interrupted. "If she's half as good looking as that maybe I can use a set of Shakespeare!"

In less than three minutes the caller was ushered in. This was the same beautiful blonde I recognized at once as being Elaine Fortescue. She was wearing blue silk that matched her eyes and couldn't have fit bet-

ter if six dressmakers had pasted it on. She glanced from me to my boy friend and took the chair he made haste to drag out for her.

"I don't know just how to begin," she said slowly. "I feel so embarrassed and per——"

"Don't feel like that, Cutey," Scandrel said. "How much do you need? You can have any part of the ninety dollars I have with me."

When it dawned on Miss Fortescue she was being offered a loan the lips that made the roses quit like dogs parted and a silvery laugh escaped her.

"Thank you ever so much," she cooed, "but I didn't come all the way up here this afternoon to borrow money. My purpose is to speak about Wilbur. Mr. Scandrel, do you think that you are doing a just and manly thing in following out Mr. Boyd's instructions? I could not help but overhear the agreement you made with him and I have been waiting for something definite to occur before coming to you. Must Wilbur be sacrificed to make a Roman holiday?

"Is Friday an Eyetalian celebration?" Ottie replied. "What difference does it make? Wilbur's a set-up for any socker of *any* poundage. If he lives to be a hundred and eighty he'll never get out of the pork-and-bean class and the chances are he'll be murdered inside of a month anyway. Wildcat Hogan's doing him a favor by goaling him. Honest, for all young Boyd knows box fighting is something they put rivets in!"

Elaine Fortescue looked troubled.

"Then he has no chance whatsoever?"

"Who said that?" Scandrel demanded. "In this game, Cutey, you never know your luck. Hogan might break a hand or lose an arm or something. Otherwise, he wins by the Lincoln Highway. But tell me, why are you so interested?"

She colored quickly.

"You see—that is—Wilbur is in love. This is a secret at present and so I am asking you to please keep it. He's in love and engaged to a young lady—a working girl who does not meet with his father's approval—and she would not like to see him injured. You say that he will never be a prize fighter of distinction? Perhaps the best thing for him to do is to enter his father's office but surely there must be milder methods of having him get over this foolish desire of his to be a pugilist. Couldn't you have this 'Tomcat' Hogan defeat him without having him knocked out or beaten up?"

"Not a chance in the world!" Scandrel cried promptly. "If Hogan don't do it in the ring he'll do it in the street, so what's the difference?"

Elaine Fortescue leaned slightly forward. She laid one of her white hands on Ottie's arm and lifted her eyes to his. Scandrel looked like a nervous woman calling on a hypnotist for the first time.

"Magnus Boyd thinks that you are extremely clever and I think so too," she cried softly. "You can speak to Mr. Hogan if you wish—ask him to be less severe. It means a lot to the girl Wilbur is engaged to—a little manicurist in a hotel downtown whom I used to go to school with. I promised I'd do what I could so don't fail me. I won't forget the favor!"

The blue eyes and her voice were enough to have charmed the works out of your watch. Ottie listened to her plea and mopped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Er—I'll see what I can do," he mumbled. "It means a lot to me to have Wilbur goaled. Understand, though, your asking me is just as important. I'll—now—I'll see what I can do."

"I knew you would!" the blondie murmured, slipping her fingers into Ottie's hand.

When she had tripped away Scandrel flopped down in the chair.

"That's a break for the life of you!" he whined. "Ever since I rolled an eye at that little blonde I've been trying to figure out a way to take her out for a meal. Now look it. I suppose I could send a little kale in to Hogan and tell him to win on points but then I lose out with old man Boyd. I'll have to play the string out as it is because business before the ladies! But that cooks me with the doll. How am I ever going to give her a bell and take her out for a ride or anything after Wilbur gets clouted pretty! Positively, there's always a woman mixed up in it somewhere!"

Up until the time of Tiger Boyd's first appearance in any professional ring Wilbur was as even tempered and confident as a prima donna on an opening night. It might have been his college education or it might have been his unbounded faith in himself, but whatever it was nothing worried him.

He did his gym and road exercises without a murmur, worked out briskly with Kid MacInsky and seemed serenely contented with himself and the world. Perhaps the fact that Looie Pitz had taken Wildcat Hogan over to a temporary camp in New Rochelle had something to do with Boyd's high spirits.

His temper never had a chance to be ruffled!

"He's a cuckoo and no mistake!" Scandrel informed me on the afternoon of the fight. "When I used to strut my stuff in the old days I was like a greenhorn waiter with soup for a coupla days before the scuffle. When the fight was only two hours away I was fit to dive out a window when anybody dropped a pin on the floor. And look at Wilbur!"

"What's he doing?" I asked.

"Teaching MacInsky and two other bums how to play bridge. He didn't say which one at that. I had lunch with his old gent and he'll have a ringside seat to-night. Say, I hope none of them strong arms who frequent the Casino will pick the old bird's pocket. Well, after all, it's none of my business. My job is to get Dumb-bell slammed silly and everything's all set for the occasion. I lose Elaine's friendship but I get the grandest swat pavilion this burg has ever seen! Joe, how about putting a private balcony in the Coliseum Athletic Club for nothing but the broads who want to come up and see the fights, bring their sewing with them and at the same time not have to mix with the hoi polly?"

"Why not a room for children?" I suggested.

Ottie looked interested.

"That's an idea! Children what ain't interested in the bouts could beat it in there and ride hobble horses and the like. I'll speak to the architect to-morrow. We still got a little spare room left on the second floor we don't know what to do with!"

For the next half hour Ottie was busy preparing a list of toys needed for the play room!

Tiger Boyd had one of the family limousines call at the gym to convey his handlers and seconds down to the Casino A. C. We reached the club at ten after seven, got a line on Wilbur's dressing room and found it was a cell-like chamber in the cellar under the ring.

"The ventillating system here is deficient," Boyd stated immediately. "Really, I cannot understand how the management can expect a person to prepare himself for the arena amid such surroundings. Fortunately, after the arduous weeks of training my constitution is such that foul air will have but small effect upon it. Still, I am thinking of others who are less rugged. Tomorrow I shall ask father to buy this building and have it torn down."

He continued the patter while he was being kneaded. The gang from the gym looked at him with round eyes. For all they knew he was talking Turkish.

"How do you feel?" Ottie asked him after he had had his rub-down.

"I'll win with ease," Boyd declared seriously. "This is my Night of Nights for within the hour father's viewpoint is to suffer a great change. Not only will I thrash Hogan but I'll make father understand that I'm not a person to be crossed in—ah—*amour,* either. I am engaged to the dearest girl in the world but simply because she is a manicurist father will not tolerate the idea!"

"Mebbe," Ottie suggested, "your father thinks she's out to trim him!"

"Ridiculous idea!" Boyd snorted. "I shall be the welterweight champion and I shall marry Gladys! I decided upon that weeks past!"

I went upstairs and took a look at the hall after Wilbur had finished his monologue. The Friday-night slam carnival had them jammed in until they were sitting on each other's shoulders. The flower of the neighborhood was revealed through a cloud of tobacco smoke. Gunmen and gangsters mingled with ordinary pickpockets and hard eggs that made you wish you had left your watch home.

The first prelim had ended without creating much of a stir. With some difficulty I picked out Magnus Boyd. Wilbur's father sat near the southwest corner of the roped inclosure. With his gray hair and in his evening clothes the Copper King stood out like a wart on a screen star's nose in a close-up. My gaze shifted when I got a flash of gold hair and I elevated a quick brow.

In the next chair to Boyd sat the marvelous Elaine Fortescue.

The second prelim ended with the crowd bawling both sockers out and Magnus Boyd straightened up stiffly in his seat.

Tiger Boyd was the first to enter the ring. He came down the aisle wearing a bathrobe of baby blue that immediately got a whinny of joy out of the crowd. When the élite of the district saw that Wilbur had his hair parted in the middle they began to ride him. But for all the visible impression it made on Ottie's white hope the customers might have been in London giving the king the top of the morning.

Stopping only to wave to his father and bow to Miss Fortescue, Wilbur rubbed his shoes in the rosin box, tested the ropes and looked the crowd over with an unconcerned stare. A few minutes later Wildcat Hogan entered the ring, wrapped up in what appeared to be a Turkey-red tablecloth. One look at his pan and the crowd cheered Hogan to a man. They made him vociferously welcome.

Hogan took it with a smile, swung around and waved a hand at Wilbur.

"Ah, there, Cinderella! Now ain't you sorry you didn't behave?" he called.

Pushing Ottie aside Boyd darted across the ring and with half a dozen seconds on his back tried to assault his annoyer. The gang took the incident with the greatest of appreciation and some kind of order was restored only when the gong rang half a dozen times and the announcer moved to the front.

"Over here, Wildcat Hogan, the Bronx Battler!" he bawled. "In the other corner, Tiger Boyd, the Park Avenue Dynamiter! Welterweights! Six rounds!"

The ring was cleared and Scandrel climbed down beside me, chuckling with excitement.

"Like a bakery the kid will be pie for Hogan! Notice who's with old man Boyd, Joe! I'll have to have a special chair built for blondie at the Coliseum with gold cushions on it—in case she ever gets over being sore at me for what happens to-night! Well, we're off!"

The bell clanged and the two battlers sprang to the center of the ring.

Wilbur immediately led to the jaw and missed by the length of the Hudson. Hogan slammed a left through the opening presented and slapped over his right. The two blows registered and Wilbur went to his knees. He got up without waiting for any count, shook his head and bored in.

"Come on, you sponge-cake fighter!" Hogan snarled. "Like it!"

Wilbur missed again and Hogan slammed a stiff right to the jaw. Boyd again led with his right but left himself wide for a counter. The Wildcat spilled him again with a burning one just above the belt and the Copper King's son hit the pad with the crowd giving Hogan more advice than his family physician.

"That one hurt!" Scandrel hollered. "Flash the old gent, Joe!"

I twisted my neck and saw Magnus Boyd sitting as still as a mummy in a glass case. There was a tense, anxious expression on the pretty face of Elaine Fortescue that gave way to the sunshine of relief when Wilbur took nine and tottered to his feet, falling into a clinch.

The referee dragged them apart and Hogan made a right hook to the heart good. The blow rocked the Tiger like a rowboat in a gale. It looked like lilies for Wilbur until the bell ended it and he stumbled to his corner, dazed.

"Really," he mumbled to Scandrel, "I almost had him twice then! I'm afraid that I outclass him entirely!"

"You've got him licked from here to Miami!" Ottie yelped. "Keep on rushing him, play for the body and wear him out! He can't last much longer. You'll have him on his shoulderblades in the next round sure!"

The following three frames were torrid and horrid. Hogan couldn't have inflicted more damage with a repeating rifle. He jabbed, punched and chopped away until it seemed as if the heir to the Boyd fortune must curl up and roll over if only out of self pity. Counting Wilbur's flops became monotonous. Even the crowd that packed the Casino A. C. got tired of riding him and yowled for Hogan to end it up.

"How am I progressing now?" Boyd asked Ottie when the gong saved him again at the end of the fifth.

Scandrel clucked like a mother hen.

"You've got him ready for the shutter! You've given him an awful pasting and he's set for a quick curtain! This here is the last round so go out and get him! You're doing a beautiful fight and don't let no one tell you different!"

Hogan came out of his corner as fresh as a tulip for the last round. He immediately began to punch Boyd groggy again, evidently realizing it was his last chance to hang a K. O. on his record.

"This is terrible!" Ottie moaned. "Wil-

bur's as game as a partridge but why don't he get wise to himself and do a nose dive when he can't win? Honest, I never seen nobody so stubborn! If Hogan don't tuck him in soon I'll have to climb up there and put him over the jumps myself!"

While the Wildcat hammered away I stole another glance at Magnus Boyd. If the Copper King had moved a half inch during the whole battle the fact was not observable. He still sat in a trance—a trance shared by the girl beside him.

A hysterical panic of applause turned my eyes to the ring. Hogan had tied into Wilbur, shooting everything in he had for a spectacular finish. Boyd took it all with his arms hanging like a couple of wet neckties until Hogan dropped his right for the dreamland medicine. Then some knowledge that he was about to be emptied for good seemed to work its way through Wilbur's nut. While the Wildcat was still pulling up the punch Boyd reeled forward and slammed his own right over. It was a half hook, half swing and it caught Hogan directly on the button.

In a silence so profound you could have heard a nickel turn over in your neighbor's pocket Wildcat Hogan spun around like a skidding auto and pitched forward on his face.

When Looie Pitz reached him after the count had been clicked off Hogan was still out as cold and silent as the Arctic Circle!

"On the level," Ottie moaned when we were down in the cellar boudoir again, "can you equal that one? If luck was mucilage I couldn't cover the back of a one-cent stamp! Wilbur gets torn to tatters and all I lose is the Coliseum Athletic Club! I'll be driving a truck yet!"

He wandered unhappily away about two minutes before the Copper King rushed into the dressing room. Magnus Boyd dashed over to his gladiator son, threw an arm about his shoulders *and kissed him!*

"My boy, my boy!" he bawled. "I'm proud of you! Greatest fight I've seen since Corbett defeated Sullivan! You were right and I was wrong! If you want to be a pugilist and marry the girl of your choice you have my full and entire consent! But I can't have you boxing in such surroundings as these. You must not fight again until Mr. Scandrel and myself build a clubhouse for you!"

Boyd blinked happily.

"Really, you know, father," he murmured indistinctly, "I can't understand why I allowed Hogan to stay with me as long as I did. Another thing, I've decided that pugilism is not for me. The element attending is displeasing and not so good. Monday morning I'll report at the office for work!"

Fifteen minutes later I encountered Ottie at the entrance of the Casino. He listened to what I had to say about Magnus Boyd and the Coliseum Athletic Club with a curling lip.

"Don't be bothering me with business now, Joe!" he barked. "And don't be calling me Ottie. I'm Jack because I've got a Jill. Eh—Elaine had a heart. She said she seen that I did my best with Hogan and so the both of us is going out for a little light supper. Don't be jealous—this is only natural with me!"

Is not nature grand?

Another story by Mr. Montanye in the next issue.

AN ORIENTAL JUNKMAN

FIFTEEN years ago a Chinese named Ong Che traveled from China to the Philippine Islands. For three years he worked in Manila as a coolie. He worked hard, spent little and saved a few hundred dollars. Then he went in business for himself, buying and selling junk. Now Ong Che says that he will buy anything from a nail to a steamship, and made good the latter part of his boast by buying the steamship *Missoula* from the quartermaster's department of the army. He is rated as being worth a million dollars.

Which may prove many things—chief among them that Ong Che is a wise and fortunate man.

Devil's Club

By Frederick Niven

Author of "You Found It!" "Good Enough," Etc.

An incident of Alaska that proves the persistence of romance.

DO you know the Devil's Club? It is not a big building in town devoted to slough and bootleg; it is not a secret society of dope peddlers; it is not another version of Stevenson's Suicide Club. It is a weed. Botanists call it *Fatsia horrida*. It grows from two to twelve feet high, far from cities, in the wildest parts of our mountains, and its stout stem is covered with sharp spines. It does not rise directly from the earth; it makes firstly a creep, snakelike, then soars; and that queer stem has big flat buoyant leaves that bow and seem to float along the bottoms of the big woods, leaves shaped somewhat like hands, palmated, and covered with what looks like down on the cheek of youth, or fluff on young pigeons; but each little tuft of seeming down is really a prickle. Touch a leaf and this down comes off in your hand. If you do not pick it out of your skin it can make little festering sores. Along the deckle edges of the big leaves the same idea persists, the idea of hooks, hooked prickles. These on the edge are less downy, more obviously hooks—indeed they are not like down at all. And the Devil's Club grows by the league often, on and on, like a few-feet-high forest under the pillars of the hundred-and-fifty-feet-or-so-high cedars and still Douglas firs.

I.

For many years there used to wander in the Northland, from the Caribou country to Dawson, two brothers MacPherson, Angus and Adam. Neither was ever much given to letter writing, with the result that their meetings were generally unexpected and generally brought about by the discovery of "color" in some region or another of that wide territory. For both were prospectors, drawn by the same magnet of "discoveries."

In the summer of 1920 Adam arrived too late at the Bear Creek excitement to stake a claim at all promising. He found all the Bear Creek bed, that a change of direction in the creek had laid bare, already staked and claims staked even beyond its edge in the big rush.

"Nothing doing," he communed and left the rush town of tents and a log shack or two to push north and try the tributaries of Stikine.

All showed color, but not in sufficient quantity to suit him. The year moved on in its slow but sure way; the cotton-poplar leaves dried and rattled in the fall winds. There were premonitory snaps of chill after sundown but Adam was not of those who go out to Vancouver or Seattle for the winter. He passed on into the hinterland of

Atlin and had his cabin built before the first snows; and there, till the spring of 1921, he lived on the land, trapping, alone with his thoughts, the snow pom-poms and the aurora.

They say that men who live much alone develop a latent psychic sense, lost to the sophisticated, the sense that caused many an old Indian, so they tell, on the day that the famous Chief Crowfoot died, to halt a moment as in a quick trance and then remark: "Crowfoot is gone." But Adam did not seem at all strange when, in the spring of 1921, he came into Pike City, after the ice had gone out, with his winter's pelts and a great hunger for vegetables, if no more than canned. No suggestion in his eyes of that half battiness ascribed to lone prospectors and solitary fur getters; no suggestion in his mien of anything peculiar. His gray-blue eyes were normal and very clear. For a week he sat in a window seat of the Pike City Hotel gazing out at the mountains in the manner of his kind, chair a-tilt, foot on the brass rail fitted under the window for that purpose. Each time the bell rang and the dining-room door opened he rose, knocked out his pipe, and drifted in to eat. That was his life for a week, with occasional study of a magazine or of a trade catalogue left on the window ledge.

Before the first batch of tourists from the west coast arrived to marvel at bluebirds below the glaciers aloft, and the summer warmth up there, the reflections and the old quiet—while yet these would be conning the folders in San Francisco and Portland, Adam MacPherson rose and departed from Pike City. He had a great pack on his back and where a trail led away from the rutted road he halted to cut a staff as tall as himself. The snow still lay thick on the upper reaches; the creeks were roaring down. Jays, that stay there all year, screamed to him as he struck into that mountain trail, marching along with a clockworklike propelling movement of his arm that held the long staff.

His goal was the upper reaches of the river by which he had trapped through the winter, the look of its black silt in the spring freshet having inveigled him. The blue prints that he had asked a sight of at the registrar's office in Pike City showed him trails that led whither he desired, more or less. Up the trail he poled his way, and the big wilderness closed round him.

II.

He found color. He found it in such quantity that he pondered the advisability of going out to Pike City again and looking for a working partner. This was worth sluicing systematically. If only he knew the postal address of Brother Angus! They could even invest in a hydraulicker and work this gravel together in big fashion.

It occurred to Adam that before going out it would be a good plan to follow up the creek still farther and see just what manner of benches bordered it. But the banks were close, above his location; and the current was too swift to pole up on a raft. He looked at the hills. The best way, he thought, would be to push over the spur above his camp and drop down on the farther side of its upper reaches. The blue prints he had seen at Pike City, and the map of the forestry man there showed no trails so far; but often one struck an old Indian trail or even some not too terribly willow-overgrown trail made by the men of the '59 and '60 explorations after the precious metal. Not but what he was entirely competent to make his own trail.

