AUG., 1907

GREAT WESTERN STORY
BY FRANCIS LYNDE

15 CENTS

The Popular Magazine

To Owners of Graphophones and other Talking Machines:

There's as much difference in *records* as there is in *voices*.

Columbia Disc and Gold-Moulded Cylinder Records are far clearer, smoother and more lasting than the best of all the others.

Easy enough to prove it.

You know what you like and why you like it.

Argument doesn't count for much—step into the nearest of the 9,000 stores where Columbia Records are sold and get the *evidence* through the big end of the horn. *Listen*—that's all.

Look for this trade mark whenever and wherever you buy disc or cylinder records

Grand Prix,
Paris, 1900
Grand Prize,
Milan, 1906
Double Grand Prize,
St. Louis, 1904

Send for our latest list of new records, disc or cylinder. Get the Graphophone catalog if you don't own a Graphophone. Cylinder records, 25c. Disc records, 60c to $5. Graphophones, $7.50 to $200.

To insure reply by return mail, mark your postal or letter Dept. S.

COLUMBIA PHONOGRAPH CO., Gen'l
TRIBUNE BUILDING, NEW YORK

DISTRIBUTING DEPOTS: 35 W. 23d Street, New York; 88 Wabash Avenue, Chicago; 921 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco.

At Jamestown Exposition—N. E. cor. Manufactures and Liberal Arts Bldg.

Dealers wanted wherever we are not now represented.

Columbia Records Will Fit Your Machine and Double Its Value to You

Increased Salaries

Greater Demand Than Ever for Trained Ad Writers and Managers. $1,200.00 to $6,000.00 a Year. More Proof of the Benefits of the World's Best Instruction System.

By GEORGE H. POWELL

The best argument in the world as to the superiority of the Powell System of Advertising Instruction by correspondence is the *large number* of *genuine, simon pure* testimonials I have for years been able to publish.

When I say that the Powell System is the only one endorsed by the great advertising publications of America, I have *genuine testimony* to prove it.

When I say that the large printers and publishers everywhere—men who do not know me personally, but by reputation—advise the ambitious to take *my* instruction, careful inquiry by the investigator will prove it.

When I say that clerks, mechanics, and business men everywhere are reaping large rewards from my help I have their letters in proof.

I have never faked "china nest egg" testimony because I am constantly doing so much good that I have more *real* recommendations than I am able to use at one time in print. *I don't omit addresses*, and always urge the prospective student to write and find out. Note these unsolicited testimonials, with their *late dates* (remember this ad is written early in June).

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn., June 12, 1907.

MR. GEORGE H. POWELL, New York City.

My dear Mr. Powell:—Enclosed please find $5.00 as fourth payment on my advertising course.

I must state that I am deriving much good from your course. The training is simply great. As a graduate from one of the leading Universities of this country, I am frank to state that your course of instruction gives a mental training that is ahead of anything taught in the Colleges. You are certainly to be congratulated in the systematic, painstaking way you conduct your course.

I shall want to make this work my profession and therefore wish to become better acquainted and stay in close touch with you. Very truly yours,

WM. S. KIENHOLZ,
319 Washington Ave., S. E.

SAN DIEGO, Cal., June 4, 1907.

GEO. H. POWELL,

Dear Sir and Teacher:—I wish to express gratitude for the great amount of good which I have gained through taking your course, and, while I am not making any practical use of it to speak of, I would not have missed taking same for twice the amount.

I can fully enjoy such an education now, and appreciate an artistic ad when I see one. And in this respect let me say that both your own ads, and those composed by Powell students are a never-ending pleasure to the lovers of true advertising art.

My business is constantly on the upward move, and I am now working hard to get to the place, financially, where I can begin a vigorous advertising campaign, and thus insure success through seeds planted by your efforts.

With best wishes for yourself and School, I remain as ever, Your grateful student,

(Signed) FRANK E. BUSER,
Tea and Coffee Routes, 643 Sixth St.

THE
INDEPENDENT PRINTING HOUSE
E. F. GRABILL, *Proprietor.*

GREENVILLE, Mich., May 28, 1907.

MR. GEORGE H. POWELL, New York, N. Y.

Dear Sir:—Have you on your list, available within 30 days, a graduate who is capable of taking charge of the advertising and window dressing for a department store? If so, will you please have him communicate direct with Mr. Henry Jacobson, care Jacobson's "Big Store," Greenville, Mich., using your name and mine.

About a year and a half ago I was an enrolled student in your school. Since that time I have become actively engaged in the newspaper business, and take pleasure in stating that the benefits derived from your course have been of great value to me. It has made it possible for me to talk intelligently and convincingly to our advertisers and through it our medium has become of greater value to them. Very respectfully,

C. E. GRABILL.

If you want to join the $5,000.00 ranks let me mail my two free books—Prospectus and "Net Results," laying bare the situation. Merely address me

GEORGE H. POWELL, 551 Metropolitan Annex, New York

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

Ainslee's for August

"The Magazine That Entertains"

The midsummer number of AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE will give a prominent place to the story by **Robert Hichens,** which began with the first instalment in July. The opening chapters introduce the reader to some of the characters and bring them to the scene of the story's action. The August instalment will fully develop the mystical atmosphere of the desert and Lady Wyverne will give readers some intense dramatic moments.

Elizabeth Duer is the author of the novelette, a story of the type which she knows so well how to write, full of life, clever dialogue and consummate characterization, and with a skilfully constructed plot. It is called *"The Cousin from Paris."*

One of the best stories of child interest that has been written in a long time will have a place in the August number. *"The Bisque Doll,"* by **Will Levington Comfort,** is a tale of profoundly pathetic interest leading up to a climax that is unrivaled for dramatic effect.

A humorous story that will be found irresistibly funny is **Elliott Flower's** *"The Automobile and the Pig."*

Nobody, so far, has been able to equal **Roy Norton's** Western tales in verisimilitude and human interest, and he will have a new one in *"The Grand Reunion."*

Robert E. MacAlarney's series of mystery stories under the title of *"The Chauffeur Crook"* will be continued.

Then there will be other short stories by **Owen Oliver, Carolyn Wells, Leo Crane** and **Joseph C. Lincoln,** two excellent essays and the usual discussion of theatrical and literary matters.

Price, per copy, 15c. Subscription, $1.80 per Year

AINSLEE MAGAZINE COMPANY, NEW YORK

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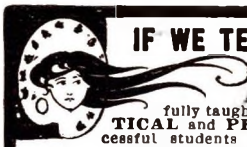

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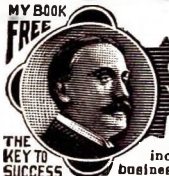

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We have just made arrangements whereby we are able to offer a valuable prize, to those who will copy this cartoon. **Take Your Pencil Now,** and copy this sketch on a common piece of paper, and send it to us today; and, if in the estimation of our Art Directors, it is even 40 per cent. as good as the original, we will mail to your address, **FREE OF CHARGE FOR SIX MONTHS,**

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This magazine is fully illustrated and contains special information pertaining to Illustrating, Cartooning, etc., and published for the benefit of those desirous of earning larger salaries. It is a Home Study magazine. There is positively **no money consideration** connected with this free offer. Copy this picture **now** and send it to us **today.**

Correspondence Institute of America, Box 971 Scranton, Pa.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

A5

Long Complete Novel by GEORGE BRONSON-HOWARD, Author of "Norroy," Will Appear in the September POPULAR.

VOLUME IX NUMBER 2

The Popular Magazine

AUGUST CONTENTS 1907

Monthly Publication Issued by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York

Entered at the New York Post Office as Second-Class Matter, under Act of Congress of March 2, 1879

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION $1.50 SINGLE COPIES 15 Cents

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The "Best" Tonic

For Dyspepsia

Loss of appetite is nature's first warning of indigestion, the forerunner of dyspepsia. This disease, like nervousness, is often due to irregular living, improper food and inattention to diet. The digestive organs are inert, the weakened membranes of the overtaxed stomach are unable to perform their functions, and the food you force yourself to eat distresses instead of nourishes. Nothing will do more to stimulate the appetite and aid digestion than

Pabst Extract
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Combining the rich food elements of pure barley malt with the tonic properties of choicest hops, the nourishment offered in this predigested form is welcomed by the weakest stomach, readily assimilated by the blood and its food for the nerves and muscles is quickly absorbed by the tissues. At the same time, the digestion of other foods is aided by promoting the flow of digestive juices, while the tonic properties of the hops create an appetite and tone up the system, thus assuring a speedy return of health.

Pabst Extract
The "Best" Tonic

creates an appetite, aids in the digestion of other foods, builds up the nerves and muscles of the weakened stomach and conquers dyspepsia. It brings strength to the weak and overworked, induces refreshing sleep and revives the tired brain.

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FREE PICTURE AND BOOK

Send us your name on a postal for our interesting booklet and "Baby's First Adventure" a beautiful picture of baby life. Both FREE. Address

PABST EXTRACT DEPT. "B1" Milwaukee, Wis.

Rockford, Ill.
It gives me pleasure to endorse your "Best" Tonic as the best malt extract I have used in my fourteen years practice. I have often prescribed it for my patients, but never was so fully convinced of its merits as when I tried it myself for dyspeptic and stomach troubles, from which I suffer, especially during the hot weather.
W. R. FRANKLIN, M D.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. IX. AUGUST, 1907. No. 2.

The Taming of Red Butte Western

By Francis Lynde

Author of "The King of Arcadia," "The Empire Builders," "The Grafters," Etc.

The building and operating of railroads in the far West is not accomplished without good hard fighting. Mr. Lynde has an intensely dramatic story to tell of a typical Western road which had come into the control of ex-cowmen and gulch miners and the driftwood of humanity; and how in the search for a man to "civilize" the road the choice fell upon a self-confessed coward, a good-living, right-thinking, upright, but hitherto untried man who had always been content to take the path of least resistance. The story is an illustration of how action, bodily action, will shape the mind and endow it with earnestness and strength and that nameless something that gives a man the mastery of his faculties.

(A Complete Novel)

I.

COLLARS-AND-CUFFS.

THE windows of the division headquarters of the Pacific Southwestern at Copah look northward over bald, brown mesas, and across the Pannikin to the eroded cliffs of the Uintah Hills. The prospect, lacking artistic atmosphere and color, is crude and harshly aggressive; and to Lidgerwood, glooming thoughtfully out upon it through the weather-worn panes scratched and scarred by many desert sand-storms, it was peculiarly depressing.

"No, Ford; I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I am not the man you are looking for," he said, turning back to the broad-shouldered, square-jawed figure swinging gently in the division superintendent's pivot-chair. "I've had a week since you wired me, and I have been looking the ground over while waiting for you to come on from New York. It isn't in me to flog the Red Butte Western into a well-behaved division of the P. S-W."

"I know; that is what you say—what you've been saying, with variations, for the last half-hour. Put it in ten words, Howard; why isn't it in you?"

"Because the job asks for gifts that I don't possess. At the present transition moment, the Red Butte is the most utterly demoralized three hundred miles of railroad west of the Rockies. There is no discipline, there is no respect for authority; there is nothing like system. The men run the road as if it

were a private venture of their own. Add to these conditions the fact that the red desert is a country where the ready revolver is the arbitrator of all disputes, and you have the combination your new superintendent will have to go up against."

"Yes, I know all that," was the vice-president's reply. "The road and the country need civilizing 'a whole lot,' as Prisbie would say. That is one of the reasons why I am offering you the superintendency of the Red Butte Western. You are long on civilization, Howard."

"Not on the compulsory kind. Now, if you could materialize a man like Spearman's 'Whispering Smith,' and send him over to Angels as your superintendent, something might come of it. But I'm no scrapper."

To the eye of appraisal, Lidgerwood's personal appearance bore out the peaceable assertion to the final well-groomed detail. Compactly built and neatly, brawn and bulk were conspicuously lacking: and the thin, intellectual face was made to appear still thinner by the pointed cut of the closely trimmed brown beard. The eyes were alert and steadfast, but they had a trick of seeming to look beyond, rather than directly at, the visual object. Nine guesses out of ten would have classified him as a man of leisure: a student, an artist, or a dilettante: and he unconsciously dressed the part.

In his outspoken moments, which were rare, he was given to railing against the fate which had made him a round peg in a square hole: a technical engineer and a man of action, when his earlier tastes and inclinations had drawn him in other directions. But the artistic nicety, which was his chief characteristic, had made him a master in his unchosen profession: as none knew better than Mr. Stuart Ford, first vice-president of the Pacific Southwestern System.

So now the vice-president was locking his hands over one knee, and the swing of the pivot-chair was becoming a rhythmic measure for the crisp sentences, while he spoke as a man and a comrade, and not at all as a railroad magnate holding out the bait of promotion to a reluctant aspirant.

"Let me tell you, Howard—we've had a savage fight in the Street absorbing these same demoralized three hundred miles. You know why we had to have them. If the Transcontinental had beaten us, it meant that our competitor would build over here from Jack's Cañon, divide the Copah business with us, and have a line three hundred miles nearer to the Nevada gold-fields than ours."

"I understand," said Lidgerwood; and the vice-president went on:

"We began buying quietly, with the stock at nineteen. Since the failure of the Red Butte 'pocket' mines, the road and the country it traverses have been practically given over to the cowmen, the gulch miners, the rustlers, and the drift from the big camps elsewhere. In New York and on the Exchange, Red Butte Western was regarded as an exploded cartridge, and nobody wanted the empty shell. Then it dawned upon a few of us that it offered a ready-made jump of three hundred miles toward Tonopah and Goldfield, and we began to feel the market for the control. That was the tip the Transcontinental people had been waiting for, and in three days the fight was on."

Lidgerwood nodded. "I kept up with it in the newspapers," he said.

"The newspapers didn't print the whole story," was the curt rejoinder; "not by a good many turns of the thumbscrew. Howard, there were eight nights along toward the last when I never had my clothes off. When the stock jumped to par and beyond, our own crowd went back on me: and when it passed the two-hundred mark, Adair and I were fighting it practically alone. Even President Brewster lost his nerve, and wanted to make a hedging dicker with the Transcontinental just before we swung over the summit with the final five hundred shares we needed."

Lidgerwood nodded again. "Mr. Brewster is a level-headed Westerner. He doubtless knew to the dotting of an 'i' the particular brand of trouble

you two expansionists were so eager to acquire."

"He did. He has a copper property somewhere in the vicinity of Angels. He contended that we were buying two streaks of rust and a right-of-way in the red desert; that the man didn't live who could bring order out of the chaos that bad management and a peculiarly tough country had superimposed upon the Red Butte Western. That's where I had him bested, Howard. All through the hot fight I kept saying to myself that I knew the man."

"But you *don't* know him, Stuart—that is the weak link in the chain." Lidgerwood turned away to the scratched window-panes and the crude prospect, dimmed now by the gathering shadows of the early evening. In the yards below, a long freight-train was pulling in from the West, with a switch-engine chasing it to begin the cutting out of the locals. Over in the Red Butte yard an engine, turning on the table, swept a wide arc in the graying dust with the beam of its electric headlight. Through the half-opened door into the despatcher's room came the diminished chattering of the telegraph-instruments—this, with the jangling clamor of trains and engines, made the silence in the private office more insistent.

When Lidgerwood faced about again, after the interval of abstraction, his eyes had fine lines at the corners, and his words came laboriously.

"I suppose I know enough, technically, to do what you want done with the three hundred miles of demoralization. But the Red Butte proposition asks for more—it asks for something that I can't give it. Stuart, there is a yellow streak in me that you seem never to have discovered. I am a coward."

The ghost of an incredulous smile wrinkled about the tired eyes of the man in the swinging chair.

"You put it in the proper phrase—with your customary exactitude," he assented slowly. "We have known each other, boy and man, since the swimming-hole days in the old Sangamon River; certainly I hadn't discovered it."

"It is true, nevertheless; God help me, it is only too shamefully true! No"—when the listener would have protested—"no, hear me through, and then judge for yourself. What I'm going to say to you I have never said to any living man, but it is your right to hear it. I've had the symptoms all my life, Stuart. You may remember how you used to fight my battles at school—you thought I took the bullying of the bigger boys because I wasn't strong enough to hold up my end. That wasn't it—it was physical fear, pure and simple. Are you listening?"

The man in the chair made a sign of assent. He was of those to whom fear—the fear of what other men might do to him—was a thing as yet unlearned, and he was trying to attain the point of view of one to whom it seemed very real.

"It followed me up to manhood, and after a time I found myself deferring to it—taking always the path of the least resistance. As twentieth-century civilization is decently peaceable, it is not so very difficult to dodge the personal collisions with the scrappers. I have dodged them, for the greater part, paying the price as I went along. I'm paying the price at the present moment—this is the fourth time I've had to refuse a good job that carried with it the slugging chance."

The vice-president's heavy eyebrows slanted in questioning surprise.

"You knew in advance that you were going to turn me down? Yet you came two thousand miles to meet me here; and you admit you've gone the length of looking the ground over."

Lidgerwood's smile was mirthless.

"Yes; one of the regularly recurring phases of the disease manifests itself in a frenzied determination to break away and do something desperate—to jump into the thick of things, and to be flung out of the mill, once for all, a living, self-respecting unit in the bunch, or a permanently dead coward. I can't take the plunge; I know beforehand that I can't. . . . Which brings us down to Copah, the present exigency, and the fact that you'll have to look farther

along for your Red Butte man-queller. The marrow isn't in my bones, Stuart. It was left out in the making."

The vice-president was still a young man, and he was confronting a problem that nettled him. He had been calling himself a fair judge of men, and hitherto the event had proved that he was. Yet here was a man whom he had known intimately from boyhood, who was but just now revealing a totally unsuspected weakness.

"You say you've been dodging the scraps—how do you know you wouldn't buck up when the real pinch comes?" he demanded.

"Because the pinch came—once, and —I failed, most miserably. It was over a year ago, and I can't think calmly about it, even at this distance. You'll understand when I say that it cost me the love of the one woman in the world."

The vice-president did understand. Being a married lover himself, he knew the depth of the abyss into which Lidgerwood was looking. His voice was as sympathetic as a woman's when he said:

"Ease your mind and tell me about it, if you can, Howard. It's barely possible that you are not the best judge of your own act."

There was something akin to the defiance of despair in Lidgerwood's manner when he went on.

"It was in the Montana mountains. I was going in to do a bit of expert work for Mr. ——, for her father; and, incidentally, I was escorting her and her mother to a meeting-point with a Yellowstone coaching-party of their friends. We had to drive forty miles from the railroad, and there were six of us in the stage; the two women and four men. On the way the talk turned upon stage-robbers and hold-ups. With the fact no more than the thousandth possibility, I could be an ass and a braggart: I remember that I was even tempted to be sarcastic at the expense of the armed victim who lets himself be robbed without striking a blow. You can guess what followed?"

"I'd rather hear you tell it," said the listener at Superintendent Leckhard's desk. "Go on."

Lidgerwood waited until the switching engine, with pop-valve open and screaming like a liberated devil of the noise-pit, had passed.

"Three miles beyond our supper station we had our hold-up in sober earnest; the cut-and-dried, melodramatic sort of thing they put on at the cheap theaters: with a couple of Winchesters poking through the scrub-pines to represent the gang in hiding, and one lone, crippled desperado to come down to the footlights in the speaking part. Of course it struck every soul of us with the shock of the totally unexpected. It was a rank anachronism, twenty-five years out of date in that particular locality. Before anybody realized what was happening, the cripple had us lined up in a row beside the stage, and I was reaching for the stars as anxiously as the little Jew hat salesman, who was swearing by all the patriarchs that the twenty-dollar bill in his right-hand vest pocket was his entire fortune."

"Naturally," said Ford. "You needn't rawhide yourself specially for that. You've been West often enough and long enough at a time to know the rules of the game—not to be frivolous when the other fellow has the drop on you."

"Wait," said Lidgerwood. "One minute later the cripple had us sized up for what we were. The other three men were not armed—I was, and she knew it. Also the cripple knew it. He tapped the gun bulging in my pocket, and said, in good-natured contempt: 'Watch out that don't go off and hurt you some time when you ain't lookin', stranger.' Ford, I think I must have been hypnotized. I stood there like a frozen image, and let that crippled cow-rustler rob those two women—take the rings from their fingers!"

"Oh, hold on; there's another side to that, too," the vice-president began; but Lidgerwood would not listen.

"No," he protested; "don't try to find excuses for me; there were none. The fellow gave me every chance;

turned his back on me as an absolutely negligible factor while he was going through the others. I'm quick enough when I have to be; and I can shoot, too, when the thing to be shot at isn't a human being. But to save my soul from everlasting torments I couldn't go through the simple motions of pulling the pistol from my pocket and dropping that fellow in his tracks—couldn't, and didn't."

"Well?" said Ford, when the self-accused culprit turned again to the dusk-darkened window.