Pondering the matter, lying in his bunk one day after lunch, that was how he figured it out. Yes; he would go over the spur into the next valley and could perhaps come back on a raft, which would be a different matter from trying to pole upstream. And then came the time of terror.

So we come to the Devil's Club in the deep woods, the big spiked leaves, like hands, making creepy level gestures in the slight wind and then balancing still.

He had been wont to think, if not to say on coming to these parts, that he saw no reason for a man to be lost in the woods. But, after much wandering among the mountains, he came to realize what a jumble they are and came to realize that a man might know where the sun rose and yet not know where his camp was unless he practiced observation, and sedulously. He had seen weeks on end when for one cause or another it was hard to keep, if traveling, a sense of the points of the compass.

One of these causes made him now acknowledge himself, if not lost, astray; and that was smoke drifting over the land from a forest fire. He did not think the conflagration was in his immediate neighborhood, for there was just a gray-blue sift of pungent haze obscuring the peaks. The

acrid smell of it was in the air. Lightning, he considered, had doubtless struck and fired somewhere, but not near.

The sun was a gold blob over a ridge of a million trees. He had kept his sense of direction, it appeared, on leaving camp to go over the spurs northward. When circumventing a great deadfall he had thoughtfully noted his movements, the compass and the lie of the land in his mind's eye. He had come to a stretch of tall firs, little underbrush below them, the flooring of the woods there chiefly dust of cones and tamarack needles.

At a tributary creek of the river, the upper reaches of which he was looking for, he made a halt. He had considered that he could make the next valley and return in a matter of three or four days, even if he had to walk there and back instead of rafting down again on the twisting river. But over the ridge he came to a tumble of little hills thrown into a great crease of the bigger ones. Down through the haze he could see not a white but a leaden-hued twist, indicating his river. He mounted higher, seeking a crossing on the ridge where, he hoped, the trees would thin out and show one of these upland natural meadows. And then came a drop or two of rain.

"It will take more than that to put out the fire, wherever it is," he thought.

He walked slowly uphill but there was a second growth there under the big sticks, so he walked down again to try to circumvent that tangle on the sharp slope. Suddenly he stopped and looked all round him. A panic seized him and he expelled it.

"This is where I've got to keep cool," he told himself.

Lost? Why, no! Not on your life! He knew where he was. He was in Atlin, and over yonder, that way, was Atlin Lake, and up over that way was White Horse. He was not lost exactly. He was just a little doubtful about where, exactly, he had come into this tangle of hogbacks and draws.

But it seemed that he did not keep cool. He had the queer sense of knowing he was delirious. He had no pack on his back! Where was it? What had he done with it? Had he set it down while he scouted out the lie of the land, so as to scout light, intending to go back to it when he got his bearings definitely again? No; not that. He was wet. Why was he wet? The rain had not come after all. He was wet with sweat. No, surely not. He was wet as a man who has fallen into water. He must not go crazy.

He looked all round him at hogback after hogback ridged with still trees specterlike and blue in the haze. Not a berry bush even to be seen! He struggled on. But where was he going? As he went something caught his legs and he looked down. He was in a patch of Devil's Club. A patch? There were miles of it, it seemed, a low forest of weeds about his waist under the towering forest of trees. There was something horrible in those big leaves, with their barbed edges, that looked as if afloat at the base of the cedars on and on through the dim vistas. Where was he making for? He was going south again; he was climbing the north side of the ridge. The north side!

Then he heard a voice shout: "Halloa!"

He raised his head and yelled chokingly in reply: "Halloa!"

And he woke in his shack, heaved a great sigh, realized that he had lain down in his bunk for a siesta after lunch and must have fallen asleep while thinking of taking a trip over the ridge.

But that was no dream surely. He sat up, dank from the horror of it, and pieced it together again, recalling it all.

"That was no dream!" he broke out suddenly. "Or if it was I've got to show me, so to speak. It was real all right and I guess there is somebody lost over that ridge. Guess my mind being empty in sleep this here radio got busy."

Next moment, wide awake, he wondered if there was anything to it. Yet he could not leave the matter so; and half an hour later, rifle slung on one shoulder, blanket roll on the other, with a whack of bacon, frying pan, billy can, and precious tea, he was setting off, ax in hand, "just to see," he told himself, "if the country over that hogback looks at all like what I dreamed it."

III.

On the range to north his brother Angus was in the Devil's Club at that very moment.

He had been farther north by an old trail that ran in from what the Indians called the Caribou Crossing, and the whites, for the ease of postal communication and

to prevent muddle with another Caribou, called Carcross. He was in there upon a theory of his own. He knew that, after the Caribou rush of '60, many men had passed on beyond Stikine and Cassiar into Atlin, and he knew they had brought out gold even though their appliances had been of the most rough-and-ready order. From Carcross he had worked back into the hills by the old overgrown trails these men had cut; he had found trace of them in rotting sluice boxes and cabins caved in, with ants in their logs and squirrels flirting over the roofless walls. He had seen what he desired to see, panned gold at their workings where they had just scratched the surface feverishly before passing on, and had decided that it would be worth while to raise a party of men and go to these old bars with all modern improvements.

The way in from Carcross had been arduous. His food store was ebbing and he bethought him that the most expeditious way out would be by river on a raft. All creeks lead to the Pacific here. So he built him a raft and went afloat. But the raft came to grief; hitting a rock. His belongings went downstream. The raft stood a-tilt a moment between two projecting boulders that the water foamed against a hundred feet below, then sagged sidewise, spun round and was swept on. He gave thanks for a fallen tree projecting into the stream by which he hauled himself to land. To build another raft was a vain thought with no ax; and besides the creek there ran on into a close cañon. For all he knew there might be worse perils of jutting rock and rushing rapid ahead.

He left the bank to climb the spur of mountain to south, in the hope that, coming to the river again lower down, he might find some placer men at work who could outfit him and see him on his way, or some Indian camp. On he trudged to circumvent that crack in the land where the river roared, compressed. Thirst he could assuage at many a little creek running down to the big stream, but he only wet his lips and struggled on. Hunger gnawed; yet there was not so much as a berry bush to be seen with even unripe berries. The blood thudded in his head. He made a fire to sleep by, for the matches in his tin box, which he carried in a pocket, were dry; but, blanketless, it was a chill camp to a hungry man in the small hours.

At dawn he was up and on again. He scrambled over deadfalls. He stumbled into hollows hid by moss. He felt as though he walked on a spring mattress. Then he found himself raising his hands in air as he trudged on like a man in a mad step dance, raising them up to evade the barbs of Devil's Club.

All round him was the Devil's Club. He stepped on an old rotten tree and it caved under his tread so that he went down on a knee, and the deckle edges of the big leaves that seemed to float low in the woods clutched him. He struggled to his feet and at every step he was tearing himself away from their hold with the little hooks. They were like a vegetable octopus. They seemed to conspire consciously to keep him there, finish him.

Again, unsteady, he stumbled and in trying to prevent a fall wrenched his ankle. He must keep cool! He must keep calm! This was a fight with the slow old centuries. The hushed wilderness was trying in its queer way, that had all Time at its easy disposal, to worst him. Without food, weakened, a man was at the mercy, even in a few days, of no more than the clutch of a hook on a leaf.

Then he lost count of time. He did not know how long he had been trudging through these utterly silent groves where the branches fanned out a hundred feet above and the big leaves of the Devil's Club poised at his feet. He staggered and stumbled and fell. And then suddenly he heard his brother Adam's voice:

"It was no dream! By Sam Hill, it was no dream! Angus, my lad, I'm glad I came over. It was this here telepathy. It was —here, my son—my brother, I mean—here, Angus man, take a pull at this!"

A canteen, its contents tepid but refreshing, was at Angus' lips and he took a pull to the best of his strength. In a few minutes Adam had a fire alight, and was cooking a meal for him.

Yes; these were the MacPhersons who gave the name to MacPhersons' Bar. It is quite right for the apostrophe to be after the s instead of before, for it was called "the MacPhersons' Bar" at first. Angus' discovery, above the cañon, was far wealthier than his brother's to south; and after his recovery—which was only a matter of days, with his constitution—they came out to

Pike City and packed in hydraulickers and, in the phrase of their calling, "cleaned up" a fortune there.

And that fortune they are hardly like to blow in. They have come out with it. Atlin and the Yukon brood on without them. The last this chronicler heard of them Adam had bought a house on Oak Bay, looking across to the Olympics, and with a silver-headed cane and a pedigreed Airedale may be seen strolling on the esplanade. And Angus had taken unto himself a wife and a limousine, and a house on Shaughnessy Heights.

They must often remember the Devil's Club.

Look for more of Mr. Niven's work in an early issue.

SEEING WITH THE FINGERS

HOW many eyes has a man? The chances are several million to one that the person faced with this childish query will answer "Two." But if the interlocutee happened to be one of the few who follow closely the doings of the world of science the reply might be "Millions." That, in fact, is the answer of a French savant, Professor Louis Farigoule whose researches during recent years have brought to the point of practical demonstration the theory that a man can see *with his skin.*

According to Professor Farigoule the human skin is closely packed with millions of minute cells which he calls "ocelli"—little eyes—and which have within them the latent power of conveying visual images through the nervous system to the brain. Because the specialized organ, the eye proper, is so much better adapted to the function of sight, we have allowed the ocelli to atrophy through disuse. Hence our ignorance of the possession of this "sixth sense" which the discoverer has named "extra-retinal vision."

Of the detailed mechanics of extra-retinal, or skin vision, even Professor Farigoule admits little accurate knowledge. To explain just how and why it is possible to see with the skin he advances a working theory—but he does not call it anything more than a theory. The important consideration, he justly points out, is not how a thing is possible but the fact that it is possible. And that it is possible to see objects and distinguish their exact form and color with—for instance—the finger tips, Professor Farigoule has pretty well proven.

At a recent demonstration attended by French men of science one of Farigoule's pupils, with eyes sealed shut by adhesive tapes and covered with lead goggles, used the fingers to recognize and describe objects presented for identification. Among other things the blindfolded subject read accurately the denominations and values of playing cards exhibited under a strong light and even deciphered printed words. In order to obviate any question of telepathic communication between the subject and any person present at the séance, one of the spectators was asked to tear a leaf at random from an old calendar that happened to be in the room and to present it to the subject without noting its text. The subject was able to read the calendar with ease, although no one present had any knowledge of its inscription until the accuracy of the reading was checked off. The subject was never permitted to touch any of the objects submitted for recognition or reading. The tactile sense as a means of identification was thus entirely eliminated.

Professor Farigoule considers that the possibility of extra-retinal vision is henceforth an established scientific fact. His line of research now is in the direction of a method of instruction which will give to the blind in the shortest possible time the training requisite to the awakening of the new faculty. Up to the present he has been successful only with especially receptive subjects, but he believes that intensive study of the problem will evolve a method that will bestow upon all the blind the blessing of a latter-day miracle, that will lead them out of the dark into at least a degree of visual capability, through the use of the millions of eyes that peer through the translucent windows of the epidermis.

A Bird Named Corridon

By Norman Beasley

Author of "Don't Aim—Thow It!" "Low and Inside," Etc.

As a shortstop the mysterious Corridon looked like a pretty good son-in-law.

"SHAG" SHAUGHNESSY, manager of the Beetles, grumbled as the mail carrier dropped a red card on his desk.

"What's this?"

"Registration slip, Mr. Shaughnessy," explained the carrier. "Sign right here, please," and a weather-beaten, stubby forefinger indicated a dotted line at the bottom of the card.

"What's the big idea?" growled Shag.

"Rules of the department. Package for you, marked 'personal,' and says on the ticket it must be delivered to the manager of the Beetles. That's why I brought it in here instead of leaving it outside with the secretary of the ball team."

"What's the article?" persisted the irritated Shag.

"Here it is, right here. It's a baseball bat. Gosh knows why any one should be so particular over an old tobacco-stained war stick like this one. One of them nuts, I suppose, sending you a present. Maybe you can give it to 'Buck' Thompson—he ain't been hitting."

The mail man chuckled at his own deductions. They satisfied him. Shag signed, reached forth a hand for the bat and curiously eyed the tag which was fastened to the handle. The carrier, still chuckling, hurried out of the office.

Shag fingered the tag, turned it over, looked at the other side. Attached to it he saw an envelope addressed in bold handwriting to:

SHAG SHAUGHNESSY,
Manager of the Beetles.

Shag scratched his head, turned the envelope as he had turned the tag, paused, then ripped it open. A page came out. He read:

DEAR MR. SHAUGHNESSY: This will introduce Mary Ann. She's been a good friend to me. As the advertising man says: "Friends don't grow wild; you've got to cultivate 'em!" That's how it is with Mary Ann. She's a good old friend but you got to cultivate her. Put her in a dry spot until I come along.

EARL (RED) CORRIDON.

Shag's humorous mouth settled into a slow grin—a grin that his blue eyes reflected. He examined the bat. He handled it, tested its weight; stood up, planted his feet in an imaginary batter's box and swung at an imaginary baseball.

"A bit heavy on the end—a wee bit narrow around the handle—but the heft is about right," he commented. He held the bat at arm's length, surveying it critically. "Glad to meet you, Mary Ann. Where'd you come from and who in blazes is your side kick? Let's see—what's his name?"

Shag referred to the letter.

"Earl—'Red'—Corridon," he slowly spelled. "The name's all right but you never can tell where these Irish will end. Corridon—I wonder what asylum you're getting your mail at now?"

Shag put the bat down against his desk and turned to his morning correspondence. A sheaf of letters remained to be opened. He knew what they contained. All anonymous communications from "Interested Fan" or "Well-wisher" or "Friendly Critic" and all telling him how to jerk the Beetles out of their losing streak. What baseball manager doesn't get them when his team starts sliding toward the bottom? Spread open on Shag's desk was a newspaper. It had been opened at the sports pages. Shag had been reading an account of the previous afternoon's game. He had read:

> The Beetles were snowed under—nine to one. The only excitement for the home fans was furnished after the game when a delegation of spectators waited on Manager Shaughnessy and voiced their disapproval of his manner of running a ball team.

"Huh!" growled Shag, as his eye caught the offending paragraph again. "Telling *me* how to run a ball team. Won a pennant for them last year and they clapped me on the back and said I was 'the greatest manager in the business.' This year they call me 'a bum!' Yeh—and worse names than that. I'd like to have some of these newspaper writers and some of these grandstand managers sit down on the bench and run a ball team instead of parking themselves in the shade and pulling a lot of second guessing."

The door opened and "Butch" Schmidt, Shag's assistant, came in.

Butch's red face showed earnest concern.

"Been reading them papers?" he questioned. "This bunch of yowlers makes me sick. I wouldn't pay any attention to them, if I was you, Shag."

"Thanks, Butch, I'm not," dryly returned the manager.

Schmidt's gaze fastened on the bat standing against Shaughnessy's desk.

"What's that?" he questioned.

"What's it look like—a gasoline steam engine?"

"Get away with that stuff," disapproved Butch. Walking across the room he picked up the bat. A queer light appeared in his eyes as he examined it. "A fine tool," he commented as he swung it, just as Shaughnessy had done. "A little narrow in the grip, but a cuckoo just the same. Who belongs to her, Shag?"

"A bird named Corridon. Calls her Mary Ann and tells me to keep her till he comes."

"Another of them nuts," grunted Butch as he picked up the letter from Shag's desk and, with careless indifference to the property rights of others, read it.

Shag watched him. "Some day, Butch, you're going to get a good swift kick, well aimed, for butting into other people's business," threatened the Beetles' manager.

"Baseball nuts is public property," grimaced Butch. He added, after a pause: "Buck Thompson would like this bat. He ain't been hitting the size of his hat for the last month."

"Buck ain't going to get that bat if he never hits," declared Shag. "She belongs to this Corridon guy and she's going to stay in this office until he shows up."

"Supposin' he never comes?"

"No guy is going to get very far away from a stick like that."

The Beetles' manager picked up the unopened correspondence from his desk and tossed it into the wastebasket. The newspaper followed the letters.

Butch grinned as he watched. An idea came.

"Listen, Shag," he offered. "Why not give the newspaper boys the story of this bat? I ain't much after publicity, as they call it, but this letter from Corridon listens like a good yarn. Maybe it'll keep the pack off'n your back for a few days."

"I don't give a damn what they say!" exploded Shag.

"Neither do I. I'm with you, Shag, 'till the divil gets sprinkled wi' holy water,' as Father O'Brien says, but"—and Butch winked—"it's a good sign, this bat coming in, and I say to make the most of it. Let the newspaper boys photograph the bat and the letter. The printing will take up space and that means less room for panning the ball team. It ain't doing the Beetles no good. You know that. What do you say, Shag? Shall I give the boys a ring and an earful?"

Shag grunted his assent, adding: "Go ahead, but I'll get out of the office and you can do the talking."

So saying he left, while Butch sat down to the telephone.

II.

Mary Ann and her letter of introduction received much publicity that day—and the next—and the next. Received much publicity on subsequent days because on the afternoon of the morning following her arrival the Beetles won both games of a double-header from the league leaders, thereby breaking a losing streak after it had accumulated eleven games.

That winning streak held for a week—and it was exactly one week later, to the minute almost, when the mail man returned to Shag's office.

"Another registration slip, Mr. Shaughnessy."

"Another!"

"Yep. From the same nut."

"How do you know?"

"It's the same return address on the card. This time, though, it's not a bat. It's something in a package."

Shag quickly signed. Like all baseball managers and players he leaned on superstition and it was with fingers that trembled a little that he broke the string on the parcel and tore back the wrapping to uncover the contents.

A pair of well-worn baseball shoes came to light.

Accompanying them was another letter:

DEAR MR. SHAUGHNESSY: These are my trilbies. You'll see that I am supported by pretty fair-sized hoofs. When I park my dogs between second and third bases there ain't nothing that goes between 'em or around 'em. I'll be parking myself in them in another few days. Put them in a dry spot, along with good old Mary Ann. She'll recognize these—know I'm coming—and won't get lonesome for me.

EARL (RED) CORRIDON.

"I'll be a son of a gun," grinned Shag as he read the letter a second time. "Wish I'd taken a squint at that return address. I'd know where this bird named Corridon was shut up.

Without moving from his chair Shag bawled:

"Schmidt! Butch Schmidt!"

"Yes, sir," responded the always near-at-hand Butch as he poked his head through the door.

"Look'ut what we have with us again," cried Shag, indicating the shoes on his desk.

"Who they from?"

"I'm instructed to put them into a dry spot along with Mary Ann."

"This Corridon guy again?"

"Yep."

"Where is he?"

"How in blazes do I know?"

Butch was thinking of the winning streak as he declaimed: "He ain't a bad guy to have sticking around."

"I know. But what's the big idea? Sending in a baseball bat last week—a pair of shoes this week—what'll it be next week?"

"Don't know and don't care," cried Butch. "Get out of the room, Shag. I'm going to have speech with the newspapers again."

III.

Another week of winning—then a lost game. Seven days from the receipt of the second package Shag had looked for a third. It had not come—and the Beetles had lost. He was concerned, worried. So on this eighth morning he sat in his office again, fidgeting, looking at the clock and thinking about the mail man.

You remember, it was written that Shag was superstitious. Twenty years in baseball and the only time he had failed to step over the base line had been an afternoon when he had slid into second base and broken his leg. Father O'Brien had often chided Shag about his superstitions; Shag, in defense, had always said:

"I ain't what you'd call superstitious, father—I'm just careful. That's all."

So perhaps it wasn't superstition that made Shag get up and go to the safe against the wall, open the heavy door and peek inside to do homage with his eyes before an old tobacco-stained bat and a pair of well-worn baseball shoes.

It wasn't superstition, perhaps. Had he thought of it Shag would only have shrugged his shoulders and said: "It ain't that. I'm just careful."

It was while Shag was kneeling in front of the safe that the door opened. He glanced quickly up to see a gray uniform. He grinned a silent welcome to the mail man.

"These things are getting mysterious," commented the carrier as he put down another red card.

"I'll sign this in a hurry," cried the Beetles' manager as he scrawled his name, and broke the string on the package that was handed him.

A glove, with a hole in the center, came out. There, too, was a letter.

DEAR MR. SHAUGNESSY: This is the glove that covers the biggest left hand in baseball. It's the glove that goes along with the shoes and Mary Ann. Put it away with them. Been reading about my things in the newspapers. They brought you luck. I'll be along in a day or so and show you what real luck is. Tell Buck Thompson that me, and Mary Ann, the old trilbies and the glove are going after his shortstopping job. I'm signing this note again—— EARL (RED) CORRIDON.

Shag smothered a laugh.

"So he's after Buck's job," he grinned. "Wonder what Buck'll say when he reads this letter in the newspapers. The old boy will just about tear all the sod off the infield."

And Buck did fume. He sought out Shaughnessy in the clubhouse after the Beetles had licked the Braves—licked them by a seven-to-two score—in a game where Buck had contributed two hits, one a triple and the other a double, which had sent three runners racing across the plate. Buck also had played a superlative game in the infield.

"Where d'yuh get this stuff, Shaughnessy?" he hoarsely demanded. "Giving that bunk to the newspapers! Ain't I had hard enough times this year without getting the wolves on me again?"

"It's all right, Buck," soothed Shag. "I didn't give that stuff to the papers. They came in and got it. The boys have been hanging around the baseball office for the last week watching for another letter from Corridon. They were just outside my door when the glove came in. They crowded inside on the heels of the mail man."

"Feed that stuff to somebody else," growled Buck. "I have been with you ten years now. I've given you everything I got. I call it a scurvy trick and rotten reward for all I've done for the Beetles—and you, too, Shaughnessy."

"Listen, Buck, there ain't no use getting sore over it. I didn't think——"

"Think, my eye. You didn't think the Beetles into this winning streak, did you? I'm sore about this, Shaughnessy—sore right down to the heels. I say it was a scurvy trick. It was. Any time you want to get waivers on me you don't have to go beating around the bush and making me out a has-been to them wolves that just got off me last week."

Wishing to avoid arguing with the infuriated ball player, Shag started away. Buck followed.

"I ain't going to stand for this," he yelped. "I'm serving notice on you right now, Shaughnessy, that when this Corridon bird shows up he's going to have a battle on his hands. A battle all the way from the home plate."

"All right. All right," snapped Shag. "I'll give it to you, Buck. You've been a good ball player for me. But, if you want the truth, you're slowing up. I'm looking for a shortstop. I'll tell you that. Furthermore, if this Corridon bird shows anything he's liable to have your job. You've crabbed and crabbed and crabbed until I'm sick of listening to you. Also, if you don't like this comeback of mine there's another way to settle it. I've settled gazaboes like you before and I can do it again. Go on back to your locker and shut up or I'll help you on your way."

Shag's fists were doubled and were waving under Thompson's nose. Impressed, Buck turned away grumbling.

When the players had left the clubhouse Butch Schmidt came across.

"You was kind of rough on Buck?" he asked softly.

"He had it coming," supplied the still belligerent Shag. "I'm through with Buck's crabbing. He has been thinking right along that Corridon is an outfielder and figured he would get Lindsay's job. Buck is sore on Lindsay and figured——"

"How could Buck figure that?" interrupted Butch. "Corridon said in his letter that he 'parked his dogs' between second and third bases. Buck must have known right along that this letter-writing nut was a shortstop."

"Buck figured Corridon was disguising himself," explained Shag. "He came to me last week and said he thought he knew Corridon—said he was an outfielder and a good one, too. Hinted that because Lindsay was getting old Corridon would be a good bird to slip in. I agreed with him, to find out how he was thinking. When he saw he had my ear he spilled over on Lindsay. Said this kid could cover acres of ground and if I gave him the chance he'd do to Lindsay what Ty Cobb did to Dick Cooley—kick him off the ball team in one inning. Sometimes Buck makes me sick."

"I know, Shag, but Buck's still a pretty sweet ball player and he's got friends on the

team who are liable to make life miserable for Corridon when he does show up. I just don't like to see a youngster getting the worst of it when he ain't done nothing to put himself in Dutch."

"Aside from the fact that Corridon hasn't showed up yet, as well as the point that he's likely to be a youngster who, from his letters, can take care of himself, your argument is all right," asserted Shag. "In addition, I don't know anything about Corridon. I think he's just another nut, but a lucky guy to have on a ball team.

"So far as Buck is concerned, he had a call coming. I'm manager of this ball team and responsible for its position in the race. Just because I'm free and easy with those working for me is no reason why I should be the goat for them—as well as for the fans."

"Not to mention the newspapers," added Butch.

"Yeh, not to mention them," agreed Shag.

IV.

The Beetles were finishing their morning practice the following day when a young man—a young man with red hair, bluish-gray eyes, a large, inquiring nose, and a wide, humorous mouth—came across the field. Rather, he sort of slouched across. He approached Buck Thompson.

"Is Mr. Shaughnessy here?" he inquired.

Buck jerked his thumb toward the spot where Shag was directing the last stragglers in batting practice. Hesitatingly approaching Shag, the stranger stopped when within ten feet of the Beetles' leader; he stared at Shag's broad back, studying him, apparently.

Shag turned, and frowned. "Want me?"

"Is this Mr. Shaughnessy?"

"Yeh."

"I've played a little baseball. I'd like to get——"

"Got no time to talk to you now," barked Shag. "See Schmidt when practice is over."

Shag turned his attention to the field.

"But——"

"You still here?" Shag turned, barking again.

"Yes. My name's Corridon. Thought you——"

"Your name's what?" Shag fairly shouted.

"Corridon."

"Why didn't you say so in the beginning? I thought you were another of them 'try-out guys.'" Shag's tones grew apologetic.

The youth smiled.

"Hey, Butch!" yelled Shag. "Come here." Butch Schmidt ambled in from third base where he had been shagging grounders. "Meet Corridon," cried Shag. "This is Schmidt—Butch Schmidt, assistant manager of the Beetles. Go on into the clubhouse with Schmidt and get yourself a uniform, Corridon. I'll give you a work-out right now."

"I'd rather not," he protested. "You see, I've been traveling. Just got here and feel pretty tired."

"Forget that," advised Shag. "Get yourself into a uniform and a work-out'll do you good. Make you feel better."

"No. Not to-day," Corridon's tones were decisive.

Shag was insistent. "How do you expect to catch on with the Beetles if you don't give me a chance to look over your stuff?" he persisted.

"I don't. You'll see it."

"I want to see it this morning."

"Can't be done, Mr. Shaughnessy. But, if you want to—I'll talk with you."

"Not here," declared Shag, glancing around at the listening ball players. "Go on up to the office. I'll see you there within half an hour."

"How's Mary Ann?"

"Not so worse," answered Shaughnessy.

"And the shoes—and the glove?"

"They're keeping Mary Ann company—in the safe."

"Good. I was hoping you'd put em in the right place."

In less than his stipulated half hour, Shag was in his office and closeted with the strange youth who had already begun to haunt his dreams.

"I'm glad you got here," smiled Shag by way of opening a channel for conversation.

"Thanks," returned Corridon. "I've been some time getting around to it but I had to get Mary Ann and the shoes and the glove shipped first."

"Yeh. So I noticed."

"I noticed they brought you some luck, too."

"I should say they did."

The youth abruptly changed the conversation.

"I'm ready to talk business, Mr. Shaughnessy," he said.

"What d'yuh mean—business?"

"Just that."

"You mean you want me to give you a contract to play ball with the Beetles?"

"That's about right."

"How in thunder do you expect me to sign you when I've never seen you even throw a baseball?" Shag displayed temper, then suddenly remembered his own laid-down axiom of being careful, and changed front. "Things ain't done that way," he said, conciliation creeping into his voice.

"I know they're not," admitted Corridon. "My case is different—that is, different from most of the players you signed. Remember that pitcher Connie signed last year? Connie tried to get him to show his stuff in morning practice and he refused. Said he wasn't a practice pitcher but would win his game if Connie would shove him in that afternoon. There was nobody playing the Athletics that afternoon but the pennant chasers and Connie took a chance and shoved him in. What did he do—you remember, don't you? You remember he licked the pennant chasers?

"I'm the same kind of a bird. I'm not a practice player. I'm different than that pitcher who came to Connie, though. I'm not asking for a contract for a season—simply a contract to play one ball game. If I don't make good in that one game you don't have to sign any more papers. I'll take Mary Ann, the glove and the shoes back home with me. That's fair enough, isn't it?"

"Yeh. You make it sound all right. But signing a ball player to play in one game ain't done," argued Shag.

"Because it isn't done doesn't mean it can't be done."

"Don't suppose it does. But—supposing you get in there, make three or four hits, field like old Hans and run bases like Ty Cobb—where do I get off at when I try to sign you to a contract for the season?"

"Forget that. I'm thinking about this one ball game. That's all I'm interested in right now."

Shag did not answer. Instead he took a cigar from his vest pocket, rolled it in his fingers for a few minutes, put it between his teeth and thoughtfully chewed on it for several minutes.

"Corridon——" he slowly began.

"Yes, sir."

"You ain't as big a nut as I thought you was."

"That's good."

"Maybe." Shaughnessy was studiously noncommittal. "What's your idea about this one game?"

"You mean—my financial idea?"

"You got me."

"Well, the advertising I've given your baseball club has been pretty good. Mary Ann got you out of a losing streak. I said I'd be lucky for your ball team. I was right. I think about—about—five hundred dollars isn't too much for one game."

Shag's lips twisted into a satirical grin.

"I take back what I said a minute ago. You ain't as big a nut as I thought you was. You're a bigger one. You're plumb crazy. Five hundred dollars for a ball game—one ball game—and I don't even know if you can throw! The Babe, himself, is quite a few chips shy on that bid."

"I'm not interested in what other ball players get."

"You can't be—to pull a line like that. Listen, Corridon, I'd like to have you around but not at five hundred dollars a game. No, sir. Not a chance. Come down to earth. Be reasonable."

"I am reasonable. As a matter of fact I had been thinking about charging an even thousand dollars for this game."

"You're wrong, Corridon. You ain't reasonable. You're plumb cuckoo. That—or you think I am. Either way you're dead."

Corridon shuffled his feet. "Looks like we can't come to terms," he hinted.

"We can," desperately cried Shag, who didn't want to lose this purveyor of good fortune. "But, man alive—five hundred dollars a game! What'll it be if you go out there this afternoon and knock 'em loose from their seats? Where will I be when it comes to signing you on a regular contract?"

"You'll be all right," assured Corridon. "I said five hundred dollars for this game. After that I'll be reasonable—precisely as you understand being 'reasonable.' But—five hundred dollars is the price of this game. Are you going to take it—or leave it?"

Shag, although never openly admitting it, knew the value of favorable publicity for his ball team; he knew, too, that the fans wanted to see Corridon; he also knew that

if he let Corridon get out of the office without signing him that the same newspapers that were now in a spree of praise for him would flop immediately into condemnation. He thought of all these things—thought of them quickly—and as Corridon got to his feet he wailed:

"All right, Corridon. You're on. But the five hundred berries goes for this one game—and this one game only. Get me straight on that."

"I understand you perfectly."

Corridon himself directed the wording of the short and precise contract that was quickly drawn up. He read it over carefully, made one or two penciled changes and instructed the stenographer to rewrite it. This was done immediately; he read it over slowly, and signed it. Shag Shaughnessy, as manager of the Beetles, also signed it. Then Corridon left.

He had barely closed the door when Shag, for the first time in his baseball career, telephoned the newspapers, telling them that Corridon had reported and would be at short in the Beetles' line-up that afternoon. Nor could Shag keep the excitement out of his voice in telling.

V.

One hundred thousand baseball fans stormed the Beetles' park on that afternoon. Subways, elevated trains, surface cars, automobiles—every available conveyance was used in bringing the populace to the gates. From the Bronx to Jersey the word had been carried that "the mysterious Corridon would be in the game." New York, always on edge for something different did not propose to let this opportunity pass. Even the thousands who were ranged in the outfield and who had to stand congratulated themselves; they were inside where they at least could get a peek at things while thousands of others were clamoring outside for admission and couldn't get through because the gates had been locked, excepting to the holders of reserved seats, a full hour before game time.

Shag knowing, as told, the value of publicity, had carefully refrained from telling the newspapers the exact amount he was paying Corridon for this one game—but he had told that the contract was in excess, considerably, of that signed by the great Bambino. This was sufficient. Imagination ran riot; that suited all purposes.

Corridon, on the bench during practice, smiled and shook his head when Shag ordered him to "get out there and limber up."

"I told you this morning that I wasn't 'a practice ball player!'" he said. "I'm not. I'll be in there when the game starts—not before. My arm's all right. It doesn't need a work-out. Mary Ann'll take care of my hitting."

Shag expostulated vigorously, but to no avail.

"My contract calls for one ball game—that's all," he was reminded. "Besides, you aren't losing anything—this looks to me like the biggest crowd you've ever had—and that means the biggest in the history of baseball. You're not losing anything."

"Where do you get that stuff?" growled Shag. "Ain't losing a ball game something?"

"You haven't lost it—yet."

The game——

The multitude had grumbled and fumed and sweated throughout the practice sessions but its displeasure turned into a thunderclap of applause when the umpires, taking their stations, waited while a call boy, megaphone in hand, made the rounds bawling:

"Corridon playing short for the Beetles!"

It was a stage setting such as New York liked. The Beetles, every one in position, stood by as a tall, loose-jointed youth appeared from the bench and made his way to the vacant position between second and third. New York took an immediate liking to this stranger. His method of approach had caught the fancies of the crowd; the fact that Mary Ann, the shoes and the glove, had turned the Beetles into a winner was not without its magnetism. Here he was, at last!

Tens of thousands of spectators watched as he took, while standing on second base, a preliminary throw from the catcher and without straightening up, shot the ball on a low, accurate line to the first baseman. A salvo of handclapping showed appreciation of this exhibition, the spectators forgetting that the Beetles' bat boy could have done quite as well.

On the bench Shaughnessy growled to Schmidt:

"Well, that bird can throw, anyway."

In the glamour of the moment Shaughnessy had forgotten to be critical.

The Cards were opposing the Beetles that afternoon and Hickey, manager of the vis-

itors, directed his men to center their attack on the shortstop. They did, even though Scott, twirling for the Beetles, threw a puzzling assortment of pitching wares. Miller, first up for the Cards, dumped a slow, mean grounder past the pitcher's box. Corridon raced in from where he had been standing back near the grass, scooped up the ball and flipped it across the field, getting the speeding Miller by a full three feet.

"Judas Priest!" exclaimed Hickey. "That bird looks like a fielder, at that."

But Hickey did not switch his plans.

Not every Card succeeded in driving the ball into Corridon's territory but enough did to give the shortstop a busy afternoon. Sizzling, cutting grounders that caromed in short, nasty bounds near third base or behind second—teasing hoppers that hit the dirt at the fielder's feet—these were the things that Corridon fielded throughout the afternoon. He covered his position in a manner that Shag Shaughnessy, old in the game and its tricks, had not seen exemplified since the palmy days of the great Honus. And he did it modestly, carefully, efficiently.

The end of each inning brought out a new burst of applause that seemed greater than its predecessor and each seemed the maximum of human endurance. It was Corridon who fairly smothered the opposition—smothered its attack; and it was Corridon, and Mary Ann, now equally famous, who came up in the eighth inning and busted up the old ball game by driving the ball on a low, singing line between left and center fields for a home run with two runners on the sacks.

It was that smash that routed the Cards. It was that smash that covered the playing field with ten thousand dollars' worth of straw headgear and cushion seats. It was that smash that put in total eclipse, for the day, all the home runs of the idol—Ruth.

That had been Corridon's only hit of the game—but *it* was enough!

Corridon broke into a fast sprint the instant the last out for the Cards was registered and easily outdistanced the mobs of hero worshipers spouting from every entrance to the field. He was under the showers, a peculiar smile on his lips but all elation within, when Shag Shaughnessy arrived. Corridon could hear Buck Thompson's growlings—he paid no attention to them.

It was Shaughnessy's voice that made him respond.

"Corridon! Red Corridon!" Shag was calling.

"Yes, sir."

"Come out here!"

Corridon stepped into the passageway that led from the showers to the locker room and he instantly recognized the broad shoulders of a man whose back was turned and who was talking earnestly to Shaughnessy. Whipping a towel about him, Corridon stepped over to where the men were standing.

The jaw of the man in street clothes was pugnaciously hostile but there was admiration in the eyes above it.

"'Deacon' McGuire tells me he knows you," barked Shaughnessy.

"He should," grinned Corridon. "He's going to be my father-in-law."

"The hell I am!" exploded McGuire.

"How can you get out of it?" quizzed Corridon.

Deacon was silent a moment. His jaw relaxed slowly and while Shaughnessy looked on in worried wonderment the older man reached out his hand, grasped the extended one of Corridon, and chuckled:

"I don't want to get out of it, me boy. You trot along and get yourself dressed. Fanny's waiting outside for you. I'll tell Shag about this shindig of yours."

Corridon turned away while Shaughnessy, still mystified, took McGuire by the elbow and led him into the wire cage in the far corner of the room—it was a cage reserved for the manager of the Beetles. Pulling up a stool and dropping himself on it, McGuire continued his chuckle.

"Remember thim old days with the Orioles when I used to bring me little girl out to the park?"

Shag nodded.

"Tha' was a long time ago, Shag," Deacon went on. "Remember I quit playing ball 'bout the time you and Jennings and Keeler were looking around for jobs as managers? Remember I went into business? That's a long time ago, Shag. But that little girl o' mine has growed up into a fine lady. I sent her away to college and she met this bird named Corridon—only that ain't his name. It's Collins. A pretty good Irish name, Shag.

"He was anither of them college boys. He and Fanny fell in love wi' each other—I didn't blame Collins but I couldn't get the dope on Fanny. 'Bout a month ago he comes to me and asks permission to marry Fanny. I got sore. We had quite a chewing match and finally I busted wide open with a line that he was nothin' but a poor, educated simp.