"That is all. Of course, she told me what she thought of me; told me many times and in many different ways. For the few days she waited at her father's mine for the coming of the coaching-party she used me for a door-mat, as I deserved. That was a year ago last spring. It isn't needful to say that I haven't tried to see her since."

The vice-president reached up and snapped the key of the electric bulb over the desk, and the lurking shadows in the corners of the room fled away.

"Sit down," he said curtly; and when Lidgerwood had found a chair: "You say that is all. Is it all? Do you mean to go on leaving it up in the air like that?"

"I left it in the air a year ago last spring. I can't pull it down now."

"Yes, you can. You haven't exaggerated the conditions on the Red Butte line a single iota. As you say, the operating force is as godless a lot of outlaws as ever ran trains or ditched them. They all know that the road has been bought and sold, and they are looking for trouble, and are ready to help make it. If you could fire them as a body, you couldn't replace them—the red desert having nothing to offer as a dwelling-place for good men; and this they know, too. Howard, I'm telling you right here and now that it will require a higher brand of courage to go over to Angels and manhandle the Red Butte Western than it would to shoot a dozen highwaymen, if every individual one of the dozen had the drop on you!"

Lidgerwood left his chair and paced the narrow limits of the private office for five full minutes before he said:

"You mean that you are still giving me the chance to make good over yonder in the red desert—after what I have told you?"

"I do; only I'll make it more binding—it was optional with you before; it's a sheer necessity now. You've *got* to go."

Again Lidgerwood took time to consider, tramping the floor with his head down and his hands in the pockets of the correct coat. In the end he yielded, as the vice-president's subjects were commonly forced to yield.

"I'll go, if you still insist upon it," was the slowly spoken decision. "There will doubtless be plenty of trouble, and I shall probably show the yellow streak, as usual—for the last time, I guess. It's the kind of an outfit to kill a coward for the pure pleasure of it, if I'm not mistaken."

"Well," said the vice-president calmly, "I'm half-inclined to think that you need a little killing, Howard. Don't you think so?"

A gray look came into Lidgerwood's face.

"If you stand it upon that leg, I don't know but you are right."

"I know I'm right. Now that you are fairly committed, sit down and let me give you an idea of what you'll find at Angels in the way of a headquarters outfit."

It was an hour later, and the gong of the station dining-room was adding its hideous clamor to the grinding roar of the incoming passenger-train from Green Butte when the vice-president concluded his outline sketch of the Red Butte conditions.

"Of course you understand that you will have a free hand; you'll hire and discharge as you see fit, and there will be no appeal from your decision. The one exception is Gridley, the master mechanic. Nominally, he will be under your orders; but if it should come to blows, you couldn't fire him. In the regular routine he will report to the superintendent of motive power of the System at Denver, but, as it happens,

his ladder reaches still higher up—to the P. S-W. board of directors."

"How is that?" inquired Lidgerwood.

"It's a family affair. He is a widower, and his wife was a sister of the Van Kensingtons. He got his job through the family influence, and he'll hold it in the same way. But you won't have any trouble with him. He's a brute in his own somewhat peculiar fashion; but when it comes to handling shopmen and keeping the engines in service, he can't be beat."

"That is all I shall ask of him," said the new superintendent. "Anything else?"—looking at his watch.

"Yes; there is one other thing. I spoke of Hallock, the man you will find holding down the job you are going to take. He was Cumberley's chief clerk, and, long before Cumberley resigned, Hallock was the superintendent of the road in everything but the name and the place on the pay-roll. Naturally, he thought he ought to be considered when we climbed into the saddle, and he wrote President Brewster to that end. He happens to be a New Yorker—like Gridley; and again like Gridley, he has a friend at court. Magnus knows him, and recommended him for the superintendency; and I had to turn him down. I'm telling you this so you will be easy with him—as easy as you can. I don't know him personally, but if you can keep him——"

"I'll be only too glad to keep him, if he knows his business, and will stay," was Lidgerwood's reply. Then, with another glance at his watch: "Shall we go up-town to the hotel and get dinner? Afterward you can give me your notion in the large about the future extension of the Red Butte Western, and I'll order out the car and an engine and go to my place. A man can die but once: and maybe I can make shift to live long enough to set a few stakes for some better fellow to drive. Let's go."

At ten o'clock that night Engine 266, Williams, engineer, and Blackmar, fireman, was chalked up on the Red Butte Western roundhouse bulletin-board to go West at midnight with the new superintendent's service-car.

Svenson, the caller, who brought the order from the Copah despatcher's office, unloaded his news upon the circle of Red Butte engineers, firemen, and roundhouse roustabouts lounging on the benches in the tool-room, and speculating morosely on the probable changes which the new management would bring to pass.

"Ve bane got dem new boss, Ay voan tha tal you fallers," he drawled.

"Who is he?" demanded Williams, who had been looking on sourly while the engine-despatcher chalked his name on the board for the night run with the service-car.

"Ay coo-edn't tal you his name. Bote he is dem young faller bane goin' round hare dees two, t'ree days, lukin' lak preacher out of a yob. Voo-edn't dat yar you?"

Williams rose up to his full height of six-feet-two, and flung his hands upward in a gesture that was more expressive than many oaths.

"*Collars-and-Cuffs*, by God!" he said.

II.

ANGELS.

Crosswater Gap—so named because the high pass over which the railroad finds its way is anything but a gap, and, save when the winter's snows are melting, there is no water within a day's faring—was in sight from the loopings of the eastern approach when Lidgerwood sat down to a buffet breakfast prepared and served by Matsudi Takowari, the Japanese car-cook, picked up between dinner and leaving-time the night before in Copah.

Since early dawn the new superintendent had been up and out on the observation-platform of the service-car, noting—this time with the eye of mastership—the endless miles of steel unreeling backward to the valleys under the drumming trucks.

To a disheartening extent, the Red Butte demoralization included the

permanent way. Originally a good track, with heavy steel, easy grades, and mathematically alined curves, the road had been allowed to lapse under poor supervision, and the short-handing of the section gangs. Lacking careful and persistent surfacing, the best ballast will sink at the rail-joints; and it is a section-foreman's weakness to spoil the mathematical curve by working it back, little by little, into the tangent.

Lidgerwood's comment fell into speech. "About the first man we need is an engineer who won't be too toplofty to get down and squint curves with the section-bosses," he was saying, when he went in to test Matsudi's cookery.

At the summit station, where the line leaves the Pannikin basin to plunge into the western desert, there was a delay. Lidgerwood was still at breakfast when Bradford, the conductor, black-shirted, slouch-hatted, and looking much more like a ranch-foreman than a captain of trains, lounged in to explain that there was a hot box under the 266's tender. Bradford was not of the faction of discontent, but the spirit of morose insubordination was in the air, and he spoke gruffly. Hence, with the flint and steel thus provided, the spark was promptly evoked.

"Were the boxes overhauled before you left Copah?" snapped the new boss.

Bradford did not know, and the manner of his answer implied that he did not care.

"How much time have we on 201?" was the next demand; 201 being the west-bound passenger-train overtaken and passed in the small hours of the morning by the lighter and faster special.

"Thirty minutes, here," growled the ex-cowman; after which he took himself off, as if he considered the incident closed.

Fifteen minutes later Lidgerwood finished his breakfast and went back to his post on the rear platform. A glance over the railing showed him the crew still working on the heated journal. Another to the rear picked up the passenger-train storming around the loopings of the eastern approach to the summit. There was a small problem impending for the division-despatcher at Angels, and the superintendent stood aloof to see how it would be handled.

It was handled rather indifferently. The passenger-train was pulling in at the summit when Bradford asked for his clearance, got it, and gave Williams the signal to go. Lidgerwood went into the car and consulted the time-table hanging in the open compartment.

Train 201 had no dead time at Crosswater; hence, if the ten-minute interval between trains moving in the same direction was to be preserved, the passenger would have to be held.

Lidgerwood had a railroad martinet's fury against time-killing on regular trains, and his hand was on the whistle-cord when he looked back and saw that the passenger-train had made only the momentary time-card stop, and was coming on.

It was a small breach of discipline, common enough even on well-managed railways when the leading train can be trusted to increase the distance interval. Lidgerwood drew a chair out in line with one of the rear observation-windows, and sat down to mark the event.

Pitching over the hilltop summit within a minute of each other, the two trains raced down the first few curving inclines almost as one. Mile after mile was measured, and still the special seemed to be towing the passenger at the end of an invisible but dangerously short drag-rope.

The superintendent began to grow uneasy. On the tangents the following train seemed to be rushing onward to a certain rear-end collision with the one-car special; and, where the line swerved to right or left around the billowing hills, the pursuing smoke-trail rose above the hill-shoulders near and threatening.

Lidgerwood got up and took the time-table out of its pocket frame. A brief comparison of miles and minutes explained the effect without excusing the cause. 201's schedule from the summit

to the desert level was very fast; and Williams, nursing his hot box, either could not, or would not, increase his lead.

Two tugs at the air cord brought Bradford from the engine-cab to obey the summons. The memory of the conductor's gruff replies still lingered with Lidgerwood, and his reprimand was sharp.

"Do you call this railroading?" he rasped, pointing backward to the menace. "Don't you know we're on 201's time?"

Bradford scowled in surly antagonism.

"That blamed hot box——" he began; but Lidgerwood cut him off short.

"The hot box has nothing to do with the case. You are not hired to take chances, or to hold out regular trains. Go forward and tell your engineer to speed up, and get out of the way."

"I got my clearance at the summit, and I ain't despatchin' trains on this jerk-water railroad," observed the conductor coolly. Then he added, a shade less belligerently: "Williams can't speed up. That housin' under the tender is about ready to set the woods afire again, right now."

Lidgerwood examined the time-card afresh. It was twenty miles farther along to the next telegraph-station, and he heaped up wrath against the day of wrath for a despatcher who would turn two trains loose and out of his reach for thirty hazardous mountain miles under such critical conditions.

Bradford, looking on sullenly, mistook the new boss' frown for more to follow, and was moving away. Lidgerwood pointed to a chair with a curt, "Sit down!

"You say that you have your clearance, and that you are not despatching trains," he went on evenly. "Neither fact relieves you of your responsibility. It was your duty to make sure that the despatcher fully understood the situation at Crosswater, and to refuse to pull out ahead of the passenger without something more definite than a formal clearance-order. Weren't you taught that? Where did you learn to run trains?"

It was an opening for hard words, but they did not enter. Something in the steady, businesslike tone, or in the overlooking eyes, turned Bradford the potential mutineer into Bradford the possible partizan.

"I reckon we are needin' a *rodeo* over here on this jerk-water mighty bad, Mr. Lidgerwood," he said half-humorously. "I reckon about half of us ain't got the sure-enough railroad brand onto us. But Lord love you! this little pasear we're makin' down the hill ain't anything! That's the old 210 chasin' us with the passenger, and she couldn't catch Bat Williams and the '66 in a month o' Sundays if we didn't have that doggoned spavined leg under the tender."

Lidgerwood smiled in spite of himself, and wondered at what page in the railroad primer he would have to begin with these men of the camps and the round-ups.

"But it isn't railroading," he insisted, meeting his first pupil half-way. "You might do this thing ninety-nine times without paying for it, and the hundredth time something would turn up to slow or to stop the leading train, and there you are."

"Sure!" said the ex-cowman quite heartily. "Now, if there should happen to be——"

The sentence was never finished. The special, lagging a little, was rounding one of the long hill curves to the left. Suddenly the air-brakes ground sharply upon the wheels, shrill whistles from the 266 screamed the stop-signal, and past the end of the slowing car a trackman ran frantically up the line toward the swiftly approaching passenger, yelling and swinging his stripped coat like a madman.

Lidgerwood caught a fleeting glimpse of a section-gang's green "slow" flag lying toppled over between the rails a hundred feet to the rear. Measuring the distance of the onrushing passenger as against the life-saving seconds remaining, he called to Bradford to jump, and ran forward to drag the Jap out

of his galley, to fling him from the nearest vestibule, and to follow in a flying leap that carried him clear of the impending wreck.

Happily there was no wreck, though the margin of safety was the narrowest. Williams stuck to his post in the cab of the 266, releasing the brakes and running as far as he dared upon the loosened timbers of the culvert for which the section-gang's slow-flag was out.

Carter, the engineer of the passenger-train, jumped; but his fireman was of better mettle, and stayed with the machine, sliding the wheels with the driver-jams, and pumping sand on the rails up to the moment when the shuddering mass of iron and steel thrust its pilot under the trucks of Lidgerwood's car, lifted them, dropped them, and drew back sullenly under the grip of the reverse and the recoil of the brake mechanism.

It was an opportunity for eloquence of the explosive sort, and when the dust settled the trainmen and trackmen were evidently expecting it. But in crises like this the new superintendent was at his self-contained best.

Instead of swearing at the men, he gave his orders quietly, and with the brisk certainty of one who knows his business. The passenger-train was to keep ten minutes off its own time until the next siding was passed, making up beyond that point if its running orders permitted. The special was to proceed on 201's time to the first siding, where it would side-track and let the passenger precede it.

Bradford was in the cab of the 266 when Williams eased his engine and car over the unsafe culvert and sped on around the hill curves, and so down into the wide valley plain of the red desert.

"Turn it loose, Andy," said the big engineer, when the requisite number of miles of silence had been ticked off by the space-devouring wheels. "What-all do you think of Mister Collars-and-Cuffs by this time?"

Andy Bradford took a leisurely minute to cut a chewing-cube from his pocket plug of black tobacco.

"Well, first dash out o' the box, I allowed he was some locoed—jumped me like I was a jack-rabbit for takin' a clearance under Jim Carter's nose. Then we got down to business, and I was beginnin' to get onto his gait a little when the green flag butted in."

"Gait fits the laundry part of him?" suggested Williams.

"Not exactly. I ain't much on systems and sure things, Bat, but I can make out to guess a guess once in a while, when I have to. If that little tailor-made man don't get his finger mashed, or something, and have to go home, things are goin' to happen on this little old cow-trail of a railroad."

"What sort o' things?" demanded Williams.

"Now, your guess is as good as mine. They'll spell trouble for the amatoors, I reckon. That's my ante."

Williams let the 266 out another notch, hung out of his window to look back at the smoking hot box, and, in the fulness of time, said: "Think he's got the sand, Andy?"

"This time you can search me with a fine-tooth comb," was the slow reply. "Sizin' him up one side and down the other when he called me back to pull my ear, I said: 'No, my young friend: you're a bluffer—the kind that'll put up his hands quick when the bluff's called.' Afterward I wasn't so blamed sure. One kind o' sand he's got to a dead certainty. When he saw what was due to happen back yonder, he told me '23,' all right, but he took time to hike back and yank the Jap cook out o' the car kitchen before he turned his own little handspring."

The big engineer nodded, but he was still unconvinced when he stopped for the siding at Last Chance; and, after the fireman had dropped off to set the switch for the following train, he put in his word.

"That kind of sand is all right in God's country, Andy. But out here in the nearder edges of hell you got to know how to fight with pitchforks, and such other tools as come handy. The new boss may be that kind of a scrapper, but he sure don't look it. You

know as well as I do that men like Rufford, and Cat Biggs, and Red-Light Sammy'll eat him alive just for the fun of it, if he can't make out to throw lead quicker'n they do. And that ain't saying anything about the hobo outfit he'll have to go up against on this make-b'lieve railroad."

"No," said Bradford, ruminating thoughtfully. And then, by way of rounding out the subject: "Here's hopin' his nerve is as good as his clothes! I don't love a Mongolian any better'n you do, Bat; but the way he hustled to save that brown feller's skin sort o' got next to me. Says I: 'A man that'll do that won't go round huntin' a chance to kick a fice dog just because the fice don't happen to be a blooded bull-terrier."

Williams, brawny and broad-chested, leaned against his box, his bare arms folded and his short pipe at the disputatious angle.

"He'd better have nerve, or get some," he commented. "Totherways, it's him for an early wooden overcoat and a trip back home in the express-car. After which, let me tell you, Andy, that man Ford'll sift this cussed country through a flour-shaker but what he'll cinch the outfit that does it."

Back in the service-car Lidgerwood was sitting quietly in the doorway, smoking his delayed after-breakfast cigar, and timing the upcoming passenger-train, watch in hand.

Carter was ten minutes to the second behind his schedule when the train thundered past on the main track, and Lidgerwood pocketed his watch with a smile of satisfaction. It was the first small victory in the campaign of reform, and he had won it.

Later, however, when the special was once more in motion westward, the desert laid hold upon him with a grip that first benumbs, then breeds dull rage, and finally makes men mad.

Mile after mile the glistening rails sped backward into a shimmering haze of red dust. The glow of the breathless forenoon was like the reek of a furnace. To right and left the great treeless plain rose to bare buttes backed by still barer mountains. Let the train race as it would, there was always the same eye-wearying prospect. Only the blazing sun swung from side to side with the slow veerings of the track; what answered for a horizon seemed never to change, never to move.

Also, the great waste was devoid of life. At long intervals a siding, sometimes with its waiting train, but oftener empty and deserted, slid into view and out again. Still less frequently a telegraph-station, with its red, iron-roofed office, its water-tank cars and pumping machinery, and its high-fenced corral and loading chute, moved up out of the distorting haze ahead and was lost in the dusty mirages to the rear. But apart from the crews of the waiting trains, and now and then the desert-sobered face of some telegraph-operator staring from his window at the passing special, there were no signs of life; no cattle upon the hills, no loungers on the station platforms.

Lidgerwood had crossed the waterless, lifeless plain twice within the week; but both times in a Pullman, with human beings to fill the nearer field of vision. Now, however, the desert's heat, its stillness, its vacancy, its pitiless horizons claimed him as their own. He wondered that he had been impatient with the men it bred. The wonder now was rather if human virtue of any temper could long withstand the blasting touch of so great and awful a desolation.

It was past noon when the bowllike basin, in which the train seemed to circle helplessly without gaining upon the terrifying horizons, began to lose its harshest features. Little by little the tumbled hills drew nearer, and the red sand-dust of the road-bed gave place to broken rock. Patches of gray, sun-dried mountain-grass appeared on the nearer hill-slopes, and in the arroyos trickling threads of water glistened, or, at the worst, paths of damp sand hinted at the moisture underneath.

Lidgerwood began to breathe again, and when the shrill whistle of the locomotive signaled the approach to the division headquarters, he was thankful

that the builders of Angels had pitched their tents and driven their stakes in the desert's edge, rather than in its heart.

Truly, Angels was not much to be thankful for, as the exile from the East admitted when he looked out upon it from his office windows in the second story of the "Crow's Nest," the railroad headquarters. A many-tracked railroad yard, flanked on one side by the repair-shops, roundhouse, and coal-chutes; and on the other by a straggling town of bare and commonplace exteriors, unpainted, unfenced, treeless, shadeless, and wind-swept; Angels stood badly for what it was—a mere stopping-place in transit for the Red Butte Western.

The new superintendent turned his back upon the town and the depressing aspect of it and laid his hand upon the latch of the door opening into the despatcher's room. There was a thing to be said about the reckless bunching of trains out of reach of the wires; and it might as well be said now as later. But at the moment of door-opening, Lidgerwood was made to realize that a tall, boxlike contrivance in the corner of the office was a desk, and that it was inhabited.

The man who rose up to greet him was bearded, heavy-shouldered, and hollow-eyed, and he was past middle age. Green cardboard cones protecting his shirt-sleeves, and a shade of the same material vizoring the sunken eyes, were the only clerkly suggestions about him. Since he merely stood up and ran his fingers through his thick black hair with no more than an abstracted "Good afternoon," Lidgerwood was left to guess at his identity.

"You are Mr. Hallock?" said the new boss, without offering his hand. The high, boxlike desk forbade it.

"Yes." The answer was neither antagonistic nor placatory; it was simply colorless.

"My name is Lidgerwood. You have heard of my appointment?"

Again the colorless "Yes."

Lidgerwood saw no good end to be subserved by postponing the inevitable.

"Mr. Ford spoke to me about you last night. He told me that you were Mr. Cumberley's chief clerk, and that for some time you have been the acting superintendent of the road. Do you want to stay on as my lieutenant?"

For a long minute, so long that the loose-lipped mouth under the untrimmed mustaches seemed to have lost the power of speech, Hallock said nothing. But when the words came they were shorn of all euphemism.

"I suppose I ought to tell you to go to hell, put on my coat, and walk out," said this most singular of all railway subordinates. "By all the rules of the game, this job belongs to me. What I've gone through to earn it you nor any other man will ever know. If I stay, I'll wish I hadn't; and so will you. You'd better give me a time-check and let me go."

Lidgerwood walked to the window and once more stared out upon the dreary aspect of Angels. When he turned back to the man in the rifle-pit desk, he could not have told why he did not take Hallock at his word—but he did not.

"If I can't quite match your frankness, Mr. Hallock, it's because my early education was neglected. But I'll say this: that I quite appreciate your just disappointment, and that I want you to stay."