"That got him sore. He handed me some hot words and flattened me by saying there was nothing I ever done as Fanny's father that he couldn't duplicate. That got *me* sore. I told him I had played alongside you and Jennings and Keeler in the old Baltimore days and I said that he couldn't do that.

" 'Sure, and I can't,' he said, ' 'cause thim days has gone.'

" 'Right you are, me bucko,' I told him. 'But Shag Shaughnessy is managin' the Beetles and you can't get a job with him.' I made it stronger than that—I told him if he could get a job with you that I'd let him marry Fanny and bless thim both.

"I thought that would stop him. Did it? You know it didn't. What did he and me daughter do but get their heads together and sneak out old Mary Ann from the attic, where I had kept her for twenty years. They sneaked out me old glove, and me old shoes—getting them one at a time. I read thim letters in the newspapers but I never suspected who was putting up the job on you. This morning Fanny comes to me and says we got to go to the ball game this afternoon. She dragged me over here—all the way from New Rochelle; said she wanted to see this bird Corridon that the newspapers were talking about.

"Whin he walked out on the field—say, Shag, I filt like comin' down and doin' murder. Remember that day when you and Jennings got me betwixt you in a poker game; I had an ace full and you had four tens and Hughie popped up with four jacks? That's just the way I felt when I seen who this guy Corridon was. I wanted to come down on the field and tell you but Fanny held my arm and laughed:

" 'Be a sport, pop.'

"I never knew, afore, that this coming son-in-law of mine could play baseball. He looked pretty good, didn't he, Shag?"

"Not so bad," admitted Shaughnessy.

Shag glanced up to see Corridon—or Collins—standing before him.

"So your name ain't Corridon?" he snapped.

"No, sir."

"Well, it doesn't make any difference," concluded Shag. "Stick around. I want to talk to you."

"Sorry, Mr. Shaughnessy, but there's some one waiting."

"That's all right. But we have a business matter to attend to," interrupted Shag.

"No, we haven't," returned the ball player for a day. "I'm quitting!"

"You're what?" shouted Shag.

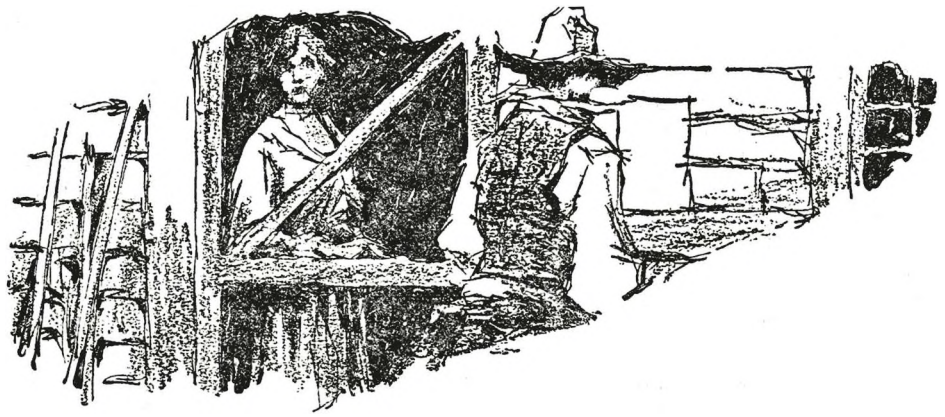
"I'm quitting," repeated Collins. He went on: "You recall, in our little talk of this morning, that I agreed to play but a single game. I'm not a ball player, Mr. Shaughnessy." Shag opened his mouth to protest but the young man stopped him. "I was just lucky to-day. I played a little when I was in college. I was good enough to make the team through a couple of seasons and every so often I kicked in with a good day. When 'pops' here"—and Collins grinned boldly—"laid down his rules and regulations it set me thinking. Fanny—that is, Miss McGuire—told me about Mary Ann, the old glove and old shoes that her father had put away in the garret. We sneaked them out, at different times, and mailed them to you—working on a plan to get your interest. It was Fanny's idea in the first place and I stretched myself writing some letters. You fell for them—as we hoped you would. The rest was easy."

"What d' yuh mean—'easy?' " barked Shag.

"Nothing else. As I have told you I had occasional good days when playing ball in college. I told Fanny about them and asked her to pray that I would have another one—just one more—the afternoon I was to play for you. Understand, we took it as an accepted thing that you would give me a try-out. All I had to do was to keep from showing myself up in practice. That was why I insisted on playing in a game—and nowhere else. Understand?"

"Yeh, I guess so," slowly returned Shag. Before Shaughnessy could give voice to the thoughts that were in his mind, Collins turned to McGuire, saying:

"Come on, pops. Let's go! I've got Mary Ann, the old glove and the old trilbies here under my arm. Step along. Fanny's waiting and we've got an appointment with the preacher at six o'clock."



Where the West Begins

By Austin Hall

Author of "The Old Master," "The Love Call," Etc.

Billy was only a cowboy and Holman was something of a cattle king, but social distinctions didn't figure with the U. S. marshal.

BILLY waited. Out in the sagebrush a black object was shunting hither and thither over the desert road, sometimes lost in the dipping swales and again hidden by the glare of the sun scintillating upon the wind shield. From the lee of the machine a ribbon of dust trailed out into the distance. Billy put on his hat and spoke to his pinto, reining him to a slight knoll to the left whence he could get a good view of the whole country. Says Billy to the pinto:

"Pinhead, we're going to have company —you an' me. That's old man Holman. He's down from his city; an' he's sore an' ornery; an' he's got about as many kicks in his system as a centipede with a toothache—all because you've been drinking his water an' because I'm a-living. An' we've got to move on, Pin, so he says—you an' me—just because he's Holman an' you an' me ain't nothin' but nothin'."

The pinto cocked up one ear at the approaching car. In his own way he scented the intrusion. Billy lit a cigarette and waited. From the knoll they looked down upon the expanse of the wide valley, north, south and east. The north was a carpet of verdure and a network of irrigation canals—reclaimed desert; the south was a stretch of sagebrush and sand, and an occasional oasis; while in the east, about three miles away, a distinct line marked the border of desert and alfalfa—the hither side a dry parched yellow; the other side a cool living green. In the west, behind him, lay the mountains. Billy had a homestead at the foot of the mountains.

Like most homesteads it was ramshackle —a plain unpainted box house and a shed barn. There is something pathetic about all homesteads and this one was no exception; had it not been for a certain grim humor and the fact that Billy was a real cowman it would have been just like any other.

There was a streak of perversity about Billy Magee. When the idea of nesting first entered his head he had looked about for a place that would give excitement as well as a place to squat, until his Uncle Samuel should think fit to bestow upon him the dignity of a patent and the appendant distinction of being a law-abiding taxpayer. Just for that excitement Billy had planted his homestead in the strip of foothill level that separated the great free mountain range from the irrigated section of the valley. The green stretches belonged to the Holman Land and Water Company; and Holman, the president and whole works of the company had always regarded that strip as his own private property and had treated it as such, because no one had hitherto had the hardihood to file on it and make the

promise to the government that they intended it for a home. The government range, in this instance, was a wild dry country. That it was still public land was due simply to the lack of accessible underground water. The creeks and springs had been taken up years before by individuals and had later been bought out by Holman. With the water in the big man's hands the rest could go hang! Then along had come Billy Magee and his homestead. If the trick were successful, Billy, as well as Holman, would have contiguous access to the great free pasture. It worried Holman; Billy was inured to the desert and accustomed to its ways; wherefore it was hardly likely that his motives were those of an air-castle tenderfoot. Knowing the country as he did and realizing the value of water the cowboy would hardly have filed on the land unless he was pretty sure of just what he was doing.

So Holman figured.

Billy waited until the car came to a stop. A heavy, broad-shouldered individual sat at the wheel, a man with gray hair and a square-cut, have-my-own-way sort of jaw.

"Magee?" he asked. He looked at the cowboy out of cold gray eyes.

"Yes, sir. That's what my ma called me."

"Ahem." The big man sparred. "You received my letter last winter, I believe?"

"Sure did," said Billy. "And I answered it. Nothin' doin'. She's my homestead and I'm going to keep her."

The other nodded. "Are you sure?" He pulled out a check book. "I haven't much time. Here's one thousand dollars, if you relinquish—or, if you don't wish to relinquish, we'll call it a payment of one thousand dollars on the quarter section—against the day that you get your title."

Billy Magee shook his head.

"Nope. She's a pretty fair piece of land. Besides"—he waved his hand toward the range—"take a look at that."

The other bit his lip.

"Where's your water? You can't use my creeks. I've served notice to my foremen to keep you out. So far I have been lenient, but I don't propose to give you a bit more now than the law allows. You can't raise stock without water. I own the creeks. You can't drill a well because your water level is too deep, here, for successful pumping."

Billy smiled. "She's a fair homestead at that," he answered. "I think I'll keep her."

"What's your game."

"No game at all," said Billy. "Just a notion. I want to pay taxes and be a real citizen."

"You won't relinquish?"

"Not to-day—nor to-morrow."

The big man thought a bit; and frowned; then to relieve his feelings he pulled a black cigar from his pocket and lighted it. Billy kept company with a cigarette.

"Let me tell you something, my boy. I'm giving you a fair chance. There's a thousand cold, hard dollars in this paper. If you take it and give me your word I'll help you get your title—grubstake you—and when you are done you can sign the land over to me for another thousand."

"Suppose I don't take the thousand?"

"That's your funeral, not mine. A thousand's a nice chunk of money."

"Sure is," said Billy, "only——"

"Only what?"

"That I don't like that kind of money. Come on, Holman, tell me the truth. Didn't you get all those twenty thousand acres down yonder in the irrigated belt in just this fashion? I take it that you know the law on dummy homesteading?"

No answer.

"Well, I gave Uncle Sam my oath that I was after this land for Billy Magee."

"Then we can't do business?"

"Not to-day."

"Huh! Well, you've got the law on your side. I can't throw you off, of course—unless I want to take a chance on the Federal prison. But"—he grinned maliciously—"better watch your homestead."

With that he started up his machine and hit down the road through the desert fringe to the great green belt that marked the patented holdings of the Holman Land and Water Company.

Billy watched him go. Then he leaned over to his pinto. "Pinhead," he said, "you an' me is in for it. I wonder what the game is? Anyway, just as soon as we hear from Uncle Samuel we're going to have a vacation."

An hour later he had ridden out of the desert into the irrigated section to the post office. A young lady of pleasant eyes passed out a long envelope with the legend "Department of the Interior" in the upper left-hand corner. Billy tore it open.

It was a leave of absence, à la red tape, granted to one, William Magee. Homestead entry—Serial No. 56943J, et cetera.

When he had read it he put it in his pocket.

"Well, Pinhead," he spoke, "it's you an' me off to see the old boys again. We're going back to the old outfit, where they raise real cattle. Then we'll come back to take care of Holman."

II.

Billy Magee was coming home.

During the five months that had elapsed he had picked up enough shekels to last him through another seven months of vigil. He had bought groceries, tobacco, magazines and a ukulele; and as soon as he could get a wagon he would hitch up and go for his provender. In the meantime he was bound for his homestead.

Billy was a musical cuss; that's why he had bought the ukulele. As he loped along on the patient Pinhead he warbled the air full of music; it was melody, sweet and rich and tuned to the joy of home: for that was his nature—and the why of the homestead—just a place that he could call his own and a place where he could hang his hat.

"If we only had a wife," he confided to Pinhead, "we'd make this little old homestead a place worth while."

He had come up through the sagebrush; at the last turn below the knoll he came into view of the side of the house; and he stopped.

"Well, I'll be dog-goned!" exclaimed Billy Magee.

Upon a clothesline, stretched from one corner of the house to a juniper post in the yard were a number of garments that had never been worn by Billy Magee; to wit—a calico dress, three pairs of silk stockings, some fluffy bits of lingerie, together with handkerchiefs and other articles.

He took a long breath. Though he was a handsome man he was anything but a gallant; he would do anything rather than face a woman. Which was perfectly natural considering the mode of life to which he had been accustomed. Bunk houses do not make for polish; and Billy was a confirmed bachelor. Girls were fairy creatures to be thought of—beings dreamy, distant, illusive—to be longed for! And here was one on his own homestead! For a moment he felt like giving up and returning whence he had come. But he had still the leaven of curiosity. He had quite forgotten Holman. Anyway, he would see what she looked like.

He left the pinto at the gate and entered the inclosure that he had fenced off the year before. It was the same and yet so different. From an open window there came a fragrance that made him hungry—not the bacon and eggs nor the ham and coffee of the confirmed desert rat; but the sweet irritating odor of apple pies. Surely, there was a woman. The stockings upon the line were of silk—somehow it seemed proper for them to be there. She would be young; and he set his mind that she would be pretty. Oh, yes, she would be that, and she could sing—from the house came the sweet flood of a love song.

Billy knocked at the door—his own door. Upon the panel was a piece of paper. He read:

Out where the world is in the making,
Where fewer hearts in despair are aching,
That's where the West begins.

Where there's more of singing and less of sighing,
Where there's more of giving, and less of buying,
Where a man makes friends without half trying,
That's where the West begins.

"By golly," said Billy, half to himself and half to the poem, "that's where she begins, all right."

Then he smiled and took off his hat; for the maker of the tantalizing pies was looking at him through the screen door. She was about as good as anything he had ever looked at. No wonder the pies smelled good! She was a demure little brunette, with cheery red lips and laughter; hair waving and done in a fashion half girlish and half womanish.

"Oh!" she said.

Billy traced his finger over the poem; he held his sombrero in the other hand.

"How do y' do?" he answered.

She nodded pleasantly; her black eyes were not critical like those of most girls; her smile was encouraging.

"I was just reading this here poem. The fellow that wrote it sure had an idee about the West."

She was frank and kindly.

"Do you like it?" She looked down at his chaps and at his high-heeled boots. It was as if he had walked out of the poem.

"'Out where the West begins,'" she quoted.

"Who wrote it?"

"Chapman. He was a Denver newspaper man. Some one had started a dispute as to where the real West begins; so he sat down one day just before the paper went to press and typed out the answer. I think he got it just right. Won't you come in?"

Evidently she was practicing the spirit of the verse. Billy stepped into his own house. And he noted the difference; everything had been renovated and feminized by the coy hands of the girl before him. His own furniture was gone. In its place was a new outfit—a small range, shining tinware on the walls, a table with a white spread—everything spic and span in tidy shape. After getting him a chair she opened the door to take a peep at the pies. In the interval Billy had time to think.

"You must excuse me," she said when she had finished her inspection. "I didn't want them to burn. They are the first pies I have cooked on our new homestead."

Billy nodded. "You have taken up a homestead?"

"Oh, yes. Isn't it dandy? You must excuse my diction; but I'd rather talk like this now that we are in the real West. I always did want to go homesteading, even when I was a little girl; but I never thought that I was to have the chance. You see, up to a year ago I was teaching school back in Ohio. I always loved the West—loved to read about it and wonder what it was really like. I had a pet dream of a real homestead where we could go out all by ourselves, like our forefathers—or Robinson Crusoe—and build up everything from nothing. I think it just the most fun! The very first thing I did when we came here was to nail Chapman's verse to the door. Don't you think that the men of the West are different?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Billy. "Most of them are, I guess; but I am afraid that there are some who get across the line without knowing it. How did you happen to start homesteading?"

"Oh, as to that"—she sat down and began to pat her hair, as if she could make herself look even prettier—"as to that—it was on account of my brother Arthur. He was a bookkeeper. The work in the office had undermined his health and the doctor advised him to try out of doors, to go West if he could. We had saved some money; so we decided to go homesteading."

"What brought you to this particular section?"

"Well, I suppose it was an accident. We first came to Los Angeles to look around. Then we purchased an old car and started exploring. One day Arthur was at the land office for this district, going over the books, and ran across this quarter section."

It puzzled Billy Magee.

"I see," he said. "You located the land through the books and then you came here?"

"Yes. But we took the precaution to have a surveyor come with us. We stopped the first night at the Holman place. Do you know Mr. Holman?"

"I have seen him," said Billy.

"I think he is very nice. He said he would do all he could for us. He said that he knew the location—that a mongrel horse thief had lived on it once but had been run out of the country. Just imagine—romance from the very start! A real horse thief—and I living in his house! Wouldn't it be terrible if he should come back?" She laughed. "I always thought that they hanged the horse thieves from the bridges."

Billy was itching under the skin but he held back his feelings. He said:

"Perhaps they would have hanged this fellow had they had a bridge. I have an idea that Holman would build one out of his own pocket if he could get a chance at him."

"That's what he said."

Billy grinned.

"Supposin' you met this black fellow—he must be black to be a horse thief, you know—would you be afraid?"

She laughed. "I don't know. Mr. Holman gave me a pistol with which to protect myself; but I don't think that I'd use it."

"Why?"

"Well, because: First, I'd kind of like to know a real Western horse thief—he must be wonderful to keep living, if the West is what they say it is—and second, because I don't believe that any girl, if she is a real girl, has need to be afraid of a mere man. Most any man can be talked into good humor if you just know how. I'd like the chance of subduing a real horse thief, barehanded."

Certainly she was subduing Billy. The

cowboy was ready to give up his homestead; but he wanted, first, to get at the motive of Holman. Surely the big man must have known that Billy would return at the expiration of his leave of absence. Low as he held him he did not think that the cattle king would stoop so low as to deceive this girl. Perhaps—the thought startled—perhaps he had been able to so manipulate the land office that the land had been thrown open to entry. Mistakes are sometimes made. A clerical error would be very convenient to Holman.

"When did you file on this land?"

"About a month ago. Why? Is there anything wrong?"

"Oh, no. Only I am a cowboy and have lived in this country all my life. I know a great deal about homesteads. For instance, it is sometimes convenient to have witnesses who knew you at, or about, the time of entry. Have you received your notice of allowance?"

"It came about three days ago. Do you wish to see it? Shall I get it?"

"Well, it wouldn't hurt if I took a peep at it."

In a moment she had the piece of paper. Billy took it and read it. It was the regulation notice from the department of the interior, giving the name, Jennie Ross—serial number—township—range—meridan—everything; and signed by the register and receiver of the land office.

"Isn't it all right?"

"All accordin' to Hoyle, Miss Ross. Not a thing wrong with it." He sniffed and looked at the oven; at the same instant the girl jumped up with a towel.

"My pies!" she exclaimed. "I was so interested. Supposing they had burned!"

During the interval Billy had a chance to take a piece of paper from his pocket; when she had the pies on the table he gave her back the notice of allowance.

"Well," he said, "I must be going."

She looked up at him, laughing.

"Without eating any of my pie? Shame on you. I thought you were a real cowboy!"

"Best cowboy ever was," grinned Billy. "Do you test them all with apple pies? Better not let it be known. I know about a million cow-punchers who'd be standing in line."

"I'll just bet that you could eat a whole pie," she teased.

"I'm not going to call you," returned the man. "We'll split the pot. Cut one in half and we'll go evens. There now—I'll take this one and start over in this corner."