"You'll be sorry for it, if I do," was the blunt rejoinder.

"Not because you will do anything to make me sorry, I am sure," said the superintendent in his evenest tone. And then, as if the matter were quite definitely settled: "I'd like to have a word with the day despatcher—Callahan, isn't it? May I trouble you to call him in?"

III.

THE OUTLAWS.

For the first few weeks the Red Butte Western, and its nerve center, Angels, took Lidgerwood as a joke perpetrated upon a primitive country and its people by some one of the Eastern

railway magnates who had a broad sense of humor.

During this period the chuckling good nature of the Red Butte rank and file, and of the Angelic soldiers of fortune who, though not upon the company's pay-rolls, still lived indirectly upon the company's bounty, was imperturbable. The red desert grinned like the famed Cheshire cat when a west-bound train brought sundry boxes and trunks said to contain the new boss' wardrobe. It laughed long and uproariously when it became noised about that the company carpenters and fitters were installing a bath, and other civilizing and softening appliances, in the closet next to the superintendent's sleeping-room.

Lidgerwood slept in the Crow's Nest —so named for the curious square signal-tower rising above the despatcher's room—with only a thin board partition between him and his office, and with a telegraph relay, cut into the despatcher's wire, clicking the news of the line from its shelf at the bed's head at all hours of the night.

Sometimes the wire gossiped, and minimized echoes of the Homeric laughter trickled through the relay in the small hours; as when Ruby Creek asked the night despatcher if it were true that the new boss slept in what translated itself in the laborious Morse of the Ruby Creek operator as "pijjimmies."

At the tar-paper-covered, iron-roofed "hotel," where he took his meals, Lidgerwood had a table to himself, shared at times by McCloskey, the train-master, and at others by breezy young Jack Benson, the engineer whom Ford had sent, at Lidgerwood's request, to put new life into the track force and to make the preliminary surveys for a possible western extension.

When the new superintendent had guests, the long table on the opposite side of the room restrained itself. When he ate alone, Maggie, the fiery-eyed, heavy-handed table-girl who ringed his plate with the semicircle of bird-bath dishes, stood between him and the men who were still regarding him as a joke. And since Maggie's displeasure manifested itself in cold coffee and tough cuts of the beef, the long table made its most excruciating jests broadly impersonal.

On the line, and in the roundhouse and the shops, the joke was far too good to be muzzled. The nickname "Collars-and-Cuffs" became classical; and once, when Branigan and the 117 were ordered out on the service-car, the Irishman wore the highest celluloid collar he could find in Angels, eking out the clownery with a pair of huge wickerware cuffs which had once seen service as the covering of a pair of Maraschino bottles.

Later, Buck Tryon, ordered out on the same duty, went so far as to decorate his engine headlight with festoonings of red and white calico: the calico being the nearest approach to bunting obtainable at Schleisinger's emporium, two doors beyond Red-Light Sammy's house of call.

All of which was harmless, one would say, however much it might be subversive of dignified discipline. Lidgerwood knew: the jests were too broad to be missed. But he ignored them completely, rather thankful for the laughing interlude which gave him the coveted opportunity to study the field before the real battle should begin.

That a battle would have to be fought was evident enough, and Gridley, the master mechanic, who had been friendly with the new superintendent from the first, assured Lidgerwood that he was losing ground by not beginning it at once.

"You've got to take a club to these hoboes before you can ever hope to make railroad men of them, Mr. Lidgerwood," was Gridley's oft-repeated advice; and the fact that the master mechanic urged the beginning of the conflict made Lidgerwood delay it. Why, he could not have explained. The advice was sound, and the man who gave it was friendly and apparently disinterested. But prejudices and prepossessions are sometimes as strong as they are inexplicable; and while Lidgerwood accused himself of injustice

toward the master mechanic, the feeling of repulsion, dating back to his first impression of the man, died hard.

On the other hand, there was a prepossession, quite as unreasoning, for Hallock. There was absolutely nothing in the chief clerk to inspire liking; on the contrary, while he attended to his duties and carried out Lidgerwood's instructions with the unvarying exactness of a mechanical automaton, his attitude toward the world at large was at best passively antagonistic. As the chief subaltern on the superintendent's small staff he was efficient and well-nigh invaluable. But as a man, Lidgerwood felt that he might easily be regarded as an enemy whose designs could never be fathomed or prefigured.

In addition to his singular manner, which was an abrupt challenge to all comers, there was an air of mystery about Hallock that no one seemed to be able to dispel.

McCloskey, the train-master, who had worked under him for the better part of a year before Lidgerwood's advent, confessed that he knew the chief clerk only as a man in authority and exceedingly hard to please. Questioned more closely by Lidgerwood, McCloskey added that Hallock was married; that after the first few months in Angels his wife, a strikingly handsome young woman, had disappeared; and that since her disappearance Hallock had lived, "bached," in two rooms over the freight-station—rooms which no one save himself ever entered.

These, and similar bits of local history, were mere gatherings by the way for the superintendent, picked up while the huge joke was running its course. In the meantime he was forced to admit that he was not breaching any of the strongholds of undiscipline.

Orders, regarded by trained railroad men as immutable as the laws of the Medes and Persians, were still interpreted as loosely as the casual suggestions of a bystander. Rules were made, only to be coolly ignored when they chanced to conflict with some train crew's desire to make time or to kill it. Directed to account for coal and oil used, the enginemen good-naturedly forged reports and the storekeepers O. K.'d them. Instructed to keep a record of all material used, the trackmen scattered more spikes than they drove, made firewood of the ties, and underpinned the section-houses with new steel rails.

In such a condition of affairs, track and train troubles were the rule rather than the exception; and it was a Red Butte Western boast that the fire was never drawn under the wrecking-train engines. For the first few weeks Lidgerwood let McCloskey answer the "hurry calls" to the various scenes of disaster. But when three sections of an east-bound cattle special, ignoring the ten-minute-interval rule, were piled up at the head of Timanyoni Cañon, he went out and took personal command of the track-clearing force.

At that moment the joke was at its flood tide, and the men of the wrecking crew took a ten-gallon keg of whisky along wherewith to celebrate the first appearance of the new boss in the field of action.

Lidgerwood disappointed them in more ways than one. For one thing, his first executive act was to knock in the head of the ten-gallon keg with a striking-hammer before it was even spiggoted. For another, he proved that he was not only a past master in the art of track-clearing, but also that he was able to endure hardship through a long day, and a still longer night, with the best man on the ground.

This was good, as far as it went. But later, with the offending cattle-train crews before him for trial and punishment, he lost all he had gained by being too easy.

"We've got him chasin' his feet," said Tryon, one of the rule-breaking engineers, at the close of the "sweat-box" interview. "It's just as I've been tellin' you fellows, he ain't got sand enough to fire anybody."

Likewise, Jack Benson, the young engineer sent in by Vice-president Ford, at Lidgerwood's request, to form an engineering department for the division. The "sweat-box" was Lidger-

wood's private office in the Crow's Nest; and Benson happened to be present when the reckless trainmen were told to go and sin no more.

"I'm not running your job, Lidgerwood, and you may fire the inkstand at me if the spirit moves you to, but you can't handle the red desert with kid gloves on. Those fellows needed cussing out and a thirty-day hang-up, at the lightest. You can't hold 'em down with Sunday-school talk."

Lidgerwood was frowning at his desk and marking squares with his pencil upon the blotting-pad—a habit which was insensibly growing upon him.

"Where would I get the two extra train crews to fill in the thirty-day layoff, Jack? Had you thought of that?"

"I had only the one think, and I gave you that one," said Benson carelessly. "I suppose it is different in your department. When I go up against a thing like that on the sections, I fire the whole bunch and import a few more Italians. Which reminds me: what do you know about Fred Dawson, the shop draftsman?"

"As little as may be," replied Lidgerwood, taking Benson's abrupt change of subject as a matter of course. "He seems a fine fellow; much too fine a fellow to be wasting himself out here. Why?"

"Oh, I just wanted to know. Ever met his mother and sister?"

"No."

"Well, you ought to. The mother is one of the only two angels in Angels, and the sister is the other. Dawson, himself, is a monomaniac."

Lidgerwood's eyebrows lifted, but his query was unspoken.

"Hadn't you heard his story?" said Benson. "But of course you haven't: nobody knows about it out here. He's a lame duck, you know; like every other man this side of Crosswater summit—present company excepted."

"A lame duck?" repeated Lidgerwood.

"Yes. A man with a past. Don't tell me you haven't caught on to the hallmark of the red desert. It's notorious. The blacklegs and tin-horns and sureshots go without saying, of course; over in the ranch country beyond the Timanyonis they call us the outlaws."

"Not without reason," said Lidgerwood.

"Not any," said Benson, with cheerful pessimism. "And the Red Butte outfit is tarred with the same stick. You haven't a dozen operators, all told, who haven't been discharged for incompetence somewhere else; or a dozen conductors or engineers who weren't blacklisted before they climbed Crosswater. Take McCloskey: you swear by him, don't you? He was a chief despatcher back East, and he put two passenger-trains together in a head-on collision the day he resigned and came West to grow up with the red desert."

"You were speaking of Dawson," suggested Lidgerwood mildly.

"Yes; and he's one of them—though he needn't be, if he weren't such a hopelessly sensitive ass. He's an M. E., or he would have been if he had stayed out his senior year at college. But also he happened to be a football fiend; and in the last intercollegiate game of the last season he had the bad luck to kill a man—the brother of the girl he was going to marry."

"You don't tell me!" said Lidgerwood. "Is he *that* Dawson?"

"The same," said the young engineer laconically. "It was the sheerest accident: everybody knew it was, and nobody blamed Dawson. I happen to know, because I was a junior in the same college at the time. But Fred took it hard; let it spoil his life. He buried himself out here, and for two years he never let his mother and sister know where he was; made remittances through a bank in Omaha so they shouldn't be able to trace him. Care to hear any more?"

"Go on," said the superintendent.

"*I* found him," chuckled Benson. "And I took the liberty of piping his little game off to the harrowed women. Next thing he knew they dropped in on him; and he's crazy enough to stay here, and to keep them here. That wouldn't be so bad if it wasn't for

Gridley, Fred's boss and your peach of a master mechanic."

"Why peach? Gridley is a pretty decent sort of man-driver, isn't he?" said Lidgerwood, doing premeditated violence to what he had come to call his unjust prejudice against the master mechanic.

"You won't believe it," said Benson hotly, "but he's making love to Dawson's sister!—and he a widow-man and old enough to be her father!"

Lidgerwood smiled. Youth is always intolerant of age in its rival. Gridley might have been forty; but then Benson was still on the sunny slope of twenty-five.

"Don't be prejudiced, Jack," he said. "Gridley is still young enough to marry again, if he wants to—and to live to spoil his grandchildren."

"But he isn't good enough for such a woman as Faith Dawson," countered the young engineer stubbornly.

"Isn't he?—or is that more of your personal prejudice? What do you know against him?"

Pressed thus sharply against the unyielding fact, Benson was obliged to confess that he knew nothing against the master mechanic. If Gridley had any of the weaknesses common to red-desert mankind, he did not parade them in Angels. As the head of his department, he was a hard hitter; and now and then, when the blows fell, the railroad colony called him a tyrant and hinted that, like the other exiles, he was a man with a past.

Lidgerwood laughed at Benson's failure to make his case, and asked quizzically:

"Where do I come in on this, Jack? You have an ax to grind, I take it."

"I have. Mrs. Dawson wants me to take my meals at the house—she's shy of Gridley. Maybe she thinks I'd do the buffer act. But as a get-between, I'd be chiefly conspicuous by my absence."

"Sorry I can't give you an office job, Jack," said the superintendent, in mock despair.

"So am I. But you can do the next best thing. Get Fred to take you home with him some evening, and you'll never go back to Maggie Dunnymore and the bird-bath dishes—not if you can persuade Mrs. Dawson to feed you. The alternative is to fire Gridley."

"This time you're trying to make the tail wag the dog," laughed Lidgerwood. "Gridley has twice my backing on the board of directors. Besides, he is a good fellow, and if I go up and try to stand him off for you, it's only because I think you are a better fellow."

"Stand it on any leg you like, only go," said Benson simply. "I'll take it as a personal favor, and do as much for you some time. I suppose I don't have to warn you not to fall in love with Faith Dawson, yourself?—or, on second thought, perhaps I *had* better."

Lidgerwood's laugh was rather bitter.

"No, Jack; like Gridley, I'm older than I look, and I've had my little turn at that wheel: or, rather, the wheel has had its little turn at me. You can safely deputize me, I guess."

"All right. Here's 202, and I'm going down to Navajo on her. Don't wait too long before you make up to Dawson. You'll find him worth while, after you've broken through his shell."

The huge joke on the Red Butte Western ran its course for another week. Then Lidgerwood determined that the time had come for the disciplinary revolution, and he began it by stringing a new time-card, supplemented by a standard "Book of Rules."

Promptly the horse-laugh died away and the trouble storm was evoked. Grievance committees haunted the Crow's Nest, and the insurrectionary faction, starting with the trainmen, threatened to involve the shopmen and the telegraph-operators: to become, not a faction, but a protest en masse.

Worse than all, the service, haphazard enough before, now became a maddening chaos. Orders were misunderstood, wrecks were of almost daily occurrence, and the shop track was speedily filled with crippled engines and cars.

In such a storm of disaster and disorder the captain on the bridge finds

and learns to distinguish his friends, if any there be. In the pandemonium of untoward events, McCloskey was Lidgerwood's right hand, toiling, smiting, striving, and otherwise approving himself a good soldier. But close behind him came Gridley; always suave and good-natured, never complaining, not even when the repair work grew mountain high; always counseling firmness and more discipline.

"This is what we've been needing for years, Mr. Lidgerwood," he took frequent occasion to say. "Of course, we've got to pay the penalty for the sins of our predecessors; but if you'll just hang to it, we'll pull through and be a railroad right when the clouds roll by. Don't give in an inch. Show these muckers that you mean business, and mean it all the time, and you'll win out."

Thus the master mechanic; and McCloskey, with more at stake and less isolated point of view, took it out in good, hard blows, backing his superior like a man.

Of the small headquarters staff, Hallock was the only non-combatant. From the first he seemed to have made a compact with himself not to let it be known by any word or act of his that he was aware of the suddenly precipitated conflict. The routine work of a chief clerk's desk is never light; Hallock's became so exacting that he rarely left the office, or the penlike contrivance where he entrenched himself.

In the beginning Lidgerwood watched him closely to discover the secret signs of satisfaction which the revolt might be supposed to awaken in the unsuccessful candidate for the headship of the Red Butte Western.

There were none. Hallock's gaunt face, with the thin, straggling beard and the loose lips, was a blank; and the worst wreck of the three which followed the introduction of the new rules in quick succession was noted in his reports with the same calm indifference with which he would have jotted down the breakage of a section foreman's spike-maul.

McCloskey was of Scotch blood, painfully homely of face, and a cool in-fighter. But at the end of a fortnight of the new time-card he cornered his superior in the private office and freed his mind.

"It's no use, Mr. Lidgerwood; we can't make these reforms stick with the outfit we've got," he said, in sharp discouragement. "The next thing on the docket will be a strike, and you know what that will mean—in a country where the whisky is bad and every second man carries a gun."

"Nevertheless, the reforms have got to stick," said Lidgerwood quite equably. "I am going to run this division as it should be run, or hang it up in the air. Did you discharge that operator at Crow Cañon—the fellow who let Train 76 get by him without orders night before last?"

"Dick Rufford?—yes, I fired him; and he came in on 202 to-day, lugging a piece of artillery and shooting off his mouth about what he'd do to you and me. I suppose you know his brother Bart, 'The Killer,' is the 'lookout' at Red-Light Sammy's faro-game, and the meanest devil this side of the Timanyonis?"

"I didn't know it; but that cuts no figure," Lidgerwood forced himself to say, though his lips were dry. "We are going to have discipline on this division while we stay here, Mac. There are no two ways about that."

McCloskey tilted his hat to the bridge of his nose, his characteristic gesture of displeasure. His heavy, coarse-featured face was a study in grotesques, and when he was moved he had a habit of mouthing and grimacing in a manner truly terrifying.

"I said I wouldn't join the gun-toters when I came out here," he said half-musingly. "But I've weakened on that. Yesterday, when I was calling Jeff Cummings down for dropping that new shifter out of an open switch in broad daylight, he pulled on me out of his cab-window. What I had to take while he had me hands up is more than I'll take from any living man again."

Once more Lidgerwood was marking pencil squares on his desk-blotter.

"I wouldn't get down to the desert level, if I were you, Mac," he said thoughtfully.

"I'm down there right now—in self-defense," was the sober reply. "And if you'll take a hint from me, you'll heel yourself, too. If this fight gets much hotter, your life won't be worth the pinch of gunpowder it will take to snuff it out. I know this country better than you do—and the men in it. I don't say they'll come after you deliberately. But as things are now, you can't open your face to one of them without taking a chance of a quarrel; and a quarrel in a gun-country——"

"I know," said Lidgerwood patiently; and the train-master gave it up.

It was an hour or two later the same day when he came in again, hat tilted to nose, and the gargoyle face portraying fresh soul agonies.

"They've taken to looting us now!" he burst out. "The 316, that new saddle-tank shifting-engine, has disappeared. I saw Broderick using the '95, and when I asked him why, he said he couldn't find the '16."

"Couldn't find it?" echoed Lidgerwood.

"No; nor I can't, either. It's not in the yards, the roundhouse, or the back shop. I've had Callahan wire east and west, and if they're all telling the truth, nobody has seen it, or heard of it."

"Where was it, at last accounts?"

"Standing on the coal track, under Chute Number Three, where the night crew left it at midnight or thereabouts."

"Of course somebody must know where it has gone," said Lidgerwood.

"Yes; and by grapples! Mr. Lidgerwood, I think I know who the somebody is!"

"Who is it?"

But now the train-master tilted his hat and scowled ferociously.

"If I should tell you, you wouldn't believe it; and, besides, I haven't got any proof. But I'm going to get the proof"—shaking a menacing forefinger—"and when I do——"

It was the entrance of Hallock, coming in with the pay-rolls for the superintendent's approval, that made the train-master break off short in his threat, and go out muttering curses to the tilted hat-brim.

IV.

THE KILLER.

Lidgerwood had found little difficulty in getting on the sociable side of Dawson, so far as the heavy-muscled, silent young draftsman had a sociable side: and the invitation to the Dawson cottage on the low mesa above the town had followed as a matter of course.

Once within the charmed circle, with Benson to plead his cause with the meek little woman whose brown eyes held the shadow of a deep trouble, Lidgerwood had still less difficulty in arranging to share Benson's table welcome. Though Martha Dawson never admitted it, even to her daughter, she stood in constant terror of the red desert and its representative town of Angels; and the presence of the superintendent as a member of the household was an added guaranty of protection.

Lidgerwood's dip into the home pool on the mesa was made without a splash, and he was coming and going as regularly as his oversight of the three hundred miles of demoralization permitted before the buffoonery on the Red Butte Western suddenly laughed itself out and war was declared. In the interval he had come to accept Benson's estimate of the family, and to share—without Benson's excuse—the young engineer's opposition to Gridley as Miss Faith's possible choice.

There was little to be done in this field, however. Gridley came and went, not too often, deporting himself as a friend of the family, and usurping no more of Miss Dawson's time and attention than she seemed willing to bestow upon him. Lidgerwood saw no chance to obstruct, and no good reason for obstructing. At least, Gridley did not furnish the reason. And the first time Lidgerwood found himself sitting out the sunset hour after dinner on the

tiny porch of the mesa cottage, with Faith Dawson for his companion, his speech was not of Gridley, nor yet of Benson: it was of himself.

"When are you going to forget that I have the misfortune to be, in a round-about way, your brother's boss, Miss Faith?" he asked, when she had brought him a light for his cigar.

"Oh; do I remember it—disagreeably?" she laughed. And then, with unconscious naïveté: "I'm sure I try not to."

"Try a little harder, then," he begged. "It's pretty lonely, sometimes, up here on the top round of the Red Butte Western ladder."

"You mean that you would like to leave your official dignity behind when you come up here?" she asked.

"That's it precisely. You've no idea what strenuous work it is, wearing the halo all the time—or, perhaps, I should say the cap and bells."

She smiled. Frederick Dawson, the reticent, had never spoken of the attitude of the Red Butte Western toward its new boss; but Gridley had.

"They are still refusing to take you seriously?" she said. "I hope you don't mind it too much."

"Personally, not at all," he assured her—which was true at the moment. "The men are acting like a lot of schoolboys bent on discouraging the new teacher. I'm hoping they'll settle down to their books after a bit, and take me for granted."

Miss Dawson had something on her mind; a thing not gathered from Gridley or any one else in particular, but which seemed to take shape of itself. The saying of it asked for a complete effacement of Lidgerwood the superintendent, and that was difficult. But she compassed it.

"You must not take them too much for granted—the men, I mean," she cautioned. "I can't help thinking that some of the joking is not quite good-natured."

"It isn't," he rejoined evenly. "Much of it is very thinly disguised contempt."

"For your authority?"

"For me, personally, first; and for my authority as a close second."

"Then there will be trouble—when the laugh is over?"

He smiled. "I'm hoping No, as I said a moment ago; but I'm expecting Yes."

"And you are not afraid?"

It would have been worth a great deal to him if he could have looked fearlessly into the clear gray eyes and denied. But instead his gaze went beyond her, and he said: "You surely wouldn't expect me to confess it if I were, would you? Don't you despise a coward, Miss Dawson?"

The sun was sinking behind the Timanyonis, and the soft glow of the western sky suffused her face, illuminating it with rare radiance. It was not, in the last analysis, a beautiful face, he assured himself, comparing it with another whose outlines were bitten deeply and beyond all hope of erasure into the memory page. Yet the face warmed by the sunset glow was sweet and winsome; attractive in the best sense of the overworked word. Lidgerwood rather envied Benson—or Gridley, whichever one of the two Miss Dawson cared most for.

"There are so many different kinds of coward," she said, after the reflective moment.

"But all despicable," he added.

"The real ones, perhaps. But our definitions are often careless. My grandfather, who was a captain of volunteers in the Civil War, used to say that real cowardice is a soul disease; that what we call the physical symptoms are often misleading."

"For example?" said Lidgerwood.

"Grandfather used to instance the camp-fire bully and braggart as one extreme, and the soldier who was frankly afraid of being killed as the other. He said the man who dodged the first few bullets in battle was most likely to be the real hero."

Lidgerwood could not resist the temptation to probe the old wound.

"Suppose, under some sudden stress—some totally unexpected trial—a man who was very much afraid of being

afraid found himself physically unable to do the courageous thing—wouldn't he be, to all intents and purposes, a coward?"

She took time to think.

"No," she said finally. "I should wait until I had seen the same man tried under conditions that would give him time to whip the physical unreadiness into line."

"Would you, really?" he asked hopefully.

"Yes. A trial of the kind you describe isn't fair. Acute presence of mind in an emergency is not the supreme test of courage—courage of that highest quality which endures and faces the threatening to-morrows."

"And you think that the man who might be surprised into doing something very despicable might still have that other kind of courage, Miss Faith?"

"Certainly."

Lidgerwood rose and flung away the half-burned cigar.

"You are more charitable than other women, Miss Dawson," he said gravely; after which he left abruptly and went back to his desk in the Crow's Nest.

This little heart-to-heart talk happened just before the jesting horse-laugh died away on the Red Butte Western. After the storm broke, there were no more quiet confidences on the cottage porch for a harassed superintendent. Lidgerwood came and went as before, when the rapidly recurring wrecks did not keep him out on the line; but he scrupulously left his troubles behind him when he climbed to the cottage on the mesa.

Yet the increasing gravity of the situation was writing itself plainly enough upon his face, and Faith Dawson was sorry for him, giving him sympathy unasked, if not wholly unexpected. The town talk, what little of it reached the cottage, was harshly condemnatory of the new superintendent, and indisputably Lidgerwood was doing what he could to earn his newer reputation.

After the mysterious disappearance of the switching-engine—mystery still unsolved, and apparently unsolvable—he struck fast and hard, searching painstakingly for the leaders in the rebellion, reprimanding, suspending, and discharging until McCloskey warned him that, in addition to the evil of short-handing the division, he was filling Angels with a growing army of ex-employees, desperate and ripe for anything.

"I can't help it, Mac," was his invariable reply. "Unless they put me out of the fight, I shall go on as I've begun, staying with it until we have a railroad in fact—or a forfeited charter. Do the best you can, but let it be plainly understood that the man who isn't with us is against us, and he is going to get a chance to hunt him a new job every time."

"But Mr. Lidgerwood—they'll murder you!" insisted the train-master, his heavy face corrugating itself into the similitude of a pained gargoyle.

"That's neither here nor there. I handled them with gloves at first, but they wanted the bare fist. They've got it now, and as I've said before, we'll fight this thing to a complete finish. Who goes east on 202 to-day?"

"It's Judson's run; but he's laying off."

"What's the matter with him?—sick?"

"No; just plain drunk."

"Fire him. I won't have a man in the train service who gets drunk. Tell him so."

"One more stick of dynamite, with a cap and fuse in it, turned loose underfoot," said McCloskey gloomily. "Judson goes."

"Never mind the dynamite. Now, what has been done with Johnston—that conductor who turned in three dollars cash collections for a hundred-mile run?"

"I've had him up. He says that's all the money there was—everybody had tickets."

"You don't believe it?"

"No. Grantby, the superintendent of the Ruby Mine, came in on Johnston's train that morning, and he registered a kick because the Ruby Gulch station-agent wasn't out of bed in time to sell him a ticket. He paid Johnston on the

train, and that one fare alone was five dollars and sixty cents."

Lidgerwood was adding another minute square to the penciled checkerboard on his desk-blotter.

"Discharge Johnston and hold back his time-check. Then have him arrested for stealing and wire the legal department at Denver that I want him prosecuted."

Again McCloskey's rough-cast face was a mask of a soul in deep trouble.

"Call it done—and another stick of dynamite turned loose," he acquiesced. "Is there anything else?"

"Yes. What have you found out about that missing engine?" This had come to be the stereotyped query, vocalizing itself every time the train-master showed his face in the superintendent's room.

"Nothing, yet. I'm hunting for proof."

"Against some one you suspect? Who is it? And what did he do with the engine?"

McCloskey became dumb.

"I don't dare to say part of it till I can say it all, Mr. Lidgerwood. You hit too quick and too hard. But tell me one thing: have you had to report the loss of that engine to anybody higher up?"

"I shall have to report it to General Manager Frisbie, of course, if we don't find it."

"But haven't you already reported it?"

"No; that is, I guess not. Wait a minute." A touch of the buzzer-push brought Hallock to the door of the inner office. The green shade was pulled low over his eyes, and he held the pen he had been using as if it were a dagger.

"Hallock, have you reported the disappearance of that switching-engine to Mr. Frisbie?" asked the superintendent.

The answer seemed reluctant, and it was given in the single word of assent.

"When?" asked Lidgerwood.

"In the weekly summary for last week; you signed it," said the chief clerk.

"Did I tell you to include that particular item in the report?" Lidgerwood did not mean to give the inquiry the tang of an implied reproof, but the fight with the outlaws was beginning to make his manner incisive.

"You didn't need to tell me; I know my business," said Hallock, and his tone matched his superior's.

Lidgerwood looked at McCloskey, and at the train-master's almost imperceptible nod, said, "That's all," and Hallock disappeared and closed the door.

"Well?" said Lingerwood sharply, when they had privacy again.

McCloskey was shifting uneasily from one foot to the other.

"My name's Scotch, and they tell me I've got Scotch blood in me," he began. "I don't like to shoot my mouth off till I know what I'm doing. I suppose I quarreled with Hallock once a day regular before you came on the job, Mr. Lidgerwood, and I'll say plump out that I don't like him—never did. That's what makes me careful about throwing it into him now."

"Go on," said Lidgerwood.

"Well, I don't know as you know it, but he wanted to be superintendent of this road. He kept the wires to New York hot for a week after he found out that the P. S-W. was in control. He missed it, and you just naturally took it over his head—at least, maybe that's the way he looks at it."

"Take it for granted, and get to the point," said Lidgerwood, always impatient of preliminary bush-beating.

"There ain't any point, if you don't see any," said McCloskey stubbornly. "But I can tell you how it would strike me, if I had to be wearing your shoes just now. You've got a man for your chief clerk who has kept this whole town guessing for two years. Some say he isn't bad: but they all agree that he's as vengeful as an Indian. He wanted your job; supposing he still wants it."

"Stick to the facts, Mac," said the superintendent. "You're theorizing now, you know."

"Well, by gravels, I will!" said McCloskey, pushed over the cautionary edge by Lidgerwood's indifference.

"What I know don't amount to much yet, but it all leans one way. Hallock puts in his daytime scratching away at that desk out there, and you'd think he didn't know it was this year. But when that desk is shut up, you'll find him at the roundhouse, over in the freight-yard, round the switch-shanties, or up at Biggs'—anywhere he can get half a dozen of the men together. I don't know what he's doing; I haven't found a man yet that I could trust to keep tab on him: but I can guess."

"Is that all?" said Lidgerwood quietly.

"No, it isn't! That switch-engine dropped out a week ago last Tuesday night. I've been prying into that locked-up puzzle-box every way I could think of ever since. *Hallock knows where that engine went!*"

"What makes you think so?"

"I'll tell you. Robinson, the night crew engineer, was a little late leaving her. His fireman had gone home, and so had the yardmen. After he had crossed the yard, coming out, he saw a man sneaking down toward the shifter, keeping in the shadow of the coal-chutes. He was just curious enough to want to know who it was, and he made a little sneak of his own. When he found it was Hallock, he went home and thought no more about it till I got him to talk."

Lidgerwood had gone back to the pencil and the blotting-pad and the making of squares. "But the motive, Mac?" he said, without looking up. "How could the theft or the destruction of a locomotive serve any purpose that Hallock might have in view?"

McCloskey did not mean any disrespect to his superior officer when he said: "I'm no 'cyclopedia. There are lots of things I don't know. But unless you call it off, I'm going to know a few more of them before I quit."

"I don't call it off, Mac; find out what you can. But I can't believe that Hallock is heading this rebellion."

"Somebody is heading it, to a dead moral certainty, Mr. Lidgerwood; the licks are coming too straight and too well-timed."

"Find the man, if you can, and we'll eliminate him. And, by the way, if it comes to the worst, how will Hepburn, the town marshal, stand?"

The train-master shook his head.

"I don't know. Jack's got plenty of sand. But he was elected out of the shops, and by the railroad vote. If it comes to a show-down against the men who elected him——"

"That is what I mean," said Lidgerwood. "It will come to a show-down, sooner or later, if we can't nip the ring-leaders. Young Rufford and a dozen more of the dropped employees are threatening to get even. That means train-wrecking, misplaced switches, arson—anything you like. At the first break there are going to be some very striking examples made of every wrecker or looter we can land on."

McCloskey's chair faced the window, and he was scowling and mouthing at the tall chimney of the shop power-plant across the tracks. Where had he got the idea that this carefully laundered gentleman, who never missed his daily plunge and scrub and still wore immaculate linen, lacked the confidence of his opinions and convictions? The train-master knew, and he thought Lidgerwood must also know, that the first blow of the vengeful ones would be directed at the man rather than at the company's property.

"I guess maybe Hepburn will do his duty, when it comes to the pinch," he said finally. And the subject having apparently exhausted itself, he went about his business, which was to call up the telegraph-operator at Timanyoni Pass to ask why he had broken the rule requiring the conductor and engineer, both of them, to sign train-orders in his presence.

Thereupon, quite in keeping with the militant state of affairs on a harassed Red Butte Western, ensued a sharp and abusive wire quarrel at long range; and when it was over, Timanyoni Pass was temporarily stricken from the list of night telegraph-stations pending the hastening forward of a relief operator to take the place of the one who, with many profane objurgations, curiously

clipped in rattling Morse, had wired his opinion of McCloskey and the new superintendent closely interwoven with his resignation.

It was after dark that evening when Lidgerwood closed his desk on the penciled blotting-pad and groped his way down the unlighted stair to the Crow's Nest platform.

The day passenger from the east was in, and the hostler had just coupled Engine 266 to the train for the night run to Red Butte. Lidgerwood marked the engine's number, and saw Dawson talking to Williams, the engineer, as he turned the corner at the passenger-station end of the building. Later, when he was crossing the open space separating the railroad yard from the town, he thought he heard the draftsman's step behind him, and waited for Dawson to come up.

The rearward darkness, made blacker by contrast with the white beam of the 266's electric headlight, yielding no one and no further sounds, he went on, past the tar-paper-covered hotel, named by its waggish keeper "The Celestial," past the flanking of saloons and false-fronted shops, past "The Arcade," with its crimson sidewalk eye setting the danger-signal for all who should enter Red-Light Sammy's, and so on up to the mesa and the cottage of seven-o'clock dinners.

His hand was on the latch of the cottage-gate when a man rose up out of the gloom; out of the ground at his feet, as it appeared to Lidgerwood; and the night and the starry dome of it were blotted out for the superintendent in a flash of red lightning and a thunderclap louder than the crash of worlds.

When he began to realize again, Dawson was helping him to his feet, and the draftsman's mother was calling anxiously from the door.

"What was it?" he asked, still dazed and half-blinded.

"A man tried to kill you," said Dawson, in his most matter-of-fact tone. "I happened along just in time to joggle his arm. That, and your quick drop, did the business. Not hurt, are you?"

Lidgerwood was gripping the gate and trying to steady himself. A chill like a sudden attack of ague was shaking him to the bone.

"No," he returned, mastering the chattering teeth by the supremest effort of will. "Thanks to you, I guess—I'm—not hurt. Who w-was the man?"

"It was Rufford. He followed you from the Crow's Nest. Williams saw him and put me on; so I followed him."

"Williams? Then he isn't——"

"No," said Dawson, anticipating the query. "He is with us, and he is swinging the best of the engineers into line. But come into the house and let me give you a drop of whisky. This thing has got on your nerves a bit—and no wonder."

But Lidgerwood clung to the gate palings for yet another steadying moment.

"Rufford, you said; you mean the discharged Crow Cañon operator?"

"Worse luck," said Dawson. "It was his brother Bart, the 'lookout' at Red-Light Sammy's: the fellow they call 'The Killer.'"

V.

THE INEBRIATE.

Barton Rufford, ex-distiller of illicit whisky in the Tennessee Mountains, ex-welsher turned informer and betraying his neighbor lawbreakers to the United States revenue officers, ex-everything which made his continued stay in the Cumberlands impossible, was a man of distinction in the red desert.

In the wider field of the West he had been successively a claim-jumper, a rustler of unbranded cattle, a telegraph-operator in collusion with a gang of train-robbers, and finally a faro "lookout," the armed guard who sits at the head of the gaming-table in the untamed regions to kill, and kill quickly, if a dispute arises.

Angels acknowledged his citizenship without joy. A murderer with a frightful record of cold-blooded homicides; a man with a temper like smoking tow, an itching trigger-finger, the eye of a haggard hawk, and catlike swiftness of

movement, he tyrannized the town when the humor was on him; and as yet no counter bully had come to chase him into oblivion.

For Lidgerwood to have earned the enmity of this man was considered equivalent to one of three things: the superintendent would throw up his job and leave the red desert—preferably by the first train; or Rufford would kill him; or he must kill Rufford.

Red Butte Western opinion was somewhat divided as to which horn of the trilemma would be chosen by the victim of Rufford's displeasure; all admitting that, for the moment, the choice lay with the superintendent.

Would Lidgerwood fight, or run, or sit still and be slain? In the Angels roundhouse, on the morning following the episode at the gate of the Dawson cottage, the discussion was spirited, not to say acrimonious.

"I'm telling you hyenas that Collars-and-Cuffs ain't going to run away," insisted Williams, who was just in from the all-night trip to Red Butte and return. "He ain't built that way."

Lester, the roundhouse foreman, himself a man-queller of no mean repute, thought differently. Lidgerwood would take to the high grass and the tall timber. The alternative was to "pack a gun" for Rufford—alternative quite inconceivable to Lester.

"I don't know about that," said Judson, the discharged—and consequently momentarily sobered—engineer of the 271. "He's fooled everybody more than once since he lit down here in the red desert. First crack everybody said he didn't know his business, 'cause he wore b'iled shirts; he does know it. Next, you could put your ear to the ground and hear that he didn't have the sand to round up the Maverick R. B. W. He's doing it. I don't know but he might run a bluff on Bart Rufford, if he felt like doing it."

"Come off, John!" growled the big foreman. "You needn't be afraid to talk straight over here. He hit you when you was down, and we all know you're only waitin' for a chance to hit back."

Judson was a red-headed man, effusively good-natured when he was in liquor, and a quick-tempered fighter of battles when he was not.

"Don't you make any such mistake!" he snapped. "That's what McCloskey said when he handed me the 'good-by.' 'You'll be one more to go round feelin' for Mr. Lidgerwood's throat, I suppose,' says he. By cripes! what I said to Mac, I'm sayin' to you, Bob Lester! I know good and well a-plenty when I've earned my blue envelope. If I'd been in the super's place, the 271 would have had a new runner a long time ago!"

"Oh, hell; *I* say he'll chase his feet," puffed Broadbent, the fat machinist who was truing off the valve-seats of the 195. "If Rufford don't make him, there's some others that will."

Judson flared up again.

"Who you quotin' now, Fatty?—one o' the shop 'prentices? Or maybe it's Link Hallock. Say, what's he doing monkeyin' round the back shop so much lately? I'm goin' to stay round here till I get a chance to lick that scrub."

Broadbent snorted his derision of all mere enginemen.

"You rail-pounders'd better get next to Lincoln Hallock," he warned. "He's the next sup'rintendent of the R. B. W. You'll see the 'pointment circular the next day after that jim-dandy over in the Crow's Nest gets moved off'n the map."

"Well, I'm some afeared Bart Rufford's likely to move him," drawled Clay, the six-foot Kentuckian who was filing the 195's brasses at the bench. "Which the same I ain't rejoicin' about, neither. That little cuss is shore a mighty good railroad man. And when you ain't rubbin' his fur the wrong way, he treats you white."

"For instance?" snapped Hodges, a freight engineer who had been thrice "on the carpet" in Lidgerwood's office for overrunning his orders.

"Oh, they ain't so blame' hard to find," Clay retorted. "Last week, when we was out on that Navajo wreck, me and the boy didn't have no dinner-buckets. Bradford was runnin' the su-

per's car; and when Andy just sort o' happened to mention the famine up along, the little man made that Jap cook o' hisn get us up a dinner that'd made your hair frizzle. He shore did."

"Why don't you go and take up for him with Bart Rufford?" sneered Broadbent, stopping his facing-machine to set in a new cut on the valve-seat.

"Oh—oh; not me. I've got cold feet," laughed the Kentuckian. "I'm like the little kid's daddy in the Sunday-school song: I cayn't die yet—got too much to do."

It was Williams' innings, and what he said was cautionary.

"Dry up, you fellows; here comes Gridley."

The master mechanic was walking down the planked track from the back shop, carrying his years, which showed only in the graying mustaches and chin beard, and his hundred and eighty pounds of well-set-up bone and muscle jauntily. In appearance he was the beau ideal of the industry field officer; handsome in a clean-cut, masculine way; a type of vigor, and also, if the signs of the full face and the eager eyes were to be regarded, of the elemental passions.

Angelic rumor hinted that he was a "periodic" drunkard; he was both more or less than that. Like many another man, Henry Gridley lived a double life; or perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that there were two Henry Gridleys. Lidgerwood, the Dawsons, the little world of Angels at large, knew the virile, accomplished mechanical engineer and master of men, which was his normal personality. What time the other personality, the elemental savage, yawned, stretched itself, and came awake, the unspeakable dens of the Copah lower quarter engulfed him till the devil-man had gorged himself on degradation.

To his men Gridley was a tyrant, exacting, but just, ruling them as the men of the desert could only be ruled, with the mailed fist. Yet there was a human hand inside the steel gauntlet, as all men knew. Having once beaten a bullying gang-boss into the hospital at Denver, he had promptly charged himself with the support of the man's family. Other generous roughnesses were recorded of him, and if the attitude of the men was somewhat tempered by wholesome fear, it was none the less loyal.

Hence, when he entered the roundhouse, industrious silence had supplanted the discussion of the superintendent's case. Glancing at the group of enginemen, and snapping out a curt criticism of Broadbent's slowness on the valve-seats, he beckoned to Judson. When the discharged engineer had followed him across the turntable, he faced about and said, not too curtly: "So your sins have found you out one more time, have they, John?"

Judson nodded.

"What is it this time—thirty days?"

Judson shook his head gloomily. "No; I'm down and out."

"Lidgerwood made it final, did he? Well, you can't blame him."

"You ain't heard me sayin' anything, have you?" was the surly rejoinder.

"No; but it isn't in human nature to forget these little things." Then, suddenly: "Where were you yesterday between one and two o'clock—about the time you should have been taking your train out?"

Judson had a needlelike mind when the alcohol was out of it, and the sudden query made him dissemble.

"About ten o'clock I was playin' pool in Rafferty's place with the butt end of the cue. After that, things got kind o' hazy."

"Well, I want you to buckle down and think hard. Don't you remember going over to Cat Biggs' about noon, and sitting down at one of the empty card-tables to drink yourself stiff?"

Judson could not have told, under the thumbscrews, why he was prompted to tell Gridley a plain lie. But he did it.

"I can't remember," he said. Then the needle-pointed brain got in its work, and he added: "Why?"