"All right," she answered. "You start over there—where the West begins!"

There's a time that comes to every man when he meets a girl on an even footing. Billy was usually bashful; it was the first time that he had ever met a real girl without stepping on his own feet or doing something equally ridiculous and self-conscious. Before he knew it he was telling Jennie Ross his whole history—outside his homestead experience—and almost everything that he knew.

"Then you are a real Western cowboy," she exclaimed. "All my life I have wanted to know one, one who lived on the range, who lived out in the open and thought the great free things of nature. You must meet my brother and get acquainted."

Then she went on to tell of their dreams—of a well, and alfalfa, fruit trees, a mansion, avenues, driveways—a dream that was half homesteader and half school-teacher; and most of all out of a girlish heart. Billy listened. They stepped out on the porch; the girl pointed to the irrigated lands in the distance.

"See," she spoke. "They tell me that all that country was once government land just like this—all desert."

"It sure was," answered the cowboy. "And it would be desert yet were it not for the water."

"That's what Arthur says. It seems to me that while they were getting water they could have drilled up here just as well as down there. When we get our well all our dreams will come true."

Billy did some thinking. He was no tenderfoot; he knew why the irrigated belt extended just so far and no farther. He was familiar with the eccentricities of water. Down there it could be tapped at a reasonable depth and was at least semi-artesian; while up on the homestead it was almost inaccessible—the elevation was higher and the water, consequently, farther from the surface. Even after it was found there was a two-hundred-foot lift before it could be utilized; and water for irrigation purposes cannot be profitably pumped more than a hundred feet.

But he said nothing to discourage her. She was having her dream. If he could he

would make it all come true. He was half sorry and half doubtful; should he tell her the truth or go after Holman? He did not care for his homestead; at the very most it had been, with him, merely a whim—a place to hang his hat, a notion.

At last he took his leave. She stepped out to the gate where he had left his pinto.

"You must come back and meet my brother some day. I am sure you will like him—and I'll have some more pies."

"Bet you will," said Billy. "I am going to come back. Don't forget the pies."

She waved her hat at him when he was out in the sagebrush and he answered with his sombrero. When he was beyond the knoll he reined in his pony. He was thinking.

From the knoll he could look down at the section line that ran to the eastward. On the desert side it could be distinguished by the straight swath that had been cleared of sagebrush; on the other side it was marked by the fence that ran into the distance. The fence was Holman's. Billy had business with Holman. He spoke to his pinto:

"Pinhead," said Billy Magee. "we have lost our homestead. We ain't clever enough to deceive a lady. But we ain't babes yet, either. You an' me is goin' to raise tarnation with Mr. Holman."

Then he struck out across the country, straight down the section line toward the irrigated belt that was the patented domain of the Holman Land and Water Company. There was a road that ran through the desert parallel to the belt of green. When Billy came to this road he stopped. A black object was coming toward him—a man on horseback.

" 'Lo, Billy Magee," greeted the man. "When'd y' get back? How's the boys up 'Pop' Mobray's way? Goin' back t' nestin'?"

"Thinkin' of it," said Billy. "Mebbe. Don't know what I'll do. Y' goin' by the mines?"

"Yep. Expect to be at the mine to-night. Why?"

"Nothin'. Only I want to write a note. Can y' wait? I want y' to give it to the stage driver. It's to my old boss, Mobray. It's kinda special; seeing as how it has to deal with a funeral."

"A funeral?"

"Yep. Leastways, almost so. There may be two. I kinda want to get news to Pop so's he can be on hand, when they take a certain cow-puncher, that we know of, off to the calaboose."

"What's the rumpus?"

"No rumpus 'tall. It's just that there's some in this country that's busting with this here stuff what we call chivalry! We ain't goin' to mention no names, nor have no hard feelin's. Y' ain't seen Holman lately?"

The other squinted one eye and whistled.

"Y' ain't goin' t' tangle with Holman, Billy?"

The cowboy nodded.

"Yep. But y' needn't say nothin' to nobody. If you see a column of smoke and sparks comin' up from that strip of green yonder, you can know that it's from Holman and Billy Magee. Him an' me is goin' t' have a little round-up."

"Better be careful, Billy. Don't lose your head. You can't hurt Holman. That crowd of Mexicans that he keeps will shoot you down like a rat. What's the fuss? If it's so dog-gone glorious let me in on it."

Billy grinned. "I'd like to be accommodating but this is kinda special. I want it all for myself. I'll take care of the Mexicans. Will you mail this note?"

"Make it a book. It's your funeral."

"That's what Holman said," returned Billy Magee. "And it's the truth. They's goin' to be something happen."

It took him a long time to write that letter. When he was through he took an envelope from his pocket. "Just happened to have the makin's of a note. Here she is. Can you catch that stage?"

"What's the game?"

But the cowboy had dug his spurs into the pony and was off down the straight section line that led through the domain of the Holman Land and Water Company.

Billy Magee had a reason. He was mad clear through and the more he thought the madder he got. At last he came to the line fence that marked the border between the desert and the alfalfa. A broad gate barred his way. On the top board were the words:

NO TRESPASSING.

Billy read the sign; it was a bit different from the one that the girl had pinned on the door. He swung the gate, cowboy fashion without alighting from his pinto; in another minute he was upon invaded territory. It did not bother Billy Magee. He rode

straight on for a mile and a half—then he stopped.

He was in the center of a great alfalfa field; to the left of him was a small building and an immense stack of alfalfa; from one side of the building a steady stream of water was flowing into a ditch that bore it out to the fields. Some men—Mexicans—were at the stack.. Several teams with full loads were waiting their turn. One wagon was being unloaded. Just as he rode up a last fork of hay was mowed up toward the stack. Billy estimated the pile as close to two hundred tons. A man, evidently a boss, was coming toward him. Billy reached for his gun.

"Hey!" said the man.

"Hey, yourself," said Billy Magee.

The man stopped before the gun. He was a tall fellow, heavy, and though he was of a dark complexion he was not Spanish—rather was he Irish. And he was no coward.

"What's the idea?" indicating the gun. "Will it go off? What'cha want?"

The cowboy rode up.

"Just this, Sweeny. I want you to git. Git! Savvy the English? See that ditch over yonder? Take your bunch of Mexicans on the other side. And keep them there. It's healthy."

"Humph!" sneered the other. "Supposin' I refuse?"

But the man said no more; he looked into the eyes of Billy Magee and backed away.

"What's the idea, Billy; have you gone mad?"

"Kinda," said the cowboy. "And I'm goin' t' get madder. This is dog days and I've been bitten—by a dog. Here! I'll help you get that bunch moving."

The gun barked. A fork of hay was rising up from a fresh load. The bullet cut the spring rope. The mass of alfalfa dropped back to the wagon. A splatter of Spanish followed. Billy Magee rode up to the stack.

"Come. Vamose! Take 'em out of here, Sweeny!"

For a minute there was silence—then consternation. The men stumbled out of the stack and began unhooking the butt chains. They all knew Billy Magee. He was the best-natured man in the country. Everybody knew him. Billy had gone crazy. Only one man stopped to remonstrate.

"Wait," he said. "You, Billy. You go the loco." He pointed to his head. "Mebbe better for to have drink. Mebbe so"—he looked up at the sun and wiped his head—*"caliente!"*

"You bet I'm hot," snapped the cowboy; "but it's not the sun. You get down and help with those butt chains. Here you——"

The gun barked again. The frightened Mexican rolled headfirst off the load to the shelter behind the horses. The whole outfit marched ahead; behind came the foreman, and back of him Billy. The alfalfa was waist-high.

"Fine lot of grass," commented the cowboy.

The other had recovered his courage; knowing Billy he had not crossed him. There is wisdom in discretion—also safety.

"What's the idea? What'cha pullin' off? Y' can't get by with this kinda stuff—not nowadays. Wait till Holman hears; he'll come howling."

"We ain't arguin'," said Billy. "I told you I am mad. Ain't nothin' in hell any madder. You go get Holman. When he comes I'm going to eat him—raw."

The foreman scratched his head.

"All right, Billy. I'll send the old boss after you, but I ain't guarantee who's goin' to do the eating. I'll keep my hands off. Look out for the Mexicans."

Billy Magee did not answer. When the Mexicans had disappeared across the alfalfa he turned back toward the pump house. For some moments he stood by the flow of water—fully a thousand gallons a minute. He did some thinking—varied and yet concentered—deserts, water, homesteaders, girls, dreams, trees, homes—love. A vague feeling had entered the breast of Billy Magee. He had a notion that life might be worth the living. He stepped into the shed; the hum of the motor runed in his ears and called up a tune that was lying at the bottom of his heart. From his pocket he drew the notebook, tore out a leaf and wrote upon it. Then he tacked it on the wall. When he was through he looked up: the pinto was beside the door.

"Well, Pinhead," said Billy Magee, "she's done. If you an' me can hold out an' keep our skins from being perforated they's goin' to be some truth in poetry."

The Mexicans and Sweeny did not come back. When a man of Magee's social standing flourishes a gun lingering ceases to be

a healthy pastime. He could see their dim forms, mere dots, disappearing toward the ranch house. The sun was going down, so he led his pony to the stack, picked out a cove between two piles of alfalfa and stabled him securely by pitching a mass of hay about the opening. Then he climbed the stack and waited for the moon.

For Billy was not quite as mad as he seemed; he had a plan and a deliberate way of going at it. He knew that Holman would not tolerate his presence on the ranch but he knew also that before the big man came he would have to deal with the Mexicans. Holman had already offered him one thousand dollars; therefore it was almost a certainty that he would pay an equal sum to the Mexicans if they would relieve him of the trouble of dealing with Billy Magee. The cowboy had driven the owner's hands off with a gun; and the law of the land protects the rights of property—only, Billy knew too much about the law! Instead of fearing the Mexicans he hoped that they would come. It would be a pleasant preliminary to his meeting with Holman. In fact it would do away with the necessity of a fight with the big man and help him immensely in his revenge.

Nevertheless he had a chance to sleep. It was not until the wee hours that his estimation of Mexican valor came to its proof. Just before daylight he was awakened by the pinto's nickering and the simultaneous report of a gun. In an instant he had ducked into the hay and was worming toward the edge,

"Ah, ha!" said Billy Magee. "Now we have the fun!"

With his revolver in his hand he crawled to a point of lookout but at first he could see nothing. There was no more shooting. Below him stretched the sea of alfalfa; as the sun tipped the mountains to the eastward he scanned every bit of it and at last he found what he was after—a head lifted, a hand. Billy did not wish to kill—that hand was a good mark.

The next instant the new daylight was cut by Spanish expletives. The Mexican leaped to his feet with a yell and without parley fled out of range. Billy watched for the others.

He did not have to wait long. A Mexican does not fight at a disadvantage. He watched with considerable glee the wriggling, frightened forms working their way out of gunshot. When they were out of danger they stood up on their feet and disappeared toward the ranch house.

Billy straightened and took a good look. If his simple plan was working it ought to be coming to fruition. Sure enough he made out a dot approaching in the distance, a fast-moving dot that could be nothing other than a machine. The car came straight to the gate that Billy had entered the previous afternoon and drew up at the pump house. Billy climbed down from the stack. A man stepped from the automobile.

"Mr. Magee."

"That's me," said Billy.

"My name is Arthur Ross. Mr. Mobray met me in town last night; he said to tell you that Jones gave him your letter. He just happened to meet him. He insisted that I come here without delay. He will come just as soon as he follows your instructions."

"Did he tell you what I wanted you for?"

"No."

The young man was dressed in corduroys and a slouch hat; he had a family resemblance to the girl Billy had found on his homestead.

"Come into the pump house."

The stranger read the words that Billy had tacked on the wall. His jaw dropped suddenly.

"Where did you get this. Did Mr. Holman——"

"Exactly."

"I do not understand."

"You will when that machine gets here." Billy pointed to a car crossing the alfalfa. "They's some people who carry this here stuff they call chivalry in their pocketbook. Holman's a sweet, kind gentleman. Just now he's coming to throw me off the ranch."

The other did not answer. He was watching the machine coming from the ranch house. It drew up at the shed. Holman was at the wheel and there was evidently something on his mind; at the sight of Arthur Ross he flushed slightly.

"Ah, Mr. Ross." Apparently he did not know what to say. "It is a fine morning. Is there—er—something that you want?"

"Decidedly," answered the young man, "but perhaps you had better talk to my friend here. He's my agent."

Holman did not conceal his anger now. He turned to Billy Magee.

"What do you want here! Do you know

the rules of the Holman Land and Water Company? Git out!"

Billy was modest to a tantalizing degree. He took off his hat and smiled, half in triumph and half in amusement.

"Before I go, Mr. Holman, I would like to thank you for the killers that you sent after me a while ago. Also I would like to stay until that automobile gets here." There was another machine coming through the gate. "I want to hear what the United States marshal has to say about it."

"The United States marshal!"

"Exactly. If you will get out of the machine I have something to show you."

The big man did not like it but he did not demur. The three men entered the pump house.

"Can you read, Mr. Holman?"

"Humph!"

"Yes, that's it. That piece of paper is the homestead entry of Jennie Ross—section twenty, southeast quarter, range twenty-six, Mount Diablo meridian, which happens to be this identical and specified piece of alfalfa. This is government land, Mr. Holman, even if you did happen to have it covered up. It was open for entry and belonged to any one who would properly file on it and live up to the conditions specified by the government. Arthur Ross discovered it on the books at the land office and Jennie Ross filed on it. Not only that; but they secured a surveyor to direct them to the land. By a mere accident they happened to stop at your ranch house. And because you did not wish to lose the land, even if you had had to steal it, you bribed the surveyor to locate them on my hopeless piece of desolation out there in the desert. You knew that if you could keep them from establishing residence for six months you could have a dummy file a contest and cheat them out of their rights. You have even gone as far as violence. I don't know what your lawyer will call it; but I do know that our good old Uncle Sam looks upon every homesteader as his own private ward and goes after those who interfere with them almighty hard. How about it, Mr. Marshal?"

The marshall was looking through the door. Pop Mobray was by his side. Billy grinned.

"Nice little round-up we're havin'. Eh, Holman?"

A few minutes later the president of the Holman Land and Water Company was on his way to deposit bail, unroll red tape and fatten his lawyers in the slow, unceasing roll of government justice.

When they were gone Billy turned to Arthur Ross.

"Go up and tell Jennie to come down and start her dream on a real piece of land. Tell her I want her to pardon me for switching papers on her while she was looking at her pies. And thank her for that piece of pie."

And when Arthur Ross was gone he took a stub pencil from his pocket and wrote upon the side of the pump house:

Where there's more of singing and less of sighing,
Where there's more of giving, and less of buying,
Where a man makes friends without half trying,
That's where the West begins.

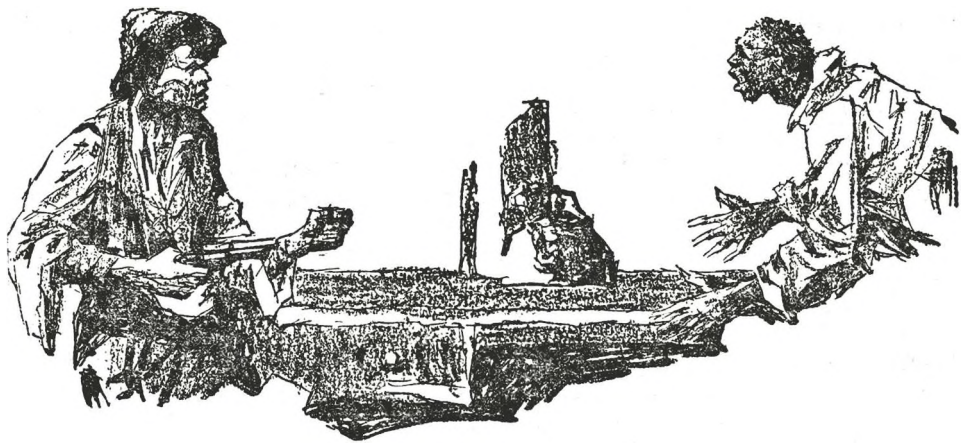
"Gosh," he said, "a girl who sticks up a piece like that sure needs a square deal. It's real poetry. I'd like to meet the man who wrote it."

NOT SO BAD

SENATOR JAMES HAMILTON LEWIS, who keeps up with all the characters and all the customs of "high society" and does not forget even the average débutante's habit of "keeping Lent" by abstaining from candy or some other edible, was seated next to a young girl at a dinner.

"Don't you hate the idea of Lent and its privations coming so soon?" he inquired, with every indication of extreme commiseration and solicitude.

"Good gracious!" retorted the girl. "What's Lent amount to after two years of the profiteers?"



Because of a Cook

By Howard R. Marsh

Author of "Big-time Vendetta," "The Three Toy Horses," Etc.

Horatius at the bridge plus the boy of the burning deck—that was "Itching Foot" Davis.

ITCHING-FOOT" Davis announced his successful home-coming with whoops of joy which sounded through the twelve thin-walled houses of Liberty. Five days earlier he had driven his stripped Ford car southward along the base of the Sierra Madre mountain range, down the Bishop-Mojave road. But Mojave was not his probable destination, for he was determined, if it were necessary, to cross the Tehachipi Pass to Bakersfield. Itching Foot had departed on a mission of the greatest importance.

Now he was returning and his pæan of victory sounded through the settlement and was echoed back from the overhanging rock walls. He appeared from the south in a cloud of alkali dust, bumping and bounding over the rocks in the road and yelling louder at every turn.

Immediately the twelve houses of Liberty debouched family representatives who turned toward the "four corners." Why the center of Liberty should be called the "four corners" no one knew; there was scarcely a corner at all, for a block-long street began at the Bishop-Mojave road and ran due west a few hundred yards to end abruptly against the base of the Sierras. Along this road were the houses of the settlement, only twelve in all and each surrounded by a high picket fence to keep the great cattle herds out of the hopeless gardens and just as hopeless kitchens during the spring and fall *rodeos.*

So twelve gates slammed in answer to the shouts of Itching Foot and within two minutes twelve men, twice twelve children and a few women were waiting in front of the single large building of the settlement.

"Itchin' Foot rides a Ford like he does a bronc," declared Sam Slade, who ran the service station, garage and oil depot. "A loose rein, an easy seat and let her go. Wonder the darned steering knuckle doesn't buckle on him."

The watchers were too intent on the approach of Itching Foot Davis to pay much attention to Sam Slade's remarks. Anyway they didn't generally understand him, for Sam knew and talked of torsion rods and differential gears and such things, while the other men of the town only knew obvious things—that a wild bull charges with its eyes closed but a cow is harder to dodge; that a green hide is incriminating evidence; that a sheep-herder is a blotch on creation and a few other facts which were necessary knowledge to cow riders long before the automobile was invented.

"He's got something with him," announced Ramon Chico, fence rider for whoever hired him. "Something in the front seat. Looks like a chink."

As if in answer came the cry of Itching Foot, who was careening around the last curve. In his excitement he narrowly missed hitting the only real tree in the region—a cottonwood growing beside the mountain stream which had determined the location of Liberty. "Got him," he called, his voice dust-choked but happy. "Got him, got him, got him!"