"I saw you there when I was going up to dinner. You called me in to tell me what you were going to do to Lid-

gerwood if he called you down for getting drunk. Don't you remember it?"

Judson was looking the master mechanic fairly in the eyes when he said: "No; I don't remember a thing about that."

"Try again," said Gridley, and now the shrewd gray eyes under the brim of the soft-rolled felt hat held the engineer helpless.

"I guess—I do—remember it now," said Judson slowly, trying, still ineffectually, to break Gridley's masterful eye-hold upon him.

"I thought you would," said the master mechanic, without releasing him. "And you probably remember, also, that I took you out in the street and started you home?"

"Yes," said Judson, this time without hesitation.

"Well, keep on remembering it; you went home to Maggie, and she put you to bed. That is what you are to keep in mind."

Judson had broken the curious eye-grip at last, and again he said: "Why?"

Gridley hooked his finger absently in the engineer's buttonhole.

"Because, if you don't, a man named Rufford says he'll kill you. I heard him say it last night—overheard him, I should say. That's all."

The master mechanic passed on, going out by the great door which opened for the locomotive entering-track. Judson hung upon his heel for a moment, and then went slowly out through the tool-room and across the yard tracks to the Crow's Nest.

He found McCloskey in his office above stairs, grimacing over the string-board of the new time-table.

"Well?" growled the train-master, when he saw who had opened and closed the door. "Come back to tell me you've sworn off? That won't go down with Mr. Lidgerwood. When he fires, he means it."

"You wait till I ask you for my job back again, won't you, Jim McCloskey?" said the disgraced one hotly. "I ain't asked it yet; and, what's more, I'm sober."

"Sure you are," muttered McCloskey. "You'd be better-natured with a drink or two in you. What's doing?"

"That's what I came over to find out," said Judson steadily. "What is the boss going to do about this flare-up with Bart Rufford?"

The train-master shrugged.

"You've got just as many guesses as anybody, John. What you can bet on is that he will do something different."

Judson had slouched to the window. When he spoke, it was without turning his head.

"You said something this morning about me feeling for the boss' throat along with that gang up-town that's trying to drink itself up to the point of hitting back. It don't strike me that way, Mac."

"How does it strike you?"

Judson turned slowly, crossed the room, and sat down in the only vacant chair.

"You know what's due to happen, Mac. Rufford won't try it on again the way he tried it last night. I heard up-town that he has posted his de-fy: Mr. Lidgerwood shoots him on sight, or he shoots Mr. Lidgerwood on sight. You can figure that out, can't you?"

"Not knowing Mr. Lidgerwood much better than you do, John, I'm not sure that I can."

"Well, it's easy. Bart'll walk up to the boss in broad daylight, drop him, and then fill him full o' lead after he's down. I've seen him—saw him do it to Bixby, Mr. Brewster's foreman at the Copperette."

"Say the rest of it," said McCloskey.

"I've been thinking. While I'm laying round with nothing much to do, I believe I'll keep tab on Bart for a little spell. I don't love him much, nohow."

McCloskey's face-contortion was intended to figure as a derisive smile. "Pshaw, John!" he commented; "he'd eat you alive. Why, even Jack Hepburn is afraid of him!"

"Jack is? How do you know that?"

McCloskey shrugged again.

"Are you with us, John?" he asked cautiously.

"I ain't with Bart Rufford and the tin-horns," said Judson negatively.

"Then I'll tell you a fairy-tale," said the train-master, lowering his voice. "I gave you notice that Mr. Lidgerwood would do something different; he did it, bright and early this morning; went before Jake Schleisinger, who had to try twice before he could remember that he was a justice of the peace, and swore out a warrant for Rufford's arrest on a charge of assault with intent to kill."

"Sure," said Judson. "That's what any man would do in a civilized country, ain't it?"

"Yes; but not here, John—not in the red-colored desert, with Bart Rufford's name in the body of the warrant."

"I don't know why not," insisted the engineer stubbornly. "But go on with the story; it ain't any fairy-tale, so far."

"When he'd got the warrant—Schleisinger protesting all the while that Bart'd kill him for issuing it—Mr. Lidgerwood took it to Hepburn, and told him to serve it. Jack backed down so fast he fell over his feet. Said to ask him anything else under God's sky and he'd do it—but not that."

"Huh!" said Judson. "If I'd took an oath to serve warrants, I'd serve 'em, if it did make me sick at my stomach." Then he got up and shuffled away to the window again, and when next he spoke his voice was the voice of a broken man.

"I lied to you a minute ago, Mac. I did want my job back. I came over here hopin' that you and Mr. Lidgerwood might be seein' things a little different by this time. I've quit the whisky."

McCloskey wagged his shaggy head.

"So you've said before, John; and not once or twice, either."

"I know—but every man gets to the bottom, some time. I've hit bed-rock, and I've just barely got sense enough to know it. Let me tell you, Mac: I've pulled trains on mighty near every railroad in this country—and then some. The Red Butte is my last ditch. With my record, I couldn't get an engine anywhere else in the United States. Don't you see what I'm up against?"

The train-master nodded. He was human.

"Well, it's Maggie and the babies now," Judson went on. "They don't starve, Mac, not while I'm on top of earth. Don't you reckon you could make some sort of a play for me with the boss, Jim? He's got bowels."

McCloskey did not resent the familiarity of the Christian name; neither did he hold out any hope of reinstatement.

"No, John. One or two things I've learned about Mr. Lidgerwood—he doesn't hit when he's mad: and he doesn't take back anything he says in cold blood. I'm afraid you've cooked your last goose."

"Let me go in and see him. He ain't half as hard-hearted as you are, Jim."

The train-master shook his head. "No; it won't do any good. I heard him tell Hallock not to let anybody in on him this morning."

"Hallock be—— Say, Mac, what does Mr. Lidgerwood keep that——" Judson broke off abruptly, pulled his hat over his eyes, and said: "Reckon it's worth while to shove me over to the other side, Jim McCloskey?"

"What other side?" demanded McCloskey.

Judson scoffed openly. "You ain't making out like you don't know, are you? Who was behind that break of Rufford's last night?"

"There didn't need to be anybody behind it. Bart thinks he has a kick coming because his brother was discharged."

"But there was somebody behind it. Tell me, Mac: did you ever see me too drunk to read my orders and take my signals?"

"No; I don't know as I have."

"Well, I never was. And I don't often get too drunk to hear straight, either, if I do look and act like the biggest fool God ever let live. I was in Cat Biggs' yesterday noon, when I ought to have been down here taking 202 east. There were two men in the back room putting their heads together. I don't know whether they knew I was on the other side of the partition or not. If they did, they probably didn't pay any attention to a drivelin' idiot

that couldn't wrap his fool tongue around an order for more whisky."

"Go on!" snapped McCloskey, almost viciously.

"They were talking about 'fixing' the boss. One of 'em was for the slow and safe way: small bets and a good many of 'em. The other was for pulling a straight flush on Mr. Lidgerwood right now. Number One said no—that things were moving along all right, and it wasn't worth while to rush. Then something was said about a woman; I didn't catch her name, or just what the hurry-man said about her. At that, Number One flopped over. 'Pull it off whenever you like!' says he, savage-like."

McCloskey sprang from his chair and towered over the smaller man.

"One of those men was Bart Rufford—who was the other one, Judson?"

Judson was apparently unmoved. "You're forgettin' that I was plum' fool drunk, Jim. I didn't see either one of 'em."

"But you heard?"

"Yes; and up to a little bit ago, I'd 'a' been ready to swear to the voice of the one you haven't guessed. But now I can't."

"Why can't you do it now?"

"Sit down, and I'll tell you. I've been jarred. Everything I've told you so far I can remember, or it seems as if I can. But right where I broke off a cog slipped. I must 'a' been drunker than I thought I was. Gridley was going by, and he says I called him in and told him, foolwise, all the things I was going to do to Mr. Lidgerwood. He hushed me up, pulled me out to the sidewalk, and started me home. Mac, I don't remember the thinnest shaving of all that; and it makes me scary about the other part."

McCloskey relapsed into his swing-chair.

"You said you thought you recognized the other man by his voice. It sounds like a drunken pipe-dream, the whole of it; but who did you think it was?"

Judson rose up, jerked his thumb toward the door of the superintendent's business office, and said: "Mac, if the whisky didn't fake the whole business for me, the man who was mumblin' with Bart Rufford was—Hallock."

What McCloskey said was said to an otherwise empty room. Judson had opened the door, and closed it, and was gone.

Summing up the astounding thing afterward, those who could recall the details and piece them together traced Judson thus:

It was ten-forty when he came down from McCloskey's office, and for perhaps twenty minutes he had been seen lounging at the lunch-counter in the station-end of the Crow's Nest. At about eleven one witness had seen him striking at the anvil in Hepburn's shop; the town marshal being the town blacksmith in the intervals of official duty.

Still later he had apparently forgotten the good resolution declared to McCloskey, and all Angels saw him staggering up and down the main street, stumbling into and out of the many saloons, and growing, to all appearances, more hopelessly irresponsible with every fresh stumble.

This was his condition when he tripped over the door-step into "The Arcade" and fell full-length on the floor of the barroom. Grimsby, the barkeeper, picked him up and tried to send him home; but with good-natured and most maudlin pertinacity he insisted on going on to the gambling-room in the rear.

The room was darkened, as befitted its use, and a lighted lamp hung over the center of the oval faro-table, as if the time were midnight instead of midday. Eight men, five of them miners from the Brewster copper-mine, and three of them discharged employees of the Red Butte Western, were the bettors; Red-Light himself, in sombrero and shirt-sleeves, was dealing; and Rufford, sitting on a stool at the table's end, was the "lookout."

When Judson reeled in there was a pause, and a movement to put him out. One of the miners covered his table-stakes and rose to obey Rufford's nod. But at this conjecture the railroad men

interfered. Judson was a fellow craftsman, and everybody knew that he was harmless in his cups. Let him stay—and play, if he wanted to.

So Judson stayed; and stumbled around the table, losing his money and dribbling foolishness. Now, faro is a silent game, and more than once an angry voice commanded the foolish one to choose his place and to shut his mouth.

But the ex-engineer seemed quite incapable of doing either. Twice he made the wavering circuit of the oval table, and when he finally gripped an empty chair, it was the one nearest to Rufford, on the right, and diagonally opposite the dealer.

What followed seemed to have no connecting sequence for the onlookers. Too restless to lose more than one bet in the place he had chosen, Judson tried to rise, tangled his feet in the chair, and fell down, laughing uproariously. When he struggled to the perpendicular again, after two or three misplaced efforts, he was fairly behind Rufford's stool.

One man, who chanced to be looking, saw the "lookout" start and stiffen rigidly in his place, staring straight ahead into vacancy. Then the entire circle of witnesses saw him take one revolver from the holster on his hip and lay it upon the table, with another from the breast pocket of his coat to keep it company. Then his hands went quickly behind him, and they all heard the click of the handcuffs.

The man in the sombrero and shirtsleeves was the first to come alive.

"Duck, Bart!" he shouted, whipping a weapon from its convenient shelf under the table's edge. But Judson, trained to the swift handling of many mechanisms in the moment of respite before a wreck or a derailment, was too quick for him.

"Bart can't duck without dying," he said grimly, screening himself behind his captive. Then coolly to the others: "Some of you fellows just quiet Sammy down till I get out of here with this peach of mine. I know what I'm doin', and if I have to shoot, it'll be to kill."

That ended it, so far as resistance was concerned. Judson backed quickly out through the barroom, drawing his prisoner backward after him; and a moment later Angels was properly electrified by the sight of Rufford, the red desert terror, marching sullenly down to the Crow's Nest, with a fiery-headed little man at his elbow, the little man swinging the weapon which had been made to simulate the cold muzzle of a revolver when he had pressed it into Rufford's back at the gaming-table.

It was nothing more formidable than a short, thick "S" wrench, of the kind used by locomotive engineers for tightening the nuts of the piston-rod packing glands.

VI.

THE PLEASURERS.

The freight wreck in the Crosswater Hills, coming a week after Rufford's arrest and deportation to Copah and the county jail, was what Bat Williams called a "holy terror."

Thirty-two boxes, gondolas, and flats, racing down the grades in the heart of a windless, crystalline summer afternoon at the heels of Clay's big ten-wheeler, suddenly left the steel as a unit, heaped themselves in chaotic confusion over the right-of-way, rounding out the disaster at the moment of impact by exploding a shipment of giant powder somewhere in the midst of the débris.

Lidgerwood came out from Angels on the second wrecking-train with the big 100-ton crane, McCloskey having been on the ground with the lighter clearing-tackle for the better part of the night.

With a slowly smoldering fire to fight, and no water to be had nearer than the tank-cars at La Guayra, the train-master had wrought miracles. By ten o'clock the main line was cleared, a temporary siding for a working base had been laid, and McCloskey's men were hard at work picking up what the fire had spared when Lidgerwood arrived.

"Pretty clean sweep, this time, eh,

Mac?" was the superintendent's greeting.

"So clean that we get nothing much but scrap-iron out of what's left," said McCloskey, climbing out of the tangle of crushed cars and bent and twisted iron-work. Then, to the men who were making the snatch-hitch for the next pull: "A little farther back, boys; farther yet, so she won't overbalance on you; that's about it. Now, *wig it!*"

"You seem to be getting along all right," said Lidgerwood. "I guess we might as well go back to Angels."

"No, don't!" protested the train-master. "We can snake out these scrap-heaps, after a fashion: but when it comes to resurrecting the 195—did you notice her as you came along? We kept the fire from getting at her, but, suffering shovers! she's dug herself in like a dog after a woodchuck!"

Lidgerwood nodded. "I looked her over," he said. "If she'd had a little more time and another breath or two, she might have disappeared entirely—like that switching-engine you can't find. I'm taking it for granted that you haven't found it yet—or have you?"

"No, I haven't," growled McCloskey, and he said it like a man with a grievance. Then he added: "I gave you all the pointers I could find three weeks ago. Whenever you get ready to put Hallock under the hydraulic-press, you'll squeeze what you want to know out of him."

This was coming to be an old subject, and a sore one. The train-master still insisted that Hallock was plotting the downfall of the Lidgerwood management, and wanted to have the chief clerk systematically shadowed. Lidgerwood's wholly groundless prepossession for Hallock kept him from turning the matter over to the company's detectives—this in spite of the growing accumulation of evidence all pointing to Hallock's treason.

Subjected to a rigid cross-examination, Judson had insisted that a part, at least, of his drunken recollection was real—that part identifying the two plotters in Cat Biggs' back room with Rufford and Hallock. Moreover, the chief clerk was undoubtedly keeping in close touch with the discharged employees, for some purpose or other; and latterly he had been dropping out of his office without notice, disappearing, sometimes, for a day at a time.

Lidgerwood was recalling the last of these disappearances when the second wrecking-train, having backed to the nearest siding to reverse the order of itself and to place the derrick-car in the lead, came up to go into action. McCloskey shaded his eyes from the sun glare and looked down the line.

"Hello!" said he. "Got a new wrecking-boss?"

The superintendent nodded. "I have one in the making. Dawson wanted to come along and try his hand."

"Gridley send him?"

"No; Gridley is away, somewhere."

"So Fred's your understudy, is he? I've got one, too. I'll show him to you after a little."

They were walking back over the ties toward the half-buried 195. The ten-wheeler was on its side in the ditch, nuzzling the opposite bank of a low cutting. Dawson had already divided his men; half of them to place the huge jack-beams and outriggers of the self-contained derrick to insure its stability, and the other half to trench under the fallen engine and to adjust the chain-slings for its lifting.

"It's a pretty long lift, Fred," said the superintendent. "Going to try it from here?"

"Best place," said the reticent one shortly.

Lidgerwood was looking at his watch.

"Williams will be due here before long with a special; I don't want to hold him up," he remarked.

"Thirty minutes?" inquired the draftsman, without taking mind or eye off his problem.

"Oh, yes; forty or fifty, maybe."

"All right, I'll be out of the way," was the quiet rejoinder.

"Yes, you will!" was McCloskey's ironical comment, when the draftsman

had gone around to the other side of his lifting machine.

"Let him alone," said Lidgerwood. "It lies in my mind that we are developing a genius, Mac."

"He'll fall down," grumbled the trainmaster. "That derrick won't lift the '95 clear."

"Won't it?" said Lidgerwood. "That's where you are mistaken. It will lift anything we have on the division. It's the biggest and best there is made. How did you come to get a tool like that on the Red Butte Western?"

McCloskey grinned.

"You don't know Gridley yet. He's a crank on good machinery. That derrick was a clean steal."

"What?"

"I mean it. It was ordered for one of the South American railroads, and was on its way to the coast over the P. S-W. About the time it got as far as Copah, we happened to have a mix-up in our Copah yards, with a ditched engine that Gridley couldn't pick up with the 60-ton derrick we had on the ground. Gridley borrowed this one out of the P. S-W. yard, used it, liked it, and kept it, sending our 60-ton machine on to the South Americans instead of it."

"Why, the pirate!" laughed Lidgerwood. "I don't wonder they call us buccaneers over here. How could he do it without being found out?"

"That puzzled more than two or three of us; but one of the men told me some time afterward how it was done. Gridley had a painter go down in the night and change the lettering—on our old derrick and on this new one. It happened that they were both made by the same manufacturing company, and were of substantially the same pattern. I suppose the P. S-W. yard crew didn't notice particularly that the derrick they had lent us out of the through coast freight had shrunk somewhat in the using. But I'll bet those South Americans are saying pleasant things to the manufacturers yet."

"Doubtless," said Lidgerwood, and now he was not laughing. The little side-light on Red Butte Western methods was sobering.

By this time Dawson had got his big lifter into position, with its huge steel arm overreaching the fallen engine, and was giving his orders quietly, but with the curtest precision.

"Man that hand-fall, and take slack! Pay off, Darby"—to the hoister engineer. "That's right; more slack!"

The great tackling-hook, as big around as a man's thigh, settled accurately over the 195.

"There you are!" snapped Dawson. "Now, make your hitch, boys, and be lively about it. You've got just one minute to do it in!"

"Heavens to Betsey!" said McCloskey, in a stage whisper to the superintendent. "He's going to pick it up at one hitch—and without blocking!"

"Hands off, Mac," said Lidgerwood quietly.

"If Fred didn't know this trade before, he's learning it pretty rapidly."

"That's all right; but if he doesn't break something before he gets through with——"

But Dawson was breaking nothing. Having designed locomotives, he knew to the fraction of an inch where the balancing hitch should be made for lifting one. Also, machinery and the breaking strains of it were as his daily bread. While McCloskey was still prophesying failure, he was giving the word to Darby.

"Now, then, Billy, try your hitch! Put the strain on a little at a time and often. Steady!—now you've got her—keep her coming!"

Slowly the big freight-puller rose out of its furrow in the gravel, righting itself to the perpendicular as it came. Anticipating the inward swing of it, Dawson was showing his men how to place ties and rails for a short, temporary track; and when he gave Darby the stop-signal, the big engine was swinging bodily in air in the grip of the derrick-tackle, poised to a nicety above the steel placed to receive it.

Dawson climbed up to the main line where Darby could see him, and where he could see all the parts of his problem

at once. Then his hands went up to beckon the slacking-signals. At the uplifting of his finger there was a backward racing of machinery, a groan of relaxing strains, and the 195 stood upright, ready to be hauled out when the temporary track should be extended to a connection with the main line.

"Let's go up to the other end and see how your understudy is making it, Mac," said the gratified superintendent. "It is very evident that we can't tell this young man anything that he doesn't already know about picking up locomotives."

On the way up the track he asked about Clay and Green, the engineer and fireman who were in the wreck.

"They are not badly hurt," said the train-master. "They both jumped—on Green's side, luckily. Clay was bruised considerably; and Green says he knows he plowed up fifty yards of gravel with his face before he stopped, and he looked it. They both went home on 201."

Lidgerwood was examining the crossties, which were cut and scarred by the flanges of many derailed wheels.

"You have no notion of what did it?" he queried, turning abruptly upon McCloskey.

"Only a guess; and it couldn't be verified in a thousand years. The '95 went off first, and Clay and Green both say it felt as if a rail had turned over on the outside of the curve."

"What did you find when you got here?"

"Chaos and Old Night; a pile of scrap with a hole torn in the middle of it by the explosion, and a fire going."

"Of course you couldn't tell anything about the cause, under such conditions."

"Not much, you'd say; and yet a curious thing happened. The entire train went off so thoroughly that it passed the point where the trouble began before it piled up. I was able to verify Clay's guess—a rail had turned over on the outside of the curve."

"That proves nothing," said Lidgerwood.

"No; because there were a number of others farther along, turned and broken and bent. But the first one was the only freak."

"How was that?"

"Well, it wasn't either broken or bent; but when it turned over it not only unscrewed the nuts of the fishplate bolts and threw them away—it pulled every spike on both sides of itself and hid them."

Lidgerwood nodded gravely. "I should say your guess has already verified itself. All it lacks is the name of the man who loosened the fishplate bolts and pulled the spikes."

"That's about all."

The superintendent's eyes narrowed. "Who was missing out of the Angels crowd of trouble-makers yesterday, Mac?"

"I hate to say," said the train-master. "God knows I don't want to put it all over any man unless it belongs to him. But I'm locoed every time it comes to that kind of a guess. Every bunch of letters I see spells just one name."

"Go on," said Lidgerwood sharply.

"Hallock went somewhere on 202 yesterday."

"I know," was the quick reply. "I sent him out to Navajo to meet Cruikshanks—the cattleman with the long claim for stock injured in the Gap wreck two weeks ago."

"Did he stop at Navajo?" queried the train-master.

"I suppose so; at any rate, he saw Cruikshanks."

"Well, I haven't got any more guesses; only a notion or two. This is a pretty stiff up-grade for 202—she passes here at two-fifty—just about an hour before Clay found that loosened rail—and it wouldn't be impossible for a man to drop off as she was climbing this curve."

But now the superintendent was shaking his head.

"It doesn't hold together, Mac; there are too many loose ends. Your hypothesis presupposes that Hallock took a day train out of Angels, deliberately rode twelve miles past his destination, jumped off here while the train

was in motion, pulled the spikes on this loosened rail, and walked back to Navajo in time to see the cattleman and to get in to Angels on the delayed Number 75 this morning. Could he have done all these things without advertising them to everybody?"

"I know," confessed the train-master. "It doesn't look reasonable."

"It isn't reasonable," Lidgerwood went on, arguing Hallock's case as if it were his own. "Bradford was 202's conductor; he'd know if Hallock failed to get off at Navajo. Gridley was a passenger on the same train; and he would have known. The agent at Navajo would be a third witness. He was expecting Hallock on that train, and was no doubt holding Cruikshanks. Your guesses prefigure Hallock failing to show up when the train stopped at Navajo, and make it necessary for him to explain to the two men who were waiting for him why he let Bradford carry him by so far that it took him several hours to walk back. You see how incredible it all is?"

"Yes, I see," said McCloskey; and when he spoke again they were several rail-lengths nearer the up-track end of the wreck, and his question went back to Lidgerwood's mention of the expected special.

"You were saying something to Dawson about Williams and a special train; is that Mr. Brewster coming in?"

"Yes. He wired from Copah last night. He has Mr. Ford's car—the Nadia."

The train-master's face expressed the deepest chagrin.

"Suffering Moses! but this is a nice thing for the president of the road to see as he comes along! Wouldn't the luck we're having make a dog sick?"

Lidgerwood shook his head. "That isn't the worst of it, Mac. Mr. Brewster isn't a railroad man, and he will probably think this is all in the day's work. But he is going to stop at Angels and go over to his copper-mine. Which means that he will camp right down in the midst of our mix-up. I'd cheerfully give a year's salary to have him stay away a few weeks longer."

McCloskey was not a profane man, in the red-desert sense of the term, but now his comment was an explosive exclamation naming the Scriptural place of future punishment. It was the only word he could find adequately to express his feelings.

The superintendent changed the subject.

"Who is your foreman, Mac?" he queried, as a huge mass of the tangled scrap was seen to rise at the end of the smaller derrick's grapple.

"Judson," said McCloskey shortly. "He asked leave to come along as a laborer, and when I found that he knew more about train-scrapping than I did, I promoted him."

There was something like defiance in the train-master's tone.

"From the way in which you are saying it, I infer that you don't expect me to approve," said Lidgerwood judicially.

McCloskey had been without sleep for a good many hours, and his patience was tenuous. His hat was tilted to its most contentious angle when he said:

"I can't fight for you when you're right, and not fight against you when I think you are wrong, Mr. Lidgerwood. You can have my head any time you want it."

"You think I should break my word and take Judson back?"

"I think, and the few men who are still with us think, that you ought to give the man who stood in the breach for you a chance to earn bread and meat for his wife and babies," snapped McCloskey, who had gone too far to retreat.

Lidgerwood was frowning when he replied: "You don't see the point involved. I can't reward Judson for what you, yourself, admit was a personal service. I have said that no drunkard shall pull a train on this division. Judson is no less a drink maniac for the fact that he arrested Rufford when everybody else was afraid to."

McCloskey was mollified—a little.

"He says he has quit drinking; and

I believe him this time. But this job I've given him isn't pulling trains."

"No; and if you have cooled off enough, you may remember that I haven't yet disapproved your action. I don't disapprove. Give him anything you like where a possible relapse on his part won't involve the lives of other people. Is that what you want me to say?"

"I was hot," said the train-master, gruffly apologetic. "We've got none too many friends to stand by us when the pinch comes, and we were losing them every day you held out against Judson."

"I'm still holding out on the original count. Judson can't run an engine for me till he has proved conclusively that he has quit the whisky. Whatever other work you can find for him——"

McCloskey slapped his thigh. "By George! I've got a job right now. Why on top of earth didn't I think of him before? He's the man to keep tab on Hallock!"

But now Lidgerwood was frowning again.

"I don't like that, Mac. It's a dirty business, to be shadowing a man who has a right to suppose that you are trusting him."

"But, good Lord! Mr. Lidgerwood, haven't you got enough to go on? Hallock is the last man seen around the engine that disappears; he spends a lot of his time swapping grievances with the rebels; he is out of town and within a few miles of here, as we know, when this wreck happens. If all that isn't enough to earn him a little suspicion I——"

"I know; I can't argue the case with you, Mac. But I can't do it."

"You mean you won't do it. I respect your scruples, Mr. Lidgerwood. But it is no longer a personal matter between you and Hallock; the company's interests are involved."

Without suspecting it, the train-master had found the weak joint in the superintendent's armor: for the company's sake the personal point of view must be ignored.

"It is such a despicable thing," he protested, as one who yields reluctantly. "And if, after all, Hallock is innocent——"

"That is just the point," insisted McCloskey. "If he is innocent, no harm will be done, and Judson will become a witness for instead of against him."

"Well," said Lidgerwood; and what more he would have said about the conspiracy was cut off by the shrill whistle of a down-coming train. "That's Williams with the special," he announced, when the whistle gave him leave. "Is your flag out?"

"Sure. It's up around the hill, with a safe man to waggle it."

Lidgerwood cast an anxious glance toward Dawson's huge derrick-car, which was still blocking the main line. The hoist-tackle was swinging free, and the clamps and outriggers were taken in.

"Better send somebody down to tell Dawson to pull up here to your temporary siding, Mac," he suggested; but Dawson was one of those priceless helpers who do not have to be told in detail. He had heard the warning whistle, and already had his train in motion.

By a bit of quick shifting the main line was cleared before Williams swung cautiously around the hill with the private car. In obedience to Lidgerwood's uplifted hand, the brakes were applied, and the Nadia came to a full stop with its observation-platform opposite the end of the wrecking-track.

A big man in a soft felt hat and loose box dust-coat, with twinkling little eyes and a curling brown beard that covered fully three-fourths of his face, stood at the hand-rail.

"Hello, Howard!" he called to Lidgerwood. "By George! I'd forgotten that you were out here. What are you trying to do? Got so many cars and engines that you have to throw some of them away?"

Lidgerwood climbed up the embankment to the track, and McCloskey carefully let him do it alone. The "Hello, Howard!" had not been thrown away upon the train-master.

"It looks a little that way, I must

admit, Uncle Ned," said the culprit, who had answered so readily to his Christian name. "We tried pretty hard to get it cleaned up before you came along, but we couldn't quite make it."

"Oho! tried to cover it up, did you? Afraid I'd fire you? You needn't be. My job as president merely gets me passes over the road. Ford's your man; he's the fellow you want to be scared of."

"I am," laughed Lidgerwood. The big man's heartiness was always infectious. Then: "Coming over to camp with us a while? If you are, I hope you carry your commissary along. Angels will starve you, otherwise."

"Don't tell me about that tin-canned teepee village, Howard—I *know*. I've been there before. How are we doing over in the Timanyoni foot-hills? Getting much ore down from the Copperette? Climb up here and tell me all about it. Or, better still, come on across the desert with us. They don't need you here."

The assertion was quite true. With Dawson, the train-master, and an understudy Judson for bosses, there was no need for a fourth. Yet intuition, or whatever masculine thing it is that stands for intuition, prompted Lidgerwood to say:

"I don't know as I ought to leave. I've just come out from Angels, you know."

But the president was not to be denied.

"Climb up here and quit trying to find excuses. We'll give you a better luncheon than you'll get out of the dinner-pails; and if you carry yourself handsomely you may get a dinner invitation after we get in. That ought to tempt any man who has to live in Angels the year round."

Lidgerwood marked the persistent plural of the personal pronoun, and a great fear laid hold upon him. None the less, the president's invitation was a little like the king's—in some sense a command. Lidgerwood merely asked for a moment's respite, and went down to announce his intention to McCloskey and Dawson.

Curiously enough, the draftsman seemed to be trying to ignore the private car. His back was turned upon it, and he was glooming out across the bare hills, and his big jaw was set as if the effort were painful.

"I'm going back to Angels with the president," said the superintendent, speaking to both of them. "You can clean up here without me."

The train-master nodded, but Dawson seemed not to have heard. At all events, he made no sign. Lidgerwood turned and ascended the embankment, only to have the sudden reluctance assail him again as he put a foot on the truck of the Nadia to mount to the platform. The hesitation was only momentary, this time. Other guests Mr. Brewster might have, without including the one person whom one would circle the globe to avoid.

"Good boy!" said the president, when Lidgerwood swung over the high hand-rail and leaned out to give Williams the starting-signal. And when the scene of the wreck was withdrawing into the rearward distance: "Let's go inside, where we sha'n't be obliged to see so much of this God-forsaken country at one time."

One half-minute later the superintendent would have given much to be safely back with McCloskey and Dawson at the vanishing curve of scrap-heaps. In that half-minute Mr. Brewster had opened the car door, and Lidgerwood had followed him across the threshold.

The comfortable lounging-room of the Nadia was not empty; nor was it peopled by a group of Mr. Brewster's associates in the copper combine, the alternative upon which Lidgerwood had hopefully hung the "we's" and the "us's."

Seated on a wicker divan drawn out to face one of the wide side windows were two young women, with a curly-headed, clean-faced young man between them. A little farther along, a rather austere lady, whose pose was of calm superiority to her surroundings, looked up from her magazine to say, as her husband had said: "Why, Howard!

are you here?" Just beyond the austere lady, and dozing in his chair, was a white-haired man, whose strongly marked features proclaimed him the father of one of the young women on the divan.

And in the farthest corner of the open compartment, facing each other companionably in an S-shaped double-chair, two other young persons, a man and a woman. Truly, the heavens had fallen! For the young woman filling half of the tête-à-tête chair was the one person whom Lidgerwood would have circled the globe to avoid meeting.

VII.

BITTER-SWEET.

Taking his cue from certain passages in the book of painful memories, Lidgerwood meant to obey his first impulse, which prompted him to follow Mr. Brewster to the private office-stateroom in the forward end of the car, disregarding the couple in the tête-à-tête contrivance. But the strikingly beautiful young woman in the nearer half of the crooked-backed seat would by no means sanction such an easy solution of the difficulty.

"Not a word for me, Howard?" she protested, rising and fairly compelling him to touch the hand of welcoming. "If you are so glacial on the outer borders of your kingdom, what will you be when we have actually invaded your sanctuary at Angels?"

Then, since Lidgerwood seemed still at loss for the exactly right word, she presented her companion of the S-shaped chair: "Possibly you will shake hands a little less frigidly with Mr. Van Lew. Herbert, this is my cousin, once-removed, Mr. Howard Lidgerwood, the tyrant of the Red Butte Western, and I can assure you that he is much more terrible than he looks—aren't you, Howard?"

Lidgerwood shook hands with the tall young athlete, who seemed never to have done increasing his magnificent stature as he rose up out of his half of the lounging-seat.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Lidgerwood, I'm sure," said the young man, gripping the given hand until Lidgerwood winced. "Miss Eleanor has been telling me about you—marooned out here in the red desert. By Jove! don't you know, I believe I'd like to try it myself! It's ages since I've had a chance to kill a man, and they tell me——"

Lidgerwood laughed, recognizing Eleanor Brewster's romancing gift, or the results of it.

"We shall have to arrange a little round-up of the bad men from Bitter Creek for you, Mr. Van Lew. I hope you brought your armament along—the regulation .45's, and all that."

Miss Brewster laughed derisively.

"Don't let him frighten you, Herbert," she mocked. "Bitter Creek is in Wyoming—or is it in Montana?"—this with a quick little eye-stab for Lidgerwood—"and the name of Mr. Lidgerwood's refuge is Angels. Also, poppa says there is a hotel there called the 'Celestial.' Do you live at the Celestial, Howard?"

"No; I never properly lived there. I dined there for a few weeks until Mrs. Dawson took pity on me. Mrs. Dawson is from Massachusetts."

"Hear him!" scoffed Miss Eleanor, still mocking. "He says that as if to be 'from Massachusetts' were a patent of nobility. He knows I had the cruel misfortune to be born in Colorado. But tell me, Howard: is Mrs. Dawson a charming young widow?"

"Mrs. Dawson is a very charming middle-aged widow, with a grown son and daughter," said Lidgerwood, a little stiffly. It seemed entirely unnecessary that she should ridicule him before the athlete.

"And the daughter—is she charming, too? But that says itself, since she must also date 'from Massachusetts.'" Then to Van Lew: "Every one is 'from' somewhere, out here in the red desert, you know."

"Miss Dawson is quite beneath your definition of charming, I think," was Lidgerwood's rather dignified rejoinder: and for the third time he made as

if he would go on to join the president in the office-stateroom.

"You are staying to luncheon with us, aren't you?" said Miss Brewster. "Or do you just drop in and out again, like the other kind of angels?"

"Your father commands me, and he says I am to stay. And now, if you will excuse me——"

This time he succeeded in getting away; and up to the luncheon hour talked copper and Copperette prospects with Mr. Brewster in the seclusion of the president's office and sleeping-compartment. The call for the midday meal had been given, when Mr. Brewster switched suddenly from copper to silver.

"By the way, there were a few silver strikes over in the Timanyonis about the time of the Red Butte gold excitement," he remarked. "Some of them have grown to be shippers, haven't they?"

"Only two, of any importance," replied the superintendent; "the Ruby, in Ruby Gulch, and Flemister's Wire-Silver, at Little Butte. Neither of these is a bonanza, but they are both shipping fair ore in good quantities."

"Flemister," said the president reflectively. "He's a character. Know him personally, Howard?"

"A little," the superintendent admitted.

"A little is a plenty. It wouldn't pay you to know him very well," laughed the big man good-naturedly. "He has a way of getting next to you, financially, that is simply paralyzing. I knew him in the old Leadville days—a born gentleman, and also a born buccaneer. If the men he has robbed—not outwitted, mind you, but just held up and robbed—were to stand in a row, they'd fill a Denver street."

"He is in his proper longitude out here, then," said Lidgerwood rather grimly. "This is the hold-ups' heaven."

"I'll bet Flemister is doing his share of the looting. Is he alone in the mine?"

"I don't know that he has any partners. Somebody told me, when I first came over here, that Gridley, our master mechanic, was in with him; but Gridley says that is a mistake—that he thinks too much of his reputation to be Flemister's partner."

"Hank Gridley," mused the president; "Hank Gridley and his reputation! It would certainly be a pity if that were to get corroded in any way. There is a man who properly belongs to the Stone Age—what you might call an elemental scoundrel."

"You surprise me!" said Lidgerwood. "I didn't like him at first; but I am convinced now that it was only an unreasoning prejudice. He appeals to me as being anything but a scoundrel."

"Well, perhaps the word is a bit too savage," admitted the copper king. "What I meant was that he has capabilities that way, and not much moral restraint. He is the kind of man to wade through fire and blood to gain his object without the slightest thought of the consequences to others. Ever hear the story of his marriage? No? Remind me of it some time, and I'll tell you. But we were speaking of Flemister—you say the Wire-Silver has turned out pretty well?"

"Very well, indeed, I believe. Flemister seems to have money to burn."

"He always has—if not his own money, then somebody else's. It makes little difference to him. The way he got the Wire-Silver would have made Bluebeard, the pirate, blush. Know anything about the history of the mine?"

Lidgerwood shook his head.

"Well, I do; just happen to. You know how it lies—on the western slope of Little Butte ridge?"

"Yes."

"That is where it lies now. But the original openings were made on the eastern slope of the Butte. They didn't pan out very well, and Flemister began to look for a victim to whom he could sell. About that time a man, whose name I can never recall, took up a claim on the western slope of the ridge directly opposite Flemister. This man struck it pretty rich, and Flemister began to bully him on the plea that the new discovery was only a continuation of his own vein going straight through

the hill. You can guess what happened."

"Fairly well," said Lidgerwood. "Flemister lawed the other man out?"

"He did worse than that; he drove straight into the hill, past his own lines, and actually took the money out of the other man's mine to use as a fighting fund! I don't know how the courts sifted it out finally; I didn't follow it up very closely. But Flemister put the other man to the wall in the end—put it all over him, as we say out here. There was some domestic tragedy involved, too, in which Flemister played the devil with the other man's family; but I don't know anything about that."

"Yet you say Flemister is a born gentleman, as well as a born buccaneer, Uncle Ned?"

"Well, yes; he behaves himself in decent surroundings. He isn't exactly the kind of man you can turn down short—education, good manners, and all that, you know. But if he were hard up, I shouldn't let him get within roping-distance of my pocketbook; or, if I had given him occasion to dislike me, within easy pistol-range. In the first instance he'd rob; in the other case he'd shoot to kill."

"Wherein he is neither better nor worse than a good many others who take the sunburn of the red desert," said Lidgerwood; and just then the waiter opened the door a second time to say that luncheon was served.

"Don't forget to remind me that I'm to tell you Gridley's story, Howard," said the president, rising out of the depths of his lounging-chair and stripping off the dust-coat. "Reads like a romance—only I fancy it was anything but a romance for poor Lizzie Gridley. Let's go and see what the cook has done for us."

At luncheon Lidgerwood was made known to the other members of the private-car party. The white-haired old man who had been dozing in his chair was Judge Holcombe, Van Lew's uncle, and the father of the prettier of the two women who had been entertaining Jefferis, the curly-headed collegian.

Jefferis laughingly disclaimed relationship with anybody; but Miss Carolyn Doty, the less pretty but more talkative of the two young women, confessed that she was a cousin, twice removed, of Mrs. Brewster.

Quite naturally, Lidgerwood sought to pair the younger people when the table gathering was complete, and was not entirely certain of his own prefiguring.

Eleanor Brewster and Van Lew sat together, and were apparently absorbed in each other to the exclusion of all things extraneous. Jefferis had Miss Doty for a companion, and the affliction of her well-balanced tongue seemed to affect neither his appetite nor his enjoyment of what the young woman found to say.

Miriam Holcombe had fallen to Lidgerwood's lot, and at first he thought that her silence was due to the fact that young Jefferis had got on the wrong side of the table. But, after she began to talk, he changed his mind.

"Tell me about the wrecked train we passed a little while ago, Mr. Lidgerwood," she began, almost abruptly. "Was any one killed?"

"No; it was a freight, and the crew escaped. It was a rather narrow escape, though, for the engineer and fireman."

"You were putting it back on the track?" she asked.

"There isn't much of it left to put back, as you may have observed," said Lidgerwood. Then he told her of the explosion and the fire.

She was silent for a few moments, and then she went on, half-gropingly, he thought.

"Is that part of your work—to get the trains on the track when they run off?"

He laughed. "I suppose it is—in the larger sense, anyway. But I am lucky enough to have a wrecking-boss; two of them, in fact, and both good ones."

She looked up quickly, and he was sure that he surprised something more than a passing interest in the deep-welled eyes; a trouble depth, he would have called it, had their talk been any-

thing more than the ordinary conventional table exchange.

"We saw you go down to speak to two of your men—one who wore his hat pulled down over his eyes and made dreadful faces at you as he talked——"

"That was McCloskey, our trainmaster," he cut in.

"And the other——?"

"Was wrecking-boss Number Two," he laughed; "my latest apprentice, and a very promising young subject. This was his first time out, under my administration, and he put McCloskey and me out of the running at once."

"What did he do?" she asked; and again he saw the groping wistfulness in her eyes, and wondered at it.

"I couldn't explain it without being unpardonably technical. But perhaps it can best be summed up in saying that he is a fine mechanical engineer, with the priceless gift of knowing how to handle men."

"You are generous, Mr. Lidgerwood, to—to a subordinate. He ought to be very loyal to you."

"He is. And I don't think of him as a subordinate—I shouldn't if he were on my pay-roll instead of that of the motive-power department. I am proud to be able to call him my friend, Miss Holcombe."