The inhabitants of Liberty looked at each other as if they were suddenly proud of something or somebody. "Trust old Itchin' Foot," declared Sam Slade, who talked on the least provocation. "The old boy may boast a lot about Indian chasing and Garden Valley, Nevada, but give him something to do and he does it. He's got——"

With a flurry of dust, the rattle of gears and the sudden grinding of brakes Itching Foot Davis jerked the little car to a stop in the midst of his curious and anxious fellow townsmen. "Whoa!" he roared. "Whoa, Betsy, you brute! Back up! Got him! I got him!" His throat was parched from the long ride across the desert, his huge body slouched wearily and he held his feet as though they were glass: yet he slid from the car with all the aplomb of a conquering hero.

"Look at him!" He pointed with a great paw to the little, frightened figure in the car. "Finest chef in all California."

There was a chorus of questions as the Libertians crowded forward to examine Itching Foot's capture. "Where'd you get him?" "Can he make tortillas?" "Drink any of his coffee?" "What do we pay him?" "Is he clean?"—this question naturally from a woman, Mrs. Sam Slade, a housekeeper of no mean proportions.

"Slow up!" ordered Itching Foot, his round red face glowing at the questioners. "Help me install Mr. Wing Yong in the Liberty House and I'll tell you how glad he was to come. Grab the chuck from the back of the bus. I'll take care of Mr. Yong myself. Mr. Yong, will you be so kind as to accompany me?"

Itching Foot swept the dust with his sombrero, exposing a bald head reddened by the sun and neatly surrounded by gray curly hair. He bowed politely to the bewildered Chinese in the car; then he pulled his six-shooter from his holster and pointed it at the yellow man's thin chest. "Will you be so kind as to come, Mr. Yong?"

The designated Mr. Yong leaped from the car with alacrity; he apparently understood perfectly the language of a waving revolver. Glancing fearfully over his shoulder at Itching Foot's gun he allowed himself to be herded into the Liberty House. Behind him filed the inhabitants of Liberty, some carrying bundles from the car but most of them joining the procession merely to hear Itchind Foot's story. In the "social room" of the hotel they stopped.

The hotel was the settlement's pride. It was the only two-story building in Liberty; it boasted eight rooms, of which four were bedrooms. Of course the bedrooms were never used, for except to get gasoline or oil at Sam Slade's garage no stranger ever stopped in Liberty.

Twelve years before, the Liberty House had been constructed by a borax company which operated a mine in the desert four miles from Liberty. It was intended to house visiting officials of the company and was comparatively well furnished and comfortable. But after five years the borax company abandoned its mine and closed the hotel.

That was the most tragic day in Liberty's brief existence. The families of the town—there were the same twelve then—had become accustomed to a social headquarters, a place where the men could meet for sociable drinks and evening solo games, where the women could gather to sew and gossip, where the whole town went for Sunday dinners.

Then the Liberty House was closed and gloom reigned in the settlement. Right there Itching Foot Davis earned everlasting fame in his own country. He disappeared for a week and when he came back he bore a complicated and thoroughly signed document. In brief it declared that if the inhabitants of Liberty would pay the taxes on the Liberty House, keep it insured, in repair and ready for occupancy, they could continue to use it.

It is said that there wasn't a sober man in Liberty for a week after Itching Foot's return. Certainly if the Libertians could have decided it Itching Foot would have been awarded a congressional medal and the ambassadorship to St. James'. Instead they honored him as far as they were able

by electing him major-domo of the Liberty House, with power to hire, fire and run things generally.

Itching Foot received the honor gracefully. He no longer manifested interest in the little ranch he had homesteaded at the edge of the settlement; he allowed his few cattle to stray and the yearlings to go unbranded. He was a hotel keeper now and sent to Bakersfield for some cards:

THE LIBERTY HOUSE,
Liberty, California.
SAMUEL SUTHERLAND DAVIS, PROP.

He had ordered three hundred of the cards and proudly distributed them to his friends and occasional tourists. After that was done he had little else to do but bother whatever cook he was fortunate enough to have and to exhibit himself proudly before the black-lettered hotel sign, pounding his heels against the door jamb behind him. Davis was probably the only man in the whole desert region who suffered from chronic chilblains.

Finances for the hotel were supplied by the twelve families of Liberty, who each paid two dollars a week to Itching Foot and furnished occasional meat and extra supplies. In return Itching Foot maintained the town's social headquarters and twice a week, on Wednesday night and Sunday noon, provided a dinner for all. The Libertians figured that their two-dollar assessment was well spent

Yet they kept an anxious eye on the hotel proprietor, fearing constantly lest again the Liberty House be closed. And when the last cook and cleaner—an Indian irrigator drafted from the neighboring Terrapin Rancho—had been chased out into the Mojave Desert by Itching Foot for dropping a dishcloth in the stew and forgetting to remove it, consternation reigned in Liberty. Cooks were difficult to secure at a salary of ten dollars a week and on the few occasions Itching Foot had essayed the culinary art himself the results had been disastrous.

So now the inhabitants of Liberty waited eagerly in the hotel's "social room" for Itching Foot's description of his new cook.

The hotel manager thoroughly enjoyed his moment of triumph, and prolonged it. Before he would tell his experiences during his trip "inside" he marched the quaking Chinese into the huge square kitchen, pointed at the cooking range, the dish pans, the cupboards and the pile of provisions he had brought with him.

"To-day Tuesday," he roared at the new cook. "To-mollow Wednesday. To-mollow night big dinner. Sixty-one eat. No, sixty-two because Herb Sackrider's baby comes now. Big dinner. Sixty-two. You get?" Itching Foot imagined he was talking to the Chinese in his own language. "To-mollow night. Don't tly to get away. I shoot." He waved his six-shooter at the cowering yellow man who immediately dropped behind the stove and squinted his eyes piteously. "You tly to go," emphasized Itching Foot, "and I put daylight through you. Bang, bang, bang. Undlestand?"

The quaking cook nodded his head violently, whereupon Itching Foot turned to his fellows. "That's the way to keep 'em in their place," he declared. "Now wait till I get my shoes off and I'll tell you what a great cook he is!"

A moment later the proprietor's feet were resting on the window sill of the "social room" and he was pouring his experiences into the avid ears of his fellow Libertians.

"Finest chef in the world," he boasted. "He's cooked for Fred Harvey himself. Yep. They told me so at the employment agency. At Bakersfield. Went clean down there to get him. Drove like the devil.

"Well, the employment man said he had a good cook. 'How much?' I asks. 'Thirty dollars a week,' he says. Well, I never batted an eye. 'Trot him out,' I says. 'Sounds good.'

"Then out comes this yellow bird and I see right away he's a great cook. He has the looks of one. 'I want to talk to you,' I says to him. 'Come outside a minute.' He came all right, thinking I was a millionaire. When we got beside the car I prodded my gun in his back."

Itching Foot grinned at the remembrance; the grin widened, his mouth opened to emit roars of laughter which shook his body and threatened to break his dilapidated suspenders.

" 'C-c-c-climb in!' I orders, and lordy how he jumped over that steering wheel! Away I came, driving hellity-larrup, one hand holding the gun in those yellow ribs and driving old Betsy with the other.

"And here we are," concluded the triumphant employer. "Me and a wonderful cook. Now fellows, I'm all in. My feet are driving me crazy; the floor of that

darned Ford gets red hot and gives me the itch. I've got you a cook like I said I would. Now beat it and come back to-morrow night for the finest dinner you ever had."

There was no doubt that the Libertians would come, though there may have been some doubts of the dinner. But it was a great affair, with soup and roast beef and baked potatoes and gelatine with whipped cream. Never had the Liberty House served a better dinner, never were the settlers in better spirits. And when Sam Slade produced a gallon of homemade peach brandy the health of Itching Foot was toasted to the accompaniment of stamping feet and whistling. Then Itching Foot modestly related how he had stood over the new cook with his gun and aided in preparing the meal. He concluded by promising each and every inhabitant of Liberty two such feasts each week. His rosy face was wreathed in smiles, his bald head glistened proudly and assumed a cherry-red hue, his little blue eyes danced with pleasure.

But it was a different Itching Foot who pounded on Sam Slade's door at daybreak the next morning. "Sam!" he roared. "Let me in the garage. The chink's beat it. For the love of Heaven, Sam, hurry! He got away in the night; dropped off the second-story porch. He's probably run himself ragged by this time. Get out Betsy, Sam, quick!"

The sleepy-eyed garage proprietor, realizing the magnitude of the tragedy which impended, made all haste. In a moment the half-clad Itching Foot Davis was stirring up the alkali dust in a mad dash down the Bishop-Mojave road.

An hour later he came back.

"See that saguaro?" he inquired, pointing to a huge cactus which raised two thorny arms to the sky. "See it?" he demanded of the little Chinese cook who trembled beside him in the car. "Well, you try to get away again and I nail you to it—one arm to each branch. Understand?"

The Chinese tried for the tenth time to speak but Itching Foot roared him into silence. "Shut up, you heathen! And don't run away again. Why, I'll—I'll chase you clear to hell and gone if I have to and then I'll strip your hide off by inches. You stay at the Liberty House and cook for me or I'll——"

Itching Foot was still roaring dire threats when he swung the car under the cottonwood tree and up to the Liberty House. News of his man hunt had passed through the settlement and again the Libertians were awaiting him. For the second time Itching Foot enjoyed his triumph, enhancing it with fanciful description.

"Fight? Say, this little yellow fellow is a second Dempsey! I had to subdue him after twelve rounds of fierce going. Sure I did! Yong, didn't you fight like the devil? Didn't you?" Itching Foot prodded his six-shooter in his cook's ribs. "Say 'yes!'" he ordered.

The Chinese nodded his head energetically, squinted his slit eyes from face to face searching for some sign of pity, then shrugged his shoulders and resigned himself to martyrdom.

So the Libertians had a fine Sunday dinner and Itching Foot Davis was again the hero of the occasion. He explained that he never relaxed his vigilance; that twice he had to chase passing automobiles to pull the cringing Chinese from off the rear tire carrier; that for one whole day he had searched for his cook and at last found him in the depths of the mesquite thicket back of the hotel.

"There he was, boys," Itching Foot declared. "All coiled up like a rattler ready to strike. Say, his eyes gleamed something awful. You know what that mesquite is. Thicker than an African jungle; can't move a step in it; and say, I had to crawl in on my hands and knees and face this bloodthirsty chink. It reminded me of the time I chased the Piutes, over in Garden Valley, Nevada and——"

"Maybe if you'd treat him better," interrupted Mrs. Sam Slade, "the poor little fellow would want to stay."

"Tried it," answered Itching Foot. "Tried it. Treated him like a prince of Wongtong. Then he began to talk about leaving and I had to bring out my shooting iron. Why, the fellow is just crazy to get away; the only idea in his noodle. I can't understand why he's so set on beating it."

Two days later he understood; all of Liberty understood. For up the Bishop-Mojave road came a procession—one of the strangest the desert had ever seen. A slip of a Chinese woman led it, and back of her came Chinese children of assorted sizes, each carrying parcels and bags and each grin-

ning until their dust-caked faces seemed about to crack.

"Well, I *am* damned!" muttered Itching Foot from his place on the front porch. "Walked! Walked the desert! And in they come with a grin reaching around their heads! Can you beat it! Yong! Hey! Yong-yong!"

The Chinese cook appeared; he glanced up the road; he clucked in his throat, jabbered—and ran. The procession opened to receive him; there was a chorus of throaty "ungs" and "koos" and other sounds.

"That must be his family," deduced Itching Foot without any severe strain of his mentality. "Walked up to meet him! No wonder he was so blamed anxious to get away."

Grinning and clucking, Yong led his family to the porch. "Mis-sus Yong," he said. "Baby Yongs. I want to go get them but Mr. Davis, he say 'no-no.' So they come. Now we all stay if Mr. Davis say 'yes.'"

"Yes!" roared Itching Foot. "Stay! And here's twenty dollars I owe you for two weeks. Your family probably needs shoes after that walk!"

So happiness reigned in Liberty. No longer were the twelve families in constant fear of losing their social headquarters and two community meals a week. The Chinese family appropriated one of the back upstairs rooms; Wing Yong cooked and grinned at his wife; Mrs. Yong grinned back at her husband and cleaned the hotel as it had never been cleaned before; the little Yongs began to play with the Liberty children and had mumps along with the rest of them. Thus was social solidarity established, and peace reigned for Itching Foot.

III.

The vaqueros of the Terrapin Rancho occasionally dropped into the Liberty House for a Wednesday-night or Sunday-noon meal, paying four bits each for the privilege. Gradually they came in greater numbers and more regularly; they were enthusiastic in their praise of Wing Yong's cooking. And of course finally they coveted the Libertians their community cook.

What is more, they set out to get him. First they offered Wing Yong higher wages than the Liberty House proprietor paid him. This was without effect, for there remained in Wing Yong's mind the image of Itching Foot Davis and his shooting iron. Firmly the Chinese cook refused to leave the hotel. Then the Terrapin outfit made more serious plans.

"It's like this," explained "Buck" Joyce, major-domo of the Terrapin, to his riders one Sunday afternoon. "That blowhard of an Itching Foot wants a cook and goes down to Bakersfield and kidnaps a chink. I guess there ain't no law about kidnaping chinks, so Davis gets away with it. Well, now we want a cook—that cook. What're we going to do? Get him? I bet. And how? Three guesses."

The eight vaqueros, ranging in size from runty red-haired "Sandy" McAllister to the hulking, two-hundred-and-sixty-pound "Slim" Temple, understood their foreman perfectly.

"Shall we rustle the whole family, or just Wing Yong?" asked Sandy McAllister.

"I don't know what you mean," countered Buck Joyce, rolling his eyes innocently. "Me, I'm not to know anything about kidnaping any one's cook. Understand that. The boss will have me on the carpet if there's trouble. But I'd say, offhand, that if a Chinaman was rustled his family would follow soon enough."

The cowboys grinned, withdrew behind the corral and made their plans for that night—plans which included the gagging of Itching Foot Davis, the theft of his cook, and, if necessary, good-natured assault and arson.

They reckoned without considering the chilblains of Itching Foot Davis. The ailment was particularly uncomfortable that Sunday night, for Davis had been on his feet almost all day, welcoming his paying guests. When night came he couldn't sleep though he stuck his feet out the window into the cool night air, though he rubbed them with goose grease and liniment and elevated them on the foot of the bed.

About midnight he decided to get up and fix a hot mustard foot bath. Then it was he heard suspicious sounds from the desert—the muffled pid-pad of horses' hoofs, the creaking of leather, subdued conversation and chuckles. For a moment the mind of Itching Foot refused to function.

Robbers? Yes, robbers, of course, or they'd come by the road. Bandits. But what was there in Liberty worth stealing? Then the awful truth broke over him—they would steal his most valuable possession—his cook.

Forgotten were all thoughts of chilblains. The blood which had flowed to drive the Piutes from Garden Valley, Nevada, quickened at the thought of a fight—a fight for which the stake was much more valuable than a dozen Garden Valleys—a first-class cook.

Itching Foot took his six-shooter from under his pillow and hastily pulled on his trousers. Now to sound the tocsin! All Liberty would answer the call, would fight to the last man to defend their prize possession.

Stealthily he crept down the stairs. Already the bandits had tied their horses back of the mesquite thicket; he could hear the rustle of sage, the sucking of sand underfoot as the robbers advanced toward the Liberty House. Then, dimly outlined against the white highway he distinguished two or three figures.

He was surrounded. Nothing now but to fight it out, to defend his hotel as though it were a fort. He opened the front door, raised his six-shooter.

"Halt!" he called.

The black blotches ceased moving. There was muffled consultation, a good-natured oath or two. Then one figure detached itself and faded away in the darkness.

"What do you want?" demanded Itching Foot.

"We're lost," piped a voice. "We're tourists and got stuck in the sand."

"You lie by the clock," roared Itching Foot. "I know you, Sandy McAllister. And I know what you're after. You're after my cook. Well, come and get him. But the first one of you who steps on the porch gets drilled."

"Aw, now, Itchin' Foot," conciliated Sandy, "we're just a-dropping over to pay you a friendly call. We've got some homebrew with us."

The ruse was too evident; Itching Foot refused the bait. "I'm going to count ten," he announced, "and then I'm going to shoot at anything I see moving. One—two——"

"Make it twenty!" pleaded the runty Scotchman, his voice shaking in well-simulated fright. "Make it twenty, Itchin' Foot!"

"No. I said ten. One—two——"

"Compromise!" shrilled Sandy. "Make it fifteen, Itchin' Foot. Compromise!"

"Ten and I shoot," repeated the hotel proprietor, "One—two——"

"Twelve, then!" pleaded Sandy. "Give a mon a chance. You're such a dummed sure shot, Itchin' Foot. Make it twelve and give me a chance to run. Just twelve."

"All right, then, twelve. And I shoot on sound. One—two——"

"Not on sound, Itchin' Foot. You didn't say that. You said on sight. Didn't you say on sight, not sound? Don't shoot on just——"

But Davis was firm this time. "Three—four—five——"

He had reached "nine" when he realized he had been hoaxed. From the back of the hotel came a shrill, frightened scream, a flow of terrified Chinese gabble. While Sandy kept Itching Foot talking in front of the hotel others of the kidnaping party had climbed to the upper porch and captured Wing Yong.

Itching Foot began to shoot. He didn't shoot, now, on either sight or sound—he fired promiscuously into the darkness. Unfortunately after a half dozen shots he had to run up to his bedroom to get more ammunition. He fell over a chair in the darkness, landing so heavily that every muscle ached sympathetically. After some fumbling he found his cartridge belt and strapped it on. Then he ran down again and out into the desert.

Now he was a veritable machine gun, firing right and left, reloading with dexterity and firing again.

He heard a voice close to him in the darkness. "For the love of Lord Harry, Itchin' Foot, don't be so careless with that gun!" There was real fright in the call but the outraged hotel proprietor was thoroughly aroused and responded with another fusillade. He was rewarded by hearing a cry of pain.

The kidnapers would never reach their horses tied behind the mesquite thicket! No siree! Not as long as Itching Foot's belt held a single cartridge. Straight to the mesquite he ran. He could see the dark outline of horses, of men leaping on them. Crack! crack! He emptied his six-shooter at the horses and men indiscriminately.

"Into the mesquite!"

Itching Foot heard the order, dimly saw figures throwing themselves into the tangled thicket; he even thought he saw the form of Wing Yong being dragged under cover. For a moment he ceased firing; he'd take no chances of killing his cook. In-

stead he untied the horses, thwacked them on the flanks and sent them galloping across the desert. That was strategy, the kind of strategy which had helped him to drive the Piutes from Garden Valley, Nevada. Itching Foot grinned to himself; he was thoroughly enjoying the fight now.

His first wild rage had evaporated; he knew he had the marauders cornered. Now it was merely a matter of keeping them in the mesquite until aid came. Plenty of gunpowder would discourage any attempt to escape.

Itching Foot used plenty of gunpowder. He enjoyed hearing his bullets cut through the thicket, just high enough to keep the kidnapers lying low and motionless. He didn't enjoy it, however, when answering bullets whizzed past him. He knew that the Terrapin boys wouldn't try to kill him, any more than he'd try to kill any of them except in his first hot rage. But they might try to wing him, and their shooting was dangerously inaccurate.

The old Indian fighter threw himself on the sand behind a creosote bush and set himself for a siege. He realized that his feet were itching terribly now and he began to kick them on the ground, beating time to the staccato tattoo of his six-shooter.

There, like Horatio at the bridge keeping the foe at bay, Sam Slade and Ramon Chico found him. But with their arrival and that of the other ten hastily aroused men of Liberty Itching Foot ceased his rôle of Horatio and became Napoleon.

In a few words he explained the situation, then sent his forces deploying around the thicket with orders to wing any man trying to escape. "But be everlastingly careful it isn't Wing Yong you shoot," he warned.

When his men were satisfactorily arranged General Itching Foot Davis began to parley. "Say, you thieving coyotes, send out our cook and we'll let you go."

The answer was a bullet which rasped into the sand at his feet and ricocheted whiningly across the desert blackness. The blood of the Terrapin vaqueros was up; word had passed among them that little Sandy McAllister had a bullet through his leg. Blood had been drawn and blood was required in satisfaction, for the honor of the Terrapin. The midnight kidnaping prank suddenly had become serious business.

For an hour there was intermittent exchange of shots. Then word was brought to Itching Foot that Herb Sackrider had lost two toes from a well-directed shot at the far side of the thicket. That decided Itching Foot. He passed from man to man of the besiegers. "They've wounded Herb Sackrider," he said. "Now they'll rush us before daylight. That's their only chance, and that's what the Piutes always did. But I'm too experienced for them. I'll bust their plans. I'll set fire to the thicket and drive 'em out."

There in the darkness and heat of miniature battle it seemed a good plan. Fire would drive the Terrapin outfit from under cover before they were ready to rush; it would light up the desert so there'd be no chance for the kidnapers to spirit away Wing Yong.

Ramon Chico was designated to bring an armful of oil-soaked waste from Sam Slade's garage and to place it at the edge of the mesquite. Then Itching Foot himself, dragging his bulky body along the ground in what he declared was the approved method of Indian fighters, snaked his way to the thicket and touched a match to the waste. The flare of flame invited shots to him; he grunted as the lobe of his left ear was carried away and again when a bullet burned its way across his portly abdomen. His crawling retreat from the thicket became a four-legged run and he dropped behind his screening creosote bush not certain whether he were mortally hurt or not. For the moment he was too interested in the flaming thicket to care.

The burning mesquite was a magnificent sight. The thicket was seventy yards in circumference, tangled branches interlacing from a single four-foot trunk. The resinous wood burned fiercely, with a roar and a crackle which shot large brands high in the air. In a few seconds the desert was bright with the flame; bushes and rocks cast grotesque shadows and farther away yucca trees seemed to writhe as they raised their arms to the red sky.

For a moment attackers and attacked alike seemed dazed by the spectacular fire, by the power of the demon which had been unleashed. Then from the flaming mesquite ran the Terrapin cowboys, led by the deathly frightened Wing Yong, who had dodged every time a shot was fired and was still dodging. There was no fight left in the vaqueros; the terrific heat, the sky-shooting flames had overawed them, shat-

tered their morale. They mingled with the men of Liberty, shielding their faces from the scorching heat.

Itching Foot Davis was victorious. The smile of a generous conqueror was on his face. With blood running down his cheek, part of one ear carried away, a painful crease across his abdomen—still he smiled, for his arms were around Wing Yong.

There was a shout. Itching Foot turned. His smile faded; it was replaced by a grimace of anguish. The Liberty House was burning. Brands from the mesquite thicket had dropped on the dry, curled shingles; the roof was in flame in a dozen places.

Horror clutched the heart of Itching Foot —horror and momentary despair. The pride of Liberty, the love of Itching Foot, was doomed. No twenty men, no hundred men could save the dry old building already flaming like oil-soaked excelsior.

Then the indomitable courage which was hidden under the verbosity and portly good humor of Itching Foot asserted itself. He tucked Wing Yong under one powerful arm and ran with him, squirming and twisting, toward the Liberty House. Itching Foot was taking no chances of again losing his cook, recaptured at such a price.

Straight to the door of the hotel he ran, into the smoke-filled "social room" and up the stairs. He came down a minute later with Chinese children swarming over him, still carrying Wing Yong under one arm and now with Mrs. Yong under the other.

In front of Sam Slade's garage he shook himself free of the children, counted them carefully and set Mrs. Yong down in their midst. But the gabbling Wing Yong he tucked tighter to him as he rushed back to the Liberty House.

Now he had to brush aside the men of Liberty and the Terrapin cowboys who tried to prevent him from entering the burning building again.

"Out of my way!" he roared, bowling over the interfering men, right and left, dodging and twisting and striking out with his free arm.

"For the love of Lord Harry don't let him go in there again!" cried Sandy McAllister, who was propped against the cottonwood tree holding his wounded leg in the air. "The roof's going."

But Itching Foot was already free and on the porch of the furnacelike hotel. The fearful watchers saw the front door open, saw Itching Foot's great figure framed against the lurid flames for a second, saw with great distinctness the squirming Wing Yong who was clawing like a terrified animal.

"Madra mia!" shouted Ramon Chico above the crackle and roar of the fire. "He's going to cremate Wing Yong!"

"Wing Yong be damned!" answered Sam Slade. "He's going to kill himself."

For age-long minutes the watchers waited. The Liberty House was now a flaming furnace, shooting flames to the sky, coloring the landscape and lighting up the mountain range which gleamed ominously and refracted red and orange lights back over Liberty. Toward the desert the mesquite thicket was sending thick clouds of smoke into the air; the fury of its fire had ceased but its acrid smoke settled like a blanket over the sand. It was Dante's "Inferno" on the desert.

A warning shout rose from many throats; the roof of the Liberty House began to fall. Slowly, softly it seemed at first, it sank in the middle, the rafters resisting the fire to the last. Then with a roar the entire superstructure gave way.

At that moment the figure of Itching Foot Davis loomed against the fire. Out the front door, which now opened from a tangled mass of burning timbers, he came, brands flying around him, flaming boards dropping past his head.

It seemed the appearance of a supernatural being, the god Vulcan from his furnace or Mars from his forge. His face gleamed in the orange light; his scanty hair had been burned away leaving his bald head mottled white and red with black charcoal streaks across it; his eyebrows were gone, his clothes smoldered and smoked. Yet his big body, looming against the blazing door, was awe-inspiring, majestic.

Momentary silence greeted his reappearance; then the feelings of the watchers were released in a shout which sounded above the crackle of the fire and was echoed down from the gleaming mountains. Men of Liberty and men of Terrapin joined in the cry of joy.

"He's got the chink yet!" some one called, pointing to the limp figure under the arm of Davis. Almost hysterical laughter greeted the announcement and relieved the taut nerves of those who had scarcely dared hope to see Itching Foot again.

Shielding their faces from the heat, men advanced to meet the intrepid Itching Foot. But his work wasn't yet done.

Down from its place on the front porch came the large black-lettered sign: "LIBERTY HOUSE, Samuel Sutherland Davis, Prop." Itching Foot would not leave that to the flames.

Now, and only now, was he ready to retreat from the flames. The limp Chinese cook under one arm, the sign under the other, his face smeared with charcoal and dried blood, his scorched skin showing through his clothes in a dozen places, his eyes as red as the fire he had challenged, but with the old triumphant smile on his face, Itching Foot strode to the cottonwood tree.

"There," he said, in a matter-of-fact voice, "is our cook. Souse him in the creek. There is our sign. We'll need it for the new hotel. Meanwhile we'll just nail it over my ranch house. And here," he added, reaching into his tattered clothes, "is the insurance policy. Lordy, I was afraid it would burn up and we couldn't get the money on it. It was up in my room. I'll take it down to Bakersfield to-morrow and collect. We won't tell the borax people anything about the fire and we'll build a jim cracker of a hotel.

"You say I didn't need the policy to collect the insurance. Oh, you're bugs, Sam. I know better. Now over in Garden Valley one time——

"Say, let me get my feet in that water. That heat was bad for my chilblains."

A PRIZE CAPTURE

THE justly redoubted detective force of Paris is congratulating itself upon the recent capture of one of the most resourceful criminals ever inscribed on a French police docket, one Cohen ben Hamouch, as he calls himself, ostensibly a native of Algeria. The prisoner's career of crime in the French capital had been brief, but what it lacked in longevity it had made up in ingenuity. His variations of time-honored confidence schemes were infinite and followed each other with dazzling rapidity. For sheer audacity, the French police say, his exploits have few equals in the history of crime. Cohen's last "job," which finally landed him behind the bars of the grim Santé Prison, was the most daring of the list. Culminating, as it did, in the very sanctuary of police authority, it stung the Paris sleuths to prodigious activity. Cohen was finally tracked to Switzerland, caught "with the goods," extradited and brought to trial.

No less a person than the prefect of police himself was Cohen's unwitting accomplice in this last ingenious operation. Presenting himself to one of the fashionable jewelers of the Rue de la Paix, Cohen produced a card which read:

ANDRÉ
Prefecture of Police

"Monsieur Naudin, the prefect, sends me," said the Algerian confidence man. "I am to make a selection of rings from which he desires to choose one for presentation to Madame Naudin."

Trays of rings were brought out. Cohen selected several.

"These will do," he said. "Will you send a clerk to accompany me to the prefect's office and arrange the details?"

A clerk was detailed. Cohen drove with him to police headquarters. They entered the building, which is all corridors and staircases and freely open to public circulation. Cohen selected a staircase. They mounted to the second floor. Before a door labeled "Office of the Prefect" Cohen paused.

"Wait a moment," he said. "I will see if the prefect is engaged."

He entered the door; closed it after him. The clerk waited. Ten minutes passed. Twenty. A half hour. The clerk drew the door ajar and peered in. Beyond was a long, empty corridor. At the end of the corridor a staircase. At the foot of the staircase a door to the street. Cohen was gone with the rings! The sign on the door he had planted an hour before, purposely choosing an unfrequented wing of the building.

A Chat With You

WHEN the little wooden ship luffed up into the wind and the anchor chains rattled and there was a splash in Provincetown harbor where no anchor had ever splashed before, those on the ship had little more idea of the importance of the occasion than did the sea gulls, who banking themselves in sweeping curves on widespread wings, looked out with black eyes on this strange manner of fowl which flew along the water instead of through the air and from which came such a clamor of men and women talking excitedly.

The blocks creak as the long boat swings out from the davits. There is another splash as the boat hits the water and still another splash as the oars swing into stroke. There are shrill cries from women and deeper cries from men. It is clear and cold and frosty. The boat slides up the shelving beach and the two men at the bow splash out into the icy surf. They are glad to be able to stretch their limbs again after their long confinement on shipboard and there is a great buzz and chatter of excitement both from those on the boat and those on the shore as they drag the boat up the shingle.

What the sea gulls, circling and screaming in excitement, have been watching is the beginning of New England, and what is more, the beginning of a new species of men and women.

* * * *

THEY had come from lush and quiet English shires. From Lincoln and Huntingdon and Essex and Devon. Until they had left for Leyden in Holland their lives had moved in a slow rhythm. Some new idea, like a fire in one of their own stubble fields, had quickened them and sent them, plain and untested men and women, across desperate seas and to desert and inhospitable shores.

And now there is no more of the quiet English countryside. They are to be frozen in the winter and scorched in the summer. They are to lose their English pink and to grow tanned and lean and tall. They are to fight men and beasts and the elements. These simple folk who had risked all for a religious ideal that seems to many fanatical were to stride forth, at last, stark conquerors on a shore where they must blast mountains to grow their bread. And soon there is a forest of masts in Boston harbor and there are greasy whalers lying at anchor in New Bedford, and all over the green hills are the spires of churches, and there are Harvard and Yale and a hundred other colleges, and there are Emerson and Hawthorne and Longfellow—in short there is New England.

* * * *

THE industrial revolution, the beginning of that factory era in which we now live and of which no one yet sees the end, has done its best to spoil the ancient land of the Yankees. To farm or to sail the seas to far Cathay, to teach or to preach or to study, to be a rich merchant who deals in precious silks and far-brought spices—these are fine and spacious occupations worthy of the conquerors. But to tend a loom in a factory, to be tied to some machine, is not so suitable. Nor is fighting a rocky field for a scanty crop so wise when richer lands lie open to the west—and so the old New England fades out from sight and superimposed upon it, more or less, is the modern industrial community. Descendants of the original founders are scattered from Maine to Texas and their spirit still quickens the life of new States and far-off cities. Also if you go back into the country, like the Roman walls and tesselated pavements under the

lava of Mount Etna, you can still find the old New England.

* * * *

RALPH PAINE'S new novel, the greatest he has ever written, concerns itself with the life of one of the old New Englanders still living in a modern day. Big Richard Carey, descendant of the Careys of Devonshire, a still living specimen of the old-time Yankee, has in him all the self-control, all the steadiness of purpose, all the seafaring prowess of the ancient race. "Four Bells" is the name of the novel Paine has written about him. Some of his ancestors had been hardy buccaneers who stormed the walls of Cartagena and Porto Bello against long odds. Others had been home-keeping religious folk, no less hardy and set of purpose in their way. And in the cycle of his life, the glorious, romantic, open air and spacious past was to come back again. How he left his farm to go to sea, how he fell in love with a woman as strong and colorful as any his fathers had known in the past, how he went adventuring on the Spanish Main and found peril and romance and beauty and love—this is the tale that Paine has called "Four Bells." Have you heard them chime on shipboard? "Ting-ting! Ting-ting!" A magic signal that marks the start of as full-blooded a story of romance and adventure as we have read in years. They still go down to the sea in ships and do their business in great waters. "These see the works of the Lord and His wonders on the deep." The story starts in the issue of THE POPULAR out two weeks from to-day.

* * * *

FOUR BELLS" would be enough in itself to make the next issue of the magazine a notable one, but it is only a single factor in the combination. There is the first of a new series of stories about The Texan Wasp, by James Francis Dwyer—"The Gold Traffickers of Montmartre."

There is a complete novel which has for its setting the Canadian wilderness—"The Pothooks Porcupine," by Theodore Goodridge Roberts. There is another number of the wonderful Stacpoole series. There is a vivid and human railroad story, "The Pioneer of Dust Storm Station," by that great writer of short stories, Calvin Johnston.

Howard R. Marsh has contributed a Western story, "The Sign Painter of the Desert," that has something more in it than interest, something of pathos and heart appeal. There is a baseball story by Hoefer, a fight story by Montanye, and a detective story by Rohde. Altogether it is the kind of magazine it is a pleasure to send to press. We would like to have the reading of it all over again, but there is a vicarious pleasure in knowing that you are going to get it soon. So here's wishing you a comfortable chair and a good light. The magazine will do the rest.

News of The New Hupmobile

We feel sure that every Hupmobile owner, or even observer, will agree with us that in order to dominate its field, the Hupmobile has only to improve upon its own past.

In this new Hupmobile, that triumph has been accomplished, not merely in one, but in every important essential—with results in performance so marked that they validate more strongly than ever its legitimate right to be called the best car of its class in the world.

We direct the attention of Hupmobile owners in particular—because they know and admire its fine points of performance more intimately, perhaps, than any other owner-group in the world—to these results, which they can absolutely count upon in the new Hupmobile:—

Noted as the Hupmobile has always been for settling down instantly to smooth, steady, straight-ahead going, this new Hupmobile has a coasting, skimming quality that surpasses any Hupmobile which has preceded it.

Prized as the Hupmobile has always been for the smoothness of its operation, this new Hupmobile is even more free from noticeable vibration.

Celebrated as the Hupmobile has always been for snapping away in the flash of a second, this new Hupmobile is even quicker on the trigger than any other Hupmobile before it.

Easy-riding as the Hupmobile has always been, this new Hupmobile—in front and rear alike—outdoes all of its predecessors in bump-absorbent spring action and restful riding.

Comfortable as the Hupmobile has always been, this new Hupmobile is more roomy and affords greater convenience to driver and passengers alike.

These are the high points of new Hupmobile performance—a positive promise to the public from the Hupp Motor Car Corporation which fifteen minutes' experience will prove to your delight and satisfaction.

The means by which these splendid results have been attained are described in detail in literature which is now ready for distribution.

Hupmobile has not veered nor varied a hair's breadth from time-tried Hupmobile principles, but, applying and extending them with infinite care and fidelity, the Hupp Corporation has produced the greatest car in its history.

We realize that announcements from this corporation are accepted as careful statements of fact, and realizing it, we urge you to put our promises to the test.

Hupp Motor Car Corporation, Detroit, Michigan

(The new Series R-12 Hupmobile is now on display throughout the country. See it, or write us for pictures and detailed description)

She is No Longer Fat

She found a way to reduce her fat. It was a way far more pleasant than dieting, exercising or the application of absurd greases and salves would have been. This new way allowed her to eat foods without danger of becoming fat again.

She found *Marmola Prescription Tablets*. They aid the digestive system to obtain the full nutriment of food. They help Nature to turn food into muscle, bone and sinew instead of fat.

Marmola Prescription Tablets are made from the famous Marmola Prescription. Thousands have found that these handy tablets give complete relief from obesity. And when the accumulation of fat is checked, reduction to normal, healthy weight soon follows.

All good drug stores the world over sell *Marmola Prescription Tablets* at one dollar a box. Ask your druggist for them, or order direct and they will be sent in plain wrapper, postpaid.

MARMOLA COMPANY
283 Garfield Bldg., Detroit, Mich.

HOW

It satisfies your thirst and also does you good

The delightfully refreshing "tart" that a teaspoonful of Horsford's Acid Phosphate imparts to fruit juices—or just plain water—also makes the summer drink more wholesome because of the vital PHOSPHATES it contains.

HORSFORD'S ACID PHOSPHATE

supplies in agreeable form many health-giving properties which bring health and strength to body and brain. At Druggist.

Write for SPECIAL BOOKLET of valuable information about the nutritious PHOSPHATES — with recipes for delightful fruit drinks, ices, etc. Sent free. Address

RUMFORD CHEMICAL WORKS
PROVIDENCE, R. I. O-49

GUARANTEED 8 MONTHS
AT HALF PRICE

These are Goodrich, Goodyear, Firestone, Fisk and other best known standard make tires. All slightly used, but readily give our customers thousands of miles of splendid service.

LOWEST TIRE PRICES IN AMERICA

	Tires	New Tubes		Tires	New Tubes
30x3	$1.90	$ .90	32x4½	$3.75	$1.65
30x3½	2.00	.90	33x4½	3.75	1.65
32x3½	2.50	.90	34x4½	4.00	1.65
31x4	2.75	.90	35x4½	4.25	1.65
32x4	3.00	1.40	36x4½	4.25	1.65
33x4	3.25	1.40	35x5	4.25	1.95
34x4	3.50	1.40	37x5	4.25	1.95

SEND ONLY $1.00 for each tire shipped. Balance C.O.D. Express shipments sent section unwrapped for inspection. Tires guaranteed eight months. Another tire given at half price for any not perfectly satisfactory. **Dealers and Agents wanted everywhere. WRITE—RUSH ORDERS.**

ROSE TIRE CORPORATION
Dept. J236 1526 S. WABASH AVE., CHICAGO, ILL.