Again a few moments of silence, during which Lidgerwood looked gloomily across at Miss Brewster and Van Lew. Then another curiously abrupt question.

"His college, Mr. Lidgerwood; do you chance to know where he was graduated?"

At another moment Lidgerwood might have wondered at the young woman's persistence. But now Benson's story of Dawson's terrible misfortune was crowding all purely speculative thoughts out of his mind. He told her the college at which Dawson had taken his engineering course, adding: "But I believe he did not stay through the four years."

Miss Holcombe was looking down the table; down and across to where her father was sitting at Mr. Brewster's right. When she spoke again the personal note was gone, and their speech, what there was of it, was of the sort that is meant to bridge discomforting gaps.

In the dispersal after the meal, Lidgerwood attached himself to Miss Doty; this in sheer self-defense. The desert passage was still in its earlier stages, and Miss Doty's volubility promised to be the lesser of two evils; the greater being the possibility that Eleanor Brewster might seek to reopen a certain spring of bitterness at which he had been constrained to drink deeply and miserably in the past.

The self-defensive expedient served its purpose admirably. For the better part of the desert run the president slept in his stateroom, Mrs. Brewster and the judge dozed in their respective easy chairs, and Jefferis and Miriam Holcombe, after roaming for an uneasy half-hour from the rear platform to the cook's galley, went forward, at one of the stops, to ride—by the superintendent's permission—in the engine-cab with Williams.

Miss Brewster and Van Lew were absorbed in a book of plays, and their corner of the large open compartment was the one farthest removed from the double divan which Lidgerwood had chosen for Miss Doty and himself.

Later, Van Lew rolled a cigarette and went to the smoking-compartment, which was in the forward end of the car; and when next Lidgerwood broke Miss Doty's eye-hold upon him, Miss Brewster had also disappeared—into her stateroom, as he supposed.

Taking this as a sign of his release, he gently disentangled the thread of Miss Carolyn's inquisitiveness, and went out to the rear platform for a breath of fresh air and surcease from the sorrow of a neatly balanced tongue.

When it was quite too late to retreat, he found the deep-recessed observation-platform of the Nadia occupied. Miss Brewster was not in her stateroom, as he had mistakenly persuaded himself. She was sitting in one of the two platform camp-chairs, and she was alone.

"I thought you would come, if I only gave you time enough," she said quite

coolly. "Did you find Carolyn very persuasive?"

He ignored the query about Miss Doty, replying only to the assumption.

"I made sure you had gone to your stateroom. I hadn't the slightest idea you were out here."

"Otherwise, you would not have come? How magnificently churlish you can be, upon occasion, Howard."

"It doesn't deserve so hard a name," he rejoined patiently. "For the moment I am your father's guest, and when he asked me to go to Angels with him——"

"He didn't tell you that mama and Judge Holcombe and Carolyn and Miriam and Herbert and Matt Jefferis and I were along," she cut in maliciously. "Howard, don't you know you are positively spiteful?"

"No," he denied.

"Don't contradict me; and don't be silly." She pushed the other chair toward him. "Sit down and tell me how you've been enduring the interval. It is more than a year, isn't it?"

"Yes. A year, three months, and eleven days." He had taken the chair beside her because there seemed to be nothing else to do.

"How mathematically exact you are!" she gibed. "To-morrow it will be a year, three months, and twelve days; and the day after to-morrow—mercy me! I should go mad if I had to think back and count up that way every day. But I asked you what you have been doing."

He spread his hands. "Existing, one way and another. There has always been my work."

"'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,'" she quoted. "You are excessively dull to-day, Howard. Hasn't it occurred to you?"

"Thank you for expressing it so delicately. It seems to be my misfortune to disappoint you, always."

"Yes," she said, quite unfeelingly. Then, with a swift relapse into pure mockery: "How many times have you fallen in love during the one year, three months, and eleven days?"

His frown was almost a scowl. "Is it worth while to make an unending jest of it, Eleanor?"

"A jest—of your falling in love? No, my dear cousin once removed: no one would dare to jest with you on that subject. But tell me: I am really and truly interested. Will you confess to three times? That isn't so very many, considering the length of the interval."

"No."

"Twice, then? Think hard—there must have been at least two little quickenings of the heart-beats in all that time."

"No."

"Still no? That reduces it to one—the charming Miss Dawson——"

"You might spare her, even if you are not willing to spare me. You know well enough there has never been any one but you, Eleanor; that there never will be any one but you."

The train was passing the western confines of the waterless tract, and a cool breeze from the snow-capped Timanyonis was sweeping across the open platform. It blew strands of the red-brown hair from beneath the closely fitting traveling-toque: blew color into Miss Brewster's cheeks, and a daring brightness into the laughing eyes.

"What a pity!" she said tauntingly.

"That I can't measure up to your requirements of the perfect man? Yes, it is a thousand pities," he agreed.

"No; that isn't precisely what I meant. The pity is that I seem to you to be unable to appreciate your many excellences and your—constancy."

"I think you were born to torment me," he rejoined gloomily. "Why did you come out here with your father? You must have known that I was here."

"Not from any line you have ever written," she retorted. "Alicia Ford told me; otherwise, I shouldn't have known."

"Still, you came. Why? Were you curious?"

"Why should I be curious; and what about—the red desert? I've seen deserts before."

"I thought you might be curious to

know what disposition the red desert was making of such a failure as I am," he said evenly. "I can forgive that more easily than I can forgive your bringing of the other man along to be an onlooker."

"Herbert you mean? He is a good boy: a nice boy—and perfectly harmless. You'll like him immensely when you come to know him better."

"You like him?" he queried.

"How can you ask—when you have just called him the other man?"

Lidgerwood turned in his chair and faced her squarely.

"Eleanor, I had my punishment over a year ago, and I have been hoping you would let it suffice. It was hard enough to lose you without having to stand by and see another man win you. Can't you understand that?"

She did not answer him. Instead, she whipped aside from that phase of the subject to ask a question of her own.

"What ever made you come out here, Howard?"

"To the superintendency of the Red Butte Western? You did."

"I?"

"Yes, you."

"It is ridiculous!"

"It is true."

"Prove it—if you can: but you can't."

"I am proving it, day by day; or trying to. I didn't want to come, but you drove me to it."

"I decline to take any such hideous responsibility," she laughed lightly. "There must have been some better reason: Miss Dawson, perhaps."

"Quite likely; barring the small fact that I didn't know there was a Miss Dawson until I had been a month in Angels."

"Oh!" she said half-spitefully. And then, with calculated malice: "Howard, if you were only as brave as you are clever! Why can't you be a man and strike back now and then?"

"Strike the woman I love? I'm not quite down to that, I hope, even if I was once too cowardly to strike for her."

"Always *that!* Why don't you let me forget?"

"Because you must not forget. Listen: one week ago—only one week ago—one of the Angels—er—peacemakers, stood up in his place and shot at me. What I did made me understand that I had gained nothing in a year."

"Shot at you?" she echoed, and now he might have discovered a note of real concern in her tone if his ear had been attuned to hear it. "Tell me about it. Who was it? And why did he shoot at you?"

His answer seemed to be indirection itself.

"How long do you expect to stay in Angels and its vicinity?" he asked.

"I don't know. This is partly a pleasure trip for us younger folk. Poppa was coming out alone, and I—that is, mama decided to come and make a car-party of it. We may stay two or three weeks if the others wish it. But you haven't answered me. I want to know who the man was, and why he shot at you?"

"Exactly; and you have answered yourself. If you stay two weeks or two days in Angels, you will doubtless hear all you care to about my troubles. When the town isn't talking about what it is going to do to me, it is gossiping about the dramatic arrest of my would-be assassin."

"You are most provoking!" she declared. "Did you make the arrest?"

"Don't shame me needlessly: of course I did not. One of our locomotive engineers, a man whom I had discharged for drunkenness, was the hero. It was a most daring thing. The desperado is known in the red desert as 'The Killer,' and he has had the entire region terrorized; so completely that the town marshal of Angels—a man who has never before shirked his duty—refused to serve the warrant. Judson, the engineer, made the capture; took the 'terror' from his place in a gambling-den, disarmed him, and brought him in. Judson himself was unarmed; he did the trick with a little steel wrench."

Miss Brewster, being Colorado-born, was deeply interested.

"Now you are no longer dull, Howard!" she exclaimed. "Tell me in words just how Mr. Judson did it."

And he told her in detail.

Miss Eleanor did not need to vocalize her approval of Judson; the dark eyes were alight with excitement.

"How fine!" she applauded. "Of course, after that, you took Mr. Judson back into the railway service?"

"Indeed, I did nothing of the sort; nor shall I, until he demonstrates that he means what he says about letting the whisky alone."

"Until he demonstrates! Don't be so cold-blooded, Howard! Possibly he saved your life."

"Quite probably. But that has nothing to do with his reinstatement as an engineer of passenger-trains. It would be much better for Rufford to kill me than for me to let Judson have the chance to kill a train-load of innocent people."

"And yet a few moments ago you called yourself a coward, cousin mine. Could you really face such an alternative without flinching?"

"It doesn't appeal to me as a question involving any special degree of courage," he said slowly. "I am a great coward, Eleanor—not a little one, I hope."

"It doesn't appeal to you?—dear God!" she said. "And I have been calling you—but would you do it, Howard?"

He smiled at her sudden earnestness.

"How generous your heart is, Eleanor, when you let it speak for itself! If you will promise not to let it change your opinion of me—you shouldn't change it, you know, for I am the same man whom you held up to scorn the day we parted—if you will promise, I'll tell you that for weeks I have gone about with my life in my hands knowing it. It hasn't required any great amount of courage; it merely comes along in the line of my plain duty to the company—it's one of the things I draw my salary for."

"You haven't told me yet why this desperado wanted to kill you—why you are in such a deep sea of trouble out here, Howard," she reminded him.

"No; it is a long story, and it would bore you if I had time to tell it. And I haven't time, because that is Williams' whistle for the Angels yard."

He had risen, and was helping his companion to her feet, when Mrs. Brewster came to the car door to say:

"Oh, you are out here, are you, Howard? I was looking for you to let you know that we dine in the Nadia at seven. If your duties will permit——"

Lidgerwood's refusal was apologetic but firm.

"I am very sorry, Aunt Jessica," he protested. "But I left a deskful of stuff when I ran away to the wreck this morning, and, really, I'm afraid I shall have to beg off."

"Oh, don't be so dreadfully formal!" said the president's wife impatiently. "You are a member of the family, and all you have to do is to say bluntly that you can't come; and then come whenever you can while we are here. Carolyn Doty is dying to ask you a lot more questions about the red desert. She confided to me that you were the most interesting talker——"

Miss Eleanor's interruption was calculated to temper the passed-on praise.

"He has been simply boring me to death, mama, until just a few minutes ago. I shall tell Carolyn that she is too easily pleased."

Mrs. Brewster, being well used to Eleanor's flippancies, paid no attention to her daughter.

"You will come to us whenever you can, Howard; that is understood," she said.

And so the social matter rested.

Lidgerwood was half-way down the platform of the Crow's Nest, heading for his office and the neglected desk, when Williams' engine came backing down one of the yard tracks on its way to the roundhouse. At the moment of its passing, a little man, with his hat pulled over his eyes, dropped from the gangway step and lounged across to the headquarters building.

It was Judson; and, having seen him

last toiling away man-fashion at the wreck in the Crosswater Hills, Lidgerwood hailed him.

"Hello, Judson! How did you get here? I thought you were doing a turn with McCloskey?"

The small man's grin was ferocious.

"I was; but Mac said he didn't have any further use for me—said I was too much of a runt to be liftin' and pullin' along with growed-up men. I came down with Williams on the '66.'"

Lidgerwood turned away. He recalled his reluctant consent to McCloskey's proposal touching the espial upon Hallock, and was sorry he had given it. It was too late to recall it now; but neither by word nor look did the superintendent intimate to the discharged engineer that he knew why McCloskey had sent him back to Angels on the engine of the president's special.

VIII.

BLIND SIGNALS.

Lidgerwood had not exaggerated about the deskful of work in making his excuses to the president's wife; and during his absence at the scene of the wreck the pile of letters had increased by the accretions from the incoming mails from both directions.

Among the day's letters was one from Flemister, which had been mailed in the postal-car on Train 202 at Little Butte, and it had "Immediate" written in the corner of the envelope. The superintendent read this letter twice before placing it, face down, in the "unanswered" basket. It was merely a friendly suggestion, but it called for a decision, which Lidgerwood was willing to postpone for the moment.

The decision involved concerned a right-of-way. Acting under instructions from Vice-president Ford, Lidgerwood had already begun to move in the matter of extending the Red Butte Western on toward the Nevada goldfields, and Benson had been running preliminaries and making estimates.

Of the two or three routes under consideration, that which left the main line at Little Butte, turning southward up the Wire-Silver Gulch, had been most favorably reported upon by Benson. The right-of-way, save for a mile or more through an upper valley of cattle-ranches, could be had for the taking; and, among the ranchers, only one was making difficulties.

It was about this man Grofield that Flemister wrote. The ranchman was down for the day from his high-valley homestead, and, in Flemister's view of the case, was amenable to reason. If Lidgerwood could make it convenient to come out on the evening passenger-train, he, Flemister, would arrange to keep Grofield overnight, and the right-of-way matter could doubtless be settled satisfactorily.

This was the substance of the mine-owner's letter, and if Lidgerwood hesitated, he told himself it was because he was puzzled by Flemister's sudden friendliness. Past correspondence with the owner of the Wire-Silver had been acrimonious rather than friendly—on Flemister's part, at least. His mine was five miles distant from Little Butte, at the end of a spur track, and he frequently complained that he had trouble in securing cars, and in getting them moved promptly when they were loaded at the mine.

Still, all this was in the way of business; while the letter about Grofield was purely personal. Lidgerwood thought about it while he was working through his correspondence with the stenographer; was still thinking of it when he closed his desk to go downstairs for a breathing moment, and the cup of coffee which should be his substitute for the dinner he was too hurried to go after.

Train 205, the train Flemister had asked him to take, was just pulling in from the run across the desert when he reached the platform. It was too late to take this means of reaching Little Butte, but that was a small matter: it merely meant that he would have to order out his service-car and go special, if he should finally decide to go.

Angels being the division-station, there was a twenty-minute stop for all

passenger-trains. Lidgerwood went in to the lunch-counter at the station-end of the headquarters building and ordered his cup of coffee. The room was comfortably filled with passengers from the waiting train, and with a sprinkling of trainmen and town idlers, among the latter a number of the lately discharged employees of the Red Butte Western. Lidgerwood marked a little group of these last-named withdrawing to a corner of the room as he entered, and, while the waiter was drawing his coffee, he saw Hallock join the group.

It was only a straw, but straws are significant when the wind is blowing hard enough. Once again Lidgerwood recalled McCloskey's proposal, and his own grudging assent to it, and now he was not sorry when he saw Judson working his way through the crowded room to a point of espial upon the group in the corner.

The ex-engineer overtook him when he was on the way back to the upper offices.

"Mac told me to report to you when I couldn't get at him," he began abruptly. "There's something on, but I can't find out what it is. Are you layin' off to go out on the road anywhere to-night, Mr. Lidgerwood?"

Lidgerwood's decision was taken on the instant; for no good reason save that the time for any decision must come sooner or later.

"Yes; I am going west in my car in an hour or two. Why?"

"I don't know why you shouldn't, if you want to. What I *don't* savvy is why them fellows in yonder are so anxious to find out."

As he spoke, a man who had been skulking behind a truck-load of express freight, so near that he might have touched either of them with an outstretched arm, withdrew silently in the direction of the lunch-room. He was a tall man with stooping shoulders, and his retreat was noiseless and cautiously made, but not quite cautiously enough to escape the lynx eyes of Judson.

"By cripes! look at that, will you?" he exclaimed, pointing to the retreating figure. "Hallock—and he was listening!"

Lidgerwood shook his head. "That isn't Hallock: and a word to you, Judson—don't you let McCloskey's prejudices run away with you. I know what you have been instructed to do. Do it with at least as much fairness as you would if McCloskey's bias ran the other way. You'll please me better if you find out that Mr. Hallock is a true man."

"But that was Hallock," insisted Judson. "Or else it was his double."

"No: follow him and see for yourself. It was more like that Ruby Gulch operator who quit in a quarrel with McCloskey a week or two ago: what's his name?—Sheffield."

Judson hurried away to satisfy himself, and Lidgerwood climbed the stair to his office. The stenographer had not yet returned from supper, and the superintendent turned his back upon the littered desk and went to stand at the window, from which he could look down upon the waiting passenger-train and the platform.

Seeing the cheerful lights in the side-tracked Nadia, he fell to thinking of Eleanor, and he knew now why he had hesitated so long about making up his mind to go to Little Butte. Chilled hearts follow the analogy of cold hands. When the fire is near, a man will go and spread his fingers to the blaze, though he may be well-assured that they will ache for it.

The woman he loved was in Angels; that was unpreventable. But he could resolve that there should not be a repetition of the old play of the moth and the candle. It was well that at the very outset a call had come to break the spell of her nearness, and that he had not disregarded it.

The train conductor's "All aboard," shouted on the platform just below him, drew his attention from the Nadia and the distracting thought of Eleanor's presence. Train 205 was in readiness for the westward flight, and the locomotive-bell was clanging musically. A half-grown moon, hanging high in the black dome of the night, yellowed the

glow of the platform incandescents. The last few passengers were hurrying up the steps of the cars, and the conductor was swinging his lantern to the engineer.

At the final moment, when the train was fairly in motion, Lidgerwood saw Hallock—it was unmistakably Hallock this time—spring from the shadow of a baggage-truck and whip up to the step of the smoker. And a scant half-second later he saw Judson race across the wide platform and throw himself, like a self-propelled projectile, against and through the closing vestibule doors of the sleeper.

Judson's dash and capture were easily accounted for—he had seen Hallock. But where was Hallock going—and why? Lidgerwood was still asking himself the question half-abstractedly, when he crossed to his desk and touched the buzzer-push, which brought an operator from the despatcher's room.

"Wire Mr. Flemister, care of Goodloe, at Little Butte, that I am coming out with my car and should be with him by eleven o'clock. Then call up the yard office and tell Matthews to let me have the car and an engine by eight-thirty, sharp," he directed.

The young man made a note of the order and went out, opening the door in time to admit the returning stenographer; and the superintendent settled himself in his swing-chair for an hour's hard work. At half-past eight he heard the wheel-grindings of the up-coming service-car, and the weary stenographer snapped a rubber band upon the notes of the final letter.

"That's all for to-night, Grady. I'm sorry to have to work you so late, but I'd like to have those letters written out and mailed before you lock up. Are you good for it?"

"I'm good for anything you say, Mr. Lidgerwood," said the boy, who was one of the loyal ones; and the superintendent put on his light coat and went out and down the dark stair.

At the outer door he turned up the long platform instead of down, and walked quickly to the Nadia, persuading himself that he must in common decency tell the president that he was going away; persuading himself that it was this, and not the desire to warm his hands at the ungrateful fire of Eleanor's mockery, that was making him turn his back upon the service-car.

The observation-platform of the private car was fully occupied, as he had expected to find it. The night was perfect, and the high-riding moon, dipping to its midnight extinguishment behind the western barriers of the Timanyonis, was an invitation which the young people of the party had not tried to withstand.

"Hello, Mr. Lidgerwood! is that you?" said Van Lew. "Thought you said this was a bad man's country. We've been out here an hour or more, and we haven't heard a single war-whoop, and nobody has shot up the town; in fact, I think the town has gone ingloriously to bed. We're defrauded."

"It does go to bed pretty early—that part of it that doesn't stay up pretty late," laughed the superintendent. Then he spoke to Eleanor. "I am going west in my car, and I don't know just when I shall return. Please tell your father that everything we have here is entirely at his service. If you don't see what you want, you are to ask for it."

"Will there be any one to ask when you are gone?" she inquired, neither sorrowing nor rejoicing, so far as he could determine.

"Oh, yes; McCloskey, my train-master, will be in from the wreck before morning, and he will fall over his feet trying to do for you, if you'll give him a chance."

"Will he make faces at me, as he did at you when you went across to speak to him this morning?"

"You are a good guesser. That was Mac; and he will probably make faces at you."

Miss Brewster was running her fingers along the hand-rail, as if the brass ornamentation were the keyboard of a piano. "You say you don't know how long you will be away?" she asked.

"No; but probably not more than the

night. I was only providing for contingencies."

"Will your run take you as far as the Timanyoni Cañon?"

"Yes; through it, and a little way beyond."

"You say we are to ask for what we want?"

"Surely," he replied unguardedly.

"Then we'll begin at once," she announced coolly; and, turning quickly to the others: "Oh, all you people, listen a moment, will you?—hush, Carolyn! What do you say to a moonlight ride through the most spectacular cañon in the Timanyonis in Mr. Lidgerwood's car? It will be an experience you'll talk about as long as you live. Don't all speak at once, please."