Send only $1.00 and this beautiful Diamond Ring will come to you **without "red-tape" or delay.** If not convinced it is the **Greatest Bargain in America,** send it back and your $1.00 will be returned. Only if pleased, pay $3.15 a month until our **Special Bargain price of only $32.50** is paid.

Million Dollar Bargain Book **FREE** Send for it today. It pictures thousands of amazing bargains Address Dept. 1926

J. M. LYON & CO. INC.
2-4 Maiden Lane, New York

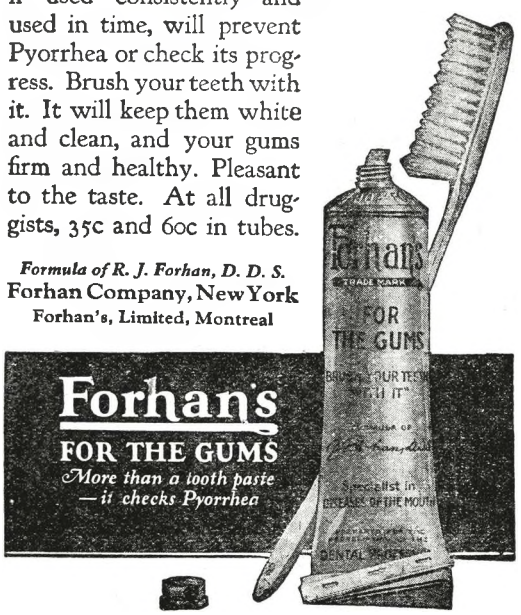
Four Out of Five Pay the Penalty

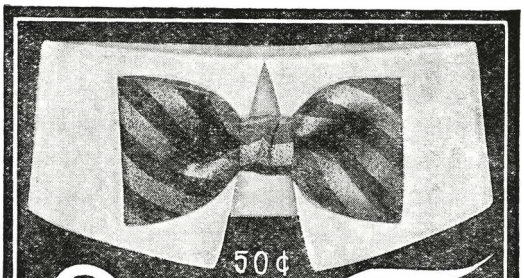
Bleeding gums herald Pyorrhea

Take heed of bleeding gums. They're Nature's warning of Pyorrhea. Only one person out of every five past forty escapes. Thousands younger contract it, too.

Forhan's For the Gums, if used consistently and used in time, will prevent Pyorrhea or check its progress. Brush your teeth with it. It will keep them white and clean, and your gums firm and healthy. Pleasant to the taste. At all druggists, 35c and 60c in tubes.

Formula of R. J. Forhan, D. D. S.
Forhan Company, New York
Forhan's, Limited, Montreal

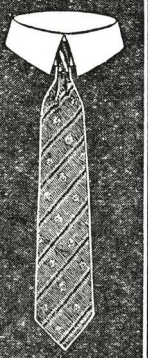




50¢

Spur Tie

Pat. June 13, 1922 Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.



BEST FOR SUMMER

SUMMER time is play-time—and bow time. Soft and semi-soft collars look better with the famous Spur Tie Bow.

COMES ALL TIED FOR YOU

—by hand. Slips on to your collar in a jiffy. Keeps its shape all day long. No adjusting—no retying. 50c each—two for $1.00. Many handsome patterns to choose from. Accept no substitute. The Spur Bow Tie has exclusive features. The name "Spur" is plainly stamped on every tie.

If your dealer will not supply you, send $1.00 for two; 50c for one; specifying size (large or small), color preference, and whether elastic band or slip-on-grip.

LOOK FOR THE NAME "SPUR" ON THE TIE

HEWES & POTTER
Boston, Mass.

On the Pacific Coast
PAUL B. HAY
120 Battery Street
San Francisco, Cal.

SPUR TIE Four-in-Hand
All tied for you—no wrinkles—on and off with ease—only $1.00 at your haberdashers.

Send for Style Book C.

BULL-DOG

Ask you dealer about Bull-Dog Suspenders and Garters, guaranteed 365 days' wear—Vestoff Suspenders worn out of sight 'neath the shirt and Bull-Dog Belts noted for their style and value.

BULL-DOG BELTS $1.00 & UP. THE BUCKLE THAT WILL NOT SLIP

Free Trial Bottle—Postage Prepaid

Gray Haired People

—learn my story!

I can't tell it in this small advertisement, so I ask you to send for the special patented Free Trial package which contains a trial bottle of my Restorer and full explanation and directions for making convincing test on one lock of hair.

When you learn how I perfected my Restorer to bring back the original color to my own gray hair, what perfect results it assures, how easy is application, you will realize what my offer means to all gray haired people.

My Hair Color Restorer is a clear, colorless liquid, clean as water. No sediment to make your hair sticky and stringy, nothing to wash or rub off. Restored color perfectly natural in all lights, no danger of streaking or discoloration. Results just as satisfactory when used on faded, bleached or streakish, discolored dyed hair.

Mail coupon today for Free Trial package and learn my wonderful story and what it means to you. If possible, enclose a lock of your hair in letter.

MAIL now

Please print your name and address

MARY T. GOLDMAN
39-J Goldman Bldg., St. Paul, Minn.

Please send your patented Free Trial Outfit. X shows color of hair. Black..... dark brown..... medium brown..... auburn (dark red)..... light brown..... light auburn (light red)..... blonde.....

Name _____

Street _____ *City* _____

It's right on my *CARD*

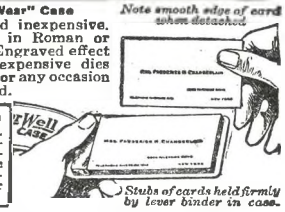
NOTHING so exasperating as having to repeat and spell out your name, address or phone number. To say "It's right on my card" is simpler and more sensible. Thousands of women are adopting this business-like way of doing things when shopping and saving themselves annoyance. Business women like and are using—

BOOK FORM CARDS

Carried in "Well Wear" Case

Note smooth edge of card when detached

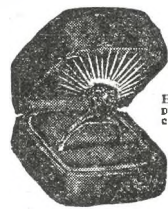
are distinctive and inexpensive. Beautifully lettered in Roman or Gothic in process. Engraved effect without the use of expensive dies and plates suitable for any occasion where a card is needed.



Send Only $2.00 for 100 cards and case. Give name, city, address and phone number (4) lines. Add 10c additional for each extra line. $3 for 250 or $4.50 for 500 cards.

Stubs of cards held firmly by lever binder in case.

MODERN CARD CO., 26 E. 11th St., Chicago



FREE DIAMOND RING OFFER

Just to advertise our famous Hawaiian im. diamonds—the greatest discovery the world has ever known. We will send absolutely free this 14k gold f. ring, set with a 1-2k Hawaiian im. diamond—in beautiful ring box postage paid. Pay postmaster $1.48 C. O. D. charges to cover postage, boxing, advertising, handling, etc. If you can tell it from a real diamond return and money refunded. Only 10,000 given away. Send no money. Answer quick. Send size of finger.

KRAUTH & REED, Dept. 412
335 West Madison St., CHICAGO

MAKE MONEY AT HOME

YOU CAN earn $1 to $2 an hour writing show cards at home in your spare time. Quickly and easily learned by our new simple "Instructograph" method. No canvassing or soliciting. We show you how, guarantee you steady work at home, no matter where you live, and pay you cash each week. Full particulars and booklet free. Write to-day.

AMERICAN SHOW CARD SYSTEM LIMITED
Authorized and Fully Paid Capital, One Million Dollars.
240 Adams Bldg. Toronto, Canada.

"Your Chance as a Screen Actor"

It contains ninety-six pages of information, by which you will be able definitely to decide whether or not the screen is to be your profession.

This book is only 25 cents a copy.

To procure one, address the book department,

STREET & SMITH CORPORATION
79 Seventh Avenue, New York City

Most wonderful offer ever made! Send a dollar TO-DAY! No bother! No delay! Beautiful cluster 7 fiery brilliant blue-white diamonds, platinum set comes at once for 30 DAYS' FREE TRIAL. See for yourself that it looks just like a $750 solitaire. Try to buy it anywhere at our price. If satisfied, pay only $4.57 monthly—price $46.75. Otherwise return and we'll refund your dollar. Rush your dollar TO-DAY! FREE CATALOG—of other wonderful values. Diamonds, watches, etc. Best values—Your OWN TERMS (within reason) PAY-AS-YOU-PLEASE! Address Dept. 42-S.

O. F. Bale & Co. EST. 1888
21-23 Maiden Lane New York

EARN MONEY AT HOME

YOU can make $15 to $60 weekly in your spare time writing show cards. No canvassing or soliciting. We instruct you by our new simple Directograph system, pay you cash each week and guarantee you steady work. Write for full particulars and free booklet.

WEST-ANGUS SHOW CARD SERVICE LIMITED
Authorized Capital $1,250,000.00
120 Colborne Building Toronto, Can.

If New Hair Doesn't Grow After Using My Method —*I Don't Want a Penny!*

I mean just exactly what I say! I don't care how thin your hair may be—I don't care how many treatments you have taken without results. If my new discovery won't restore your hair, I don't want to keep a cent of your money! Furthermore I'll send you the proof of what I have done for others entirely FREE! Just mail the coupon below.

By ALOIS MERKE

Founder of Famous Merke Institute, Fifth Avenue, New York

AFTER 17 years' experience in treating baldness—which included long years of experimentation in Heidelberg, Paris, Berlin, and other centers of scientific research—I have discovered a startling new way to promote hair growth.

At the Merke Institute, Fifth Avenue, New York—which I founded—I have treated scores of prominent stage and social celebrities. Many have paid as high as $500 for the results I have brought them.

Yet now, through a series of ingenious inventions, I have made it possible for every one to avail themselves of my discovery—right in their own homes, and at a cost of only a few cents a day!

My Unusual Guarantee

I know you are skeptical. I know that you have tried perhaps dozens of different remedies and treatments without results. All right. Perhaps my treatment cannot help you, either. I don't know. But I **do** know that it has banished falling hair and dandruff for hundreds of others. I **do** know that it has already given thick, luxuriant hair to people who long ago had despaired of regaining their hair. And I am so downright positive that it will do the same for you that I absolutely GUARANTEE to grow new hair on your head—and if I fail, then the test is free.

Entirely New Method

What is my method? It is entirely different from anything you ever heard of. No massaging—no singeing—no "mange" cures — no unnecessary fuss or bother of any kind. Yet results are usually noticeable even after the very first few treatments.

Many people have the idea when the hair falls out and no new hair appears, that the hair roots are always dead. I have disproved this. For I have found in many cases that the hair roots were NOT dead, but merely **dormant!** Yet even if the scalp is completely bare, it is now possible in the majority of cases to **awaken** these dormant roots, and stimulate an entirely new growth of hair! I KNOW this to be true—because I do it every day.

Ordinary measures failed because they did not penetrate to these dormant roots. To make a tree grow, you would not think of rubbing "growing fluid" on the bark. Instead you would get right to the roots. And so it is with the hair.

There is only one method I know about of penetrating direct to the roots and getting nourishment to them. And this method is embodied in the treatment that I now offer you. The treatment can be used in any home in which there is electricity.

Already hundreds of men and women who only recently were bald or troubled with thin falling hair, have through this method, acquired hair so thick that it is the envy and admiration of their friends. As for dandruff and similar scalp disorders, these usually disappear after the first few applications.

Remember—I do not ask you to risk "one penny." You try it on my absolute GUARANTEE. If after 30 days you are not more than delighted with the growth of hair produced, then I'll gladly return every cent you have paid me. I don't want your money unless I grow hair on your head.

Actual Results

(Dozens of letters like the following are received every day by the Merke Institute)

"The top of my head is now almost covered with new hair about one-half inch long. I have been trying five years, but could never find anything to make my hair grow until your treatment." T. C.

"Ten years ago my hair started falling. Four years ago I displayed a perfect full moon. I tried everything—but without results. Today, however, thanks to your treatment, I have a new crop of hair one inch long." F. H. B.

Free Booklet Explains Treatment

If you will merely fill in and mail the coupon below I will gladly send you—without cost or obligation—an interesting 32-page booklet, describing my treatment in detail.

This booklet contains much helpful information on the care of the hair—and in addition shows by actual photographs what my treatment is doing for others.

No matter how bald you are—no matter if you are completely bald, this booklet will prove of deepest interest to you. So mail the coupon now—and it will be sent you by return mail.

ALLIED MERKE INSTITUTES, Inc.,
512 Fifth Avenue, New York City, Dept. 319

ALLIED MERKE INSTITUTES, Inc., Dept. 319
512 Fifth Avenue, New York.

Please send me, without cost or obligation on my part, a copy of the new booklet describing in detail the Merke Institute Home Treatment.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

FOUR CONGOLEUM RUGS LESS than the price of ONE

TRIPLE GUARANTEE—There is only one guaranteed Congoleum, identified by the Gold Seal above. It protects you against dissatisfaction and gives you an unconditional money-back guarantee. Behind the Gold Seal Guarantee is our own Double Bond.

Choice of Two Famous Patterns—3 Rugs Free—Year to Pay

We show above two of the most popular Congoleum patterns that have ever been produced. One dollar pinned to the coupon below brings you either pattern on approval. One 9 foot by 12 foot rug and three small rugs to match, each small rug 18x36 inches.

Be sure to ask for our Free Book of 10,000 Furniture Bargains—anyway!

Pattern No. 534 This is the Oriental Gold Seal Congoleum Art Rug shown at the top of the page. On the floor, it looks unbelievably like an expensive piece fabric. The richest blue color dominates the ground work. Mellow ecru old ivories, and light tans, set off the blue field. Mingled with these lovely tints are peacock blue, robin's egg blue and darker tones. Old rose, tiny specks of lighter pink and dark mulberry are artistically placed. Darker browns and even blacks, subdued to faintness, lend dignity and richness.

The border background contrasts with the blue all over center by reversing the color scheme. Ecru and tan shades form the border background. In this rug you have all the advantages of design and coloring, of cheerful warmth and lovely color effects so much sought after in high grade pile fabrics.

An ideal all purpose rug, beautiful in any room. Perfect for living room or parlor. Lovely in bedroom or dining room. Charming in the kitchen.

No. E4C534 9 ft. x 12 ft. Congoleum Gold Seal Rug with 3 small rugs to match, each 18 x 36 inches—all four only $17.95

Tile Pattern No. 408 Probably no floor covering of any quality or kind, ever piled up the popularity of this wonderful design. It is a superb tile pattern that looks like mosaic. Lovely robin's egg blue, with shadings of Dutch blue, and a background of soft stone gray, give a matchless effect. This design is particularly suited for the kitchen or dining room.

No. E4C408 9 ft. x 12 ft. Congoleum Gold Seal Rug with 3 small rugs to match, each 18 x 36 inches—all four only $17.95

10000 Other Furniture Bargains **Our Catalog of 10000 Other Furniture Bargains—Now Ready. A Postal Card Brings It FREE!** **Ask for FREE Catalog**

Spiegel, May, Stern Co.

1666 35th Street, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

$1.00

Brings All Four Rugs on a Months Free Trial

Ours is the only house in America that can make you such an offer. No one else can bring you a genuine guaranteed Gold Seal Congoleum Rug, in the full 9 ft. by 12 ft. size, with three small rugs extra, and all for **less** than the **regular price** of the big rug **alone. And on a years credit.**

Clip the coupon below. Write your name and address plainly. Say which pattern you want. Pin a dollar bill to it—mail at once.

We will ship immediately, on a months trial, **all four Congoleum Rugs**—in one complete neat package. No muss, no bother, no trouble to lay. **If satisfactory, take a year to pay.**

The Greatest of Bargains Pay Almost as You Please

Almost everybody knows the price of the famous Congoleum Gold Seal Art Rugs. They are advertised and sold at the same standard price everywhere. And bear in mind that you don't send us the full amount. Only one dollar now and the rest later—taking a year's time. Look everywhere else first if you wish—stores, catalogs, magazines and newspapers. You'll find no offer like ours.

If you return the rugs, your dollar will be refunded and also all freight costs.

Three Rugs Free

For the heavy wear spots in front of range, sink, kitchen. At thresholds, in the hall, in front of dresser or bed. While this offer lasts, we give three of these small rugs free with each large rug; **all four for less than the price of one.**

The Rug of Guaranteed Wear

Congoleum Gold Seal Art Rugs are the fastest selling floor covering known. They are rapidly becoming the national floor covering—highly prized in good homes for any and all rooms.

Waterproof. No burlap for water to rot. Surface is hard, smooth and wear-resisting. Does not stain. Not marred or hurt by spilling of hot liquids.

They lay flat from the first moment without fastening. They never curl up or kick up at edges or corners. No need to tack or fasten them down. Dirt cannot accumulate underneath.

Less work. Rid yourself of back-breaking drudgery. Dirt, ashes, grit, dust or mud cannot "grind into." Congoleum Gold Seal Art Rugs. A damp rag or mop keeps it clean and colorings bright. No laborious beating, no sending to cleaners. Absolutely sanitary. All this guaranteed by the famous **Gold Seal** that means complete satisfaction **or your money back.**

VERY IMPORTANT We do not offer our bargains or send our free catalog into bigger cities. If you live in a city of 100,000 population or over, we cannot fill your order for this **Congoleum Rug Offer** or send our **free catalog.** To everyone else we bring all the advantages of our house freely.

PIN A DOLLAR TO THIS COUPON

Spiegel, May, Stern Co.

1666 Thirty-fifth Street, CHICAGO, ILL.

I enclose $1 for the 4 Gold Seal Congoleum Art Rugs—exactly as described—in the pattern selected below, on 30 days free trial. If I return them, you are to refund my $1, also all transportation costs. Otherwise I will pay $1.50 monthly until special price of $17.95 is paid.

I SELECT PATTERN NO. . . . . .

If you wish both patterns write down both numbers, send $2.00—pay $3.00 monthly and get all 8 rugs.

Name .....

Street, R.F.D. or Box No. .....

Shipping Point.....

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

Also send me your latest FREE Furniture Book.

Like Putting a New Film in a Camera

PUTTING a "Refill" Shaving Stick into Colgate's "Handy Grip" is very simple, and it is done in a few seconds.

The "Handy Grip" lasts for years. "Refills", threaded to fit it, cost you the price of the soap alone. There is no waste.

In addition to its *handiness* and economy, Colgate's makes a copious lather that softens the beard *at the base*, where the razor's work is done.

With hot water or cold, with soft water or hard, Colgate's lathers quickly, and makes shaving easy. It leaves the face smooth, cool and refreshed.

Send us 10c for the "Handy Grip", the metal container, and a trial-size shaving stick. Then buy "Refills" anywhere, as you need them, for the price of the soap alone. Three months' better shaving in each "Refill", for less than the price of a day's cigars.

COLGATE & CO. *Dept. C* **199 Fulton St., New York**

COLGATE'S

"HANDY GRIP" REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

The Refill Shaving Stick