But they did. There was an instant and enthusiastic chorus of approval, winding up rather dolefully, however, with Miss Doty's protest: "But Cousin Jessica won't let us!"

"Mr. Lidgerwood won't let us, you mean," put in Miriam Holcombe quietly.

Lidgerwood said what he could without being crudely inhospitable. His car was at their service, of course, but it was not very commodious. Moreover, he was going on a business trip, and at the Wire-Silver mine he would have to leave them for an hour or two. Moreover, again, if they got tired, they would have to sleep as they could, though possibly his stateroom in the service-car might be made to accommodate the three young women. All this he said, hoping and believing that Mrs. Brewster would promptly veto the unchaperoned excursion.

But that was one time when his great-aunt disappointed him. Mrs. Brewster, wheedled by Eleanor, yielded gracefully, merely coming to the car door to tell Lidgerwood that she would hold him responsible for the safe return of the trippers.

"See, now, how easy it is for one to promise more—oh, so much more!—than he has any idea of performing," said Miss Eleanor, dropping out to walk with her victim when the party trooped down the long platform of the Crow's Nest to the service-car. And when he did not reply—"Please don't be grumpy," she pleaded.

"It was the maddest notion!" he protested. "What ever made you suggest it?"

"More churlishness?" she said reproachfully. And then, with mock sentiment: "There was a time when you would have moved heaven and earth for a chance to take me somewhere with you, Howard."

"To be with you; yes. But——"

Her laugh was too sweet to be shrill; none the less, it was a little flick of the whip of malice.

"Listen," she said. "I did it out of pure hatefulness. You showed so plainly this afternoon that you wished to be quit of me—of the entire party—that I couldn't resist. Possibly you will think twice before you snub me again, Howard, dear."

Quickly he stopped and faced her. The others were a few steps in advance; were already boarding the service-car.

"One word, Eleanor—and, for pity's sake, let us make it final. There are some things that I can endure, and some others that I cannot—will not. I love you. What you said to me the last time we were together made no difference; nothing you can ever say will make any difference. You must take that fact into consideration while you are here, and we are obliged to meet."

"Well?" she said.

"That is all," he said shortly. "I am—as I told you this afternoon—the same man that I was a year ago last spring; as deeply infatuated, and, unhappily, as far below your ideal of what your lover should be. In justice to me, in justice to Van Lew——"

"I think your conductor is waiting to speak to you," she broke in sweetly, and, giving it up, he put her on the car and turned to confront the man with the green-shaded lantern, who proved to be Bradford.

"Any orders, Mr. Lidgerwood?" inquired the reformed cattle-herder, looking stiff and uncomfortable in his new service uniform—one of Lidgerwood's earliest requirements for men on duty in the train service.

"Yes. Run without stop to Little Butte, unless the despatcher calls you down. Time yourself to make Little Butte by eleven o'clock, or a little before. Who is on the engine?"

"Williams."

"Williams? How does it come that he is doubling out with me? He came in with the president's car only a few hours ago."

"So did I, for that matter," said Bradford calmly. "But we both got a hurry call about fifteen minutes ago."

Lidgerwood held his watch to the light of the green-shaded lantern. If he meant to keep the wire appointment with Flemister, there was no time to call out another crew.

"I don't like to ask you and Williams to double, especially when I know of no necessity for it. But I'm in a rush. Can you men stand it?"

"Sure," said the ex-cowman. Then he ventured a word of his own. "I'll ride up ahead with Williams—you're pretty full up, back here in the car, anyway—and then you'll know that two of your own men are keepin' tab on the run. With the wrecks we're enjoying——"

Lidgerwood was impatient of mysteries.

"What do you mean, Andy?" he broke in. "Anything new?"

"Oh, nothing you can put your finger on. Same old rag-chewin' up at Cat Biggs' and the other waterin'-troughs, about how you've got to be done up, if it costs money."

"That isn't new," objected Lidgerwood irritably.

"Tumble-weeds," said Bradford, "rollin' round over the short grass. But they show which way the wind's comin' from, and give you the jumps when you wouldn't have 'em naturally. Williams had a spell of 'em a few minutes ago when he went over to take the 266 out o' the roundhouse, and found one of the back-shop men down under her tinkerin' with her trucks."

"What's that?" was the sharp query.

"That's all there was to it," Bradford went on imperturbably. "Williams asked the shopman politely what in hell he was doing under there, and the fellow crawled out and said he was just lookin' her over to see if she was all right for the night run. Now, you wouldn't think there was any tumble-weed in that to make a man jump; but Williams had 'em. Says he to me, tellin' me about it just now: 'That's all right, Andy; but how in blue blazes did he, or anybody else except Matthews and the caller, know that the 266 was goin' out?' And I had to pass."

Lidgerwood asked a single question: "Did Williams find that anything had been tampered with?"

"Nothing that you could shoot up the back-shop man for. One of the truck safety-chains—the one on the left side, back, was loose. But it couldn't have hurt anything if it had been taken off. We ain't runnin' on safety-chains these days."

"Safety-chain loose, you say?—so, if the truck should jump and swing, it would keep on swinging? You tell Williams when you go up ahead that I want that machinist's name."

"H'm," said Bradford; "reckon it was meant to do that?"

"God only knows what isn't meant, these times, Andy. Hold on a minute before you give Williams the word to go." Then he turned to young Jefferis, who had come out on the car-platform to light a cigarette. "Will you ask Miss Brewster to step out here for a moment?"

Eleanor came at the summons, and Jefferis gave the superintendent a clear field by dropping off to ask Bradford for a match.

"You sent for me, Howard?" said the president's daughter, and honey could not have matched her tone for sweetness.

"Yes. I shall have to anticipate the Angels' gossips a little by telling you that we are in the midst of a pretty bitter labor fight. That is why people go gunning for me. I can't take you and your friends over the road to-night."

"Why not?" she inquired.

"Because it may not be entirely safe."

"Nonsense!" she retorted. "What

could happen to us on a little excursion like this?"

"I don't know. But I wish you would reconsider and go back to the Nadia."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," she said wilfully. And then, with totally unnecessary cruelty, she added: "Is it a return of the old malady? Are you afraid again, Howard?"

The taunt was too much. Wheeling suddenly, Lidgerwood snapped out a summons to Jefferis: "Get aboard, Mr. Jefferis; we are going."

At the word, Bradford ran forward, swinging his lantern, and a moment later the special train shot away from the Crow's Nest platform and out over the yard switches, and began to bore its way into the westward night.

IX.

A COUNCIL OF WAR.

Forty-two miles southwest of Angels the Red Butte Western, having picked its devious way among the foot-hills and hogbacks, plunges abruptly into the echoing cañon of the Timanyoni.

For forty added miles the river chasm, at no time more than a cleft of the mountains, affords a reluctant footing for the railway grade, leading the double line of the steel through the eastern spur of the twin Timanyoni ranges. At its lower extremity this first or upper cañon forms the gateway to a shut-in valley of upheaved hills. To east and west rise the sentinel peaks of the two mountain ranges; and across the valley the river brawls, twisting and turning as it may among the craggy and densely forested lesser heights.

Red Butte, the center of the evanescent mining excitement which was responsible for the building of the railroad, lies at the northern head of this hemmed-in valley, high-pitched among the shouldering hogbacks of the western range. Seeking the line of the fewest cuts and fills and the easiest grades, the locating engineers of the original company had followed the river down to a crossing at the heel of Little Butte, one of the highest of the inter-mountain hills, turning thence for the northward climb to the gold-mining district at the valley head.

Elsewhere than in the land of great peaks and continent-cresting ranges, Little Butte itself would be called a mountain.

On the engineering maps of the Red Butte Western its outline appears as that of a triangle with five-mile sides, the three angles of the figure marked respectively by Silver Switch, Little Butte station and bridge, and the Wire-Silver mine.

Between Silver Switch and the station the main line of the road follows the base of the triangle, with the precipitous bluff of the big hill on the left, and the torrent flood of the Timanyoni on the right. Along the eastern side of the triangle, in the summer of troubles, ran the old spur, starting from Silver Switch on the main track, and ending five miles up the isolating valley at the group of buildings marking Flemister's first and unprofitable opening of the silver veins.

On the western side of the triangle, with Little Butte station for its starting-point, ran the new spur, built to accommodate Flemister after he had dug through the hill, ousted the rightful owner of the true Wire-Silver, and transferred his labor hamlet and his plant—or the major part of it—to the western slope of the Butte, at this point no more than a narrow ridge separating the eastern and western gulches.

It was at Silver Switch that Judson, whom Lidgerwood saw hurling himself at the platform of the outgoing passenger-train at Angels, left his seat in the rear end of the smoking-car and darted quickly to the vestibule to hang off by the hand-rails and to make ready to jump.

Save when the disused spur was made an emergency passing-point for two trains, the switch was not a stop; and the train was unmistakably slowing as it swung around the Point-of-Rocks curve and its engine's headlight picked up the rusted rails of the abandoned mine track.

Hanging off to look ahead, Judson saw what he was expecting to see. As the slowing train passed the switch, a man dropped from the forward step of the smoker and walked swiftly away up the disused track of the spur. Judson's turn came a moment later, and when his end of the car flicked past the switch-stand he, too, dropped to the ground, waited until he could follow without being detected, and then set out after the tall figure which was by that time scarcely more than a swaying shadow in the moonlight.

The chase led directly up the old spur, but not quite to the five-mile-distant end of it. A few hundred yards short of the old buildings, one of which, judging from the sounds and lights, was still used as the Wire-Silver power-house, the shadowy figure took to the wood and began to climb the ridge. Judson followed, breathless, but when he came out on top of the hill to a point from which he could look down upon the buildings and workings of the western slope, he had lost the scent. The tall man had disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him.

This, in Judson's prefiguring, was a small matter. The tall man was Hallock, who, for some reason yet to be determined, was carefully concealing his approach to Flemister's headquarters. Hence the drop from the moving train at Silver Switch and the lonely walk up the old spur, the climbing of the hill and the descent upon the little mining hamlet from the rear, when the obvious and shorter way would have been by train around the hill and up the new spur from Little Butte station.

Forecasting it thus, Judson lost no time on the ridge's top looking for the man who had so mysteriously disappeared. Instead, he went by the shortest path he could find straight down to the mine headquarters, a long, log building of one story, with the storekeeper's room in one end and the superintendent's offices in the other.

There was a light in one of the offices, but the two small windows were carefully shaded. Judson made the circuit of the building twice before he could find an avenue of espial, even for the ear. Two persons at least were in the lighted room; but the thick log walls muffled their voices to a murmur, and there was no crack or cranny for a peep-hole. In despair, Judson made a third circuit, this time on hands and knees. To the lowly come the rewards of humility. The building stood upon the side-hill, and the space under the floor was only carelessly boarded up with the slabs from the log-sawings. Being a small man, Judson found his rat-hole, crept in, and was presently crouching beneath the poorly jointed floor of the lighted office.

It took him but a moment to verify his guess that there were two men, and only two, in the room above. They were talking in low tones, and Judson had no difficulty in identifying one of them as the owner of the Wire-Silver mine. The other seemed to be trying, curiously enough, to disguise his voice.

Judson knew nothing about the letter in which Flemister had promised to arrange a meeting between the superintendent of the Red Butte Western and the ranchman Grofield. He had followed Hallock almost to the door of the mine office; hence the second speaker could be none other than Hallock. Yet the curiously disguised voice puzzled the ex-engineer.

Judson had hardly found his breathing-space between the floor timbers when the bell of the private-line telephone rang in the room above. It was Flemister who answered.

"Hello! Yes, this is Flemister. What's that you say?—a message about Mr. Lidgerwood? All right — fire away."

"Who is it?" inquired the muffled voice which fitted, and yet did not fit, the man whom Judson had followed from Angels to his point of disappearance in the timbering of the eastern slope of the ridge.

Judson heard the click of the replaced telephone ear-piece.

"It's Goodloe, at Little Butte station," replied the mine-owner. "The Angels despatcher had called him up to say

that Lidgerwood's special had left at eight-forty, which would figure it in here at about eleven, or a little later."

"Who is running it?" asked the other man, rather anxiously, Judson thought.

"Williams and Bradford. A fool for luck every time. We might have had to *erase*r a couple of our friends."

"There is no such thing as luck," rasped the other voice. "My time was short—after we found out he wasn't coming on the passenger. But I managed to send word to Matthews and Lester, telling them to make sure of Williams and Bradford."

"Good!" said Flemister. "Then you had some such alternative as that I have just outlined in your mind?"

"No," was the swift answer. "I was merely providing for the hundredth chance. I don't like your alternative."

"Why don't you?"

"For one thing, it's needlessly bloody. We don't have to go at this thing like a bull at a gate. Matters are working out all right in a purely natural way. It would only be a question of a few days, or weeks, and Lidgerwood would throw up his hands and quit; and when he goes out, I go in."

"Yet you schemed with Bart Rufford to put him out of the fight with a pistol bullet," sneered Flemister.

The listener under the floor felt the easing of a strain. He would have been willing to swear that the voice of Flemister's companion was the voice of the man who had been conspiring with Rufford; but Flemister's taunt made assurance doubly sure. Moreover, the arch-plotter was not denying.

"Rufford is a bloodthirsty devil—like yourself," the other man was saying calmly. "As I've told you before, I've discovered Lidgerwood's weak spot: he can't call a sudden bluff. Rufford's play was to get the drop on him and chase him out *of* town—out of the country. He overran his orders—and went to jail for it."

"Well?" said the mine-owner.

"Your play, as you outlined it to me in cipher-wire this afternoon, was based on this same weakness of Lidgerwood's, and I agreed to it. You were to toll him up here with the lie about meeting Grofield, and then one of us was to put a pistol in his face and scare him into throwing up his job. As I say, I agreed to it. He'll have to go when the fight with the men gets hot enough; but he might hold on too long for our comfort."

"Well?" said Flemister again, this time more impatiently, Judson thought.

"He queered your deal by failing to come on the passenger, and now you propose to fall back on Rufford's method. I don't approve."

Again the mine-owner said: "Why don't you?" And the other voice took up the question promptly.

"First, because it is unnecessary, as I have explained. Lidgerwood is officially dead, right now. When the grievance committees tell him what has been decided upon, he will put on his hat and go back to New York."

"And secondly?" suggested Flemister, with a sneer in his voice.

There was a little pause, and Judson listened with his very soul in his ears.

"The secondly is a weakness of mine, you'll say, Flemister. I want his job; I've got to have it, or a lot of us will wind up in the penitentiary. But I haven't anything against the man, himself. He trusts me: he has defended me when others have tried to put him wise; he has been white to me, Flemister."

"Is that all?" queried the mine-owner, in the tone of the prosecuting attorney who gives the criminal his full length of rope with which to hang himself.

"All of that part of it—and you are saying that it is more than enough. Perhaps it is; but there is still another cartridge in the gun. Lidgerwood is Ford's man. If Lidgerwood throws up his job of his own accord, I may be able to swing Ford into line to name me as his successor. On the other hand, if Lidgerwood is snuffed out, and there is the faintest suspicion of foul play—Flemister, I tell you that man Ford will neither eat nor sleep till he has set the dogs on us!"

There was another pause, and Judson shifted his weight cautiously from one elbow to the other. Then Flemister began, without heat, and equally without pity:

"You say it is unnecessary; that Lidgerwood will be pushed out by the labor fight. My answer to that is that you don't know him quite as well as you think you do. If he lives, he will stay—unless you can manage to take him unawares, as I meant to, and scare him off. If he stays, you know what will happen, sooner or later. He'll find you out—and after that the fireworks."

But now the other voice took its turn at the savage sneering.

"You can't put it all over me in that way, Flemister; you can't, and, by thunder! you sha'n't. You're in the hole just as deep as I am."

"Oh, no, my friend," said the cooler voice. "I haven't been stealing from the company: I have merely been buying a little disused scrap from you. You may say that I have planned a few of the adverse happenings which have been running the loss and damage account of the road up into the pictures during the past few weeks; possibly I have; but you are the man who has carried them out, and you are the man the courts will recognize. But we're wasting time sitting here jawing each other like a pair of old women. It's up to us to obliterate Lidgerwood; after which it will be up to you to get his job and cover up your tracks as you can. If he lives, he'll dig; and when he digs, he'll turn up things that neither of us can stand for."

"But this scheme of yours," protested the other; "it's a frost, I tell you! You say the night passenger from Red Butte is late; I know it's late now; but Cranford's running it, and it is all downhill from Red Butte to the bridge. Cranford will make up his thirty minutes, and that will put his train right here in the midst of things. Call it off for to-night, Flemister; meet Lidgerwood when he comes and tell him an easy lie about your not being able to hold Grofield."

Judson heard the creak and snap of a swing-chair suddenly righted, and the floor swung under the mine-owner when he sprang up.

"And let you drop out of it? Not by a jugful, my cautious friend! Want to stay here and keep your feet warm while I go and do it? Not on your tintype! You cur! I'm about ready to freeze you, anyway. You come with me, or I'll give the whole snap away—to Vice-president Ford. I'll tell him how you built a whole street of houses in Red Butte out of company material and with company labor. I'll prove to him that you've scrapped first one thing and then another, condemned them so you might sell them for your own pocket. I'll——"

"Shut up!" said the other man hoarsely; and then, after a moment that Judson felt was crammed and surcharged with murderous possibilities: "Get your tools and come on. We'll see who's got the yellows before we're through with this."

By the movements on the floor over his head, Judson was made aware that the two plotters were about to leave the office.

As he had marked in his circuiting of the building, there was an outer door opening from the room of conference upon a short flight of steps—door and steps facing away from the hill and the mine entrance. Fearful lest they should escape by this door before he could secure a glimpse of them, Judson backed out of his cramped hiding-place in a sweating panic of excitement.

Notwithstanding his haste, however, he kept his wits keen-edged, and presently noted that the two men were passing out through the storeroom. Also, he made sure that there were other footfalls in advance of theirs, as of some one hastening to be first at the door of egress.

He was at his rat-hole opening in the underpinning in time to see a man leap from the porch at the end of the building and run for the shadows of the timbered mine entrance. And close upon the heels of this mysterious file-leader came the two whose footsteps he had been timing: these, too, crossed quickly

to the tunnel-mouth of the mine and disappeared within it.

Judson followed swiftly, without a moment's hesitation. Happily for him, the tunnel was lighted at intervals by electric pendants. Pushing on, he saw the two men pass under one of the lights in the receding depths; and a moment later he could have sworn that a third, the man who had leaped from the porch of the storeroom to run and hide in the shadows of the timbering, passed the same light, going in the same direction.

A hundred yards deeper into the hill there was a repetition of the flash-light picture. The two men, walking rapidly, one a step behind the other, passed under another of the suspended light-bulbs; and this time the ex-engineer, watching for the third man, saw him quite plainly.

Judson pulled his soft hat over his eyes and quickened his pace. The chase was growing mysterious. The two in the lead were doubtless Flemister and Hallock, presumably bent upon carrying out their plot against Lidgerwood. But since this plot evidently turned upon the nearing approach of the special train, why were they plunging on blindly into the labyrinth of the mine?

This was one-half of the mystery, and the other half was still more puzzling. Who was the third man? Was he a confederate in the plot?—or was he also following to spy upon the two in advance?

Judson was puzzled, but he did not let his curiosity tangle the feet of his purpose—which was to keep his quarry in sight. This purpose was finally defeated, however, in a most singular manner.

At the end of one of the longer tunnel reaches—a black cavern lighted only by a single incandescent near the distant end—the ex-engineer saw what appeared to be a bulkhead built across the passage and effectually blocking it. When the two men came to it, they passed through it and disappeared, and a shock of the confined air in the tunnel told of a door slammed behind them.

Judson broke into a run; then he stopped short, gasping. At the slamming of the door the third man had darted forward to fling himself against it, beating upon it with his bare hands and cursing like a madman.

Judson saw, understood, and acted, much as he would had he been on his engine with sudden death revealing itself a few short rail-lengths ahead. The two men had been merely taking the short cut through the hill to the old workings on the eastern slope—and they had cut off possible pursuit by locking the slammed door behind them.

The engineer-detective was a hundred yards down the tunnel, racing like a trained sprinter for the western exit, before he thought to ask himself why the third man was playing the madman before the locked door. But that matter was negligible; his own affair was to get out of the mine with the loss of the fewest possible seconds of time; to climb the ridge and to get down the eastern slope before the two plotters could disappear beyond the hope of rediscovery.

Judson did his best, flying down the tunnel reaches like a man escaping for his life. Far below in the deeper levels he could hear the click of drills, and the purring of the compressed air; but the upper passageway was deserted, and it was not until he was dashing out of the entrance that a watchman rose up to confront and halt him.

There was no time for soft words and skilful evasions. With one straight shoulder-blow, Judson sent the man staggering, and darted out into the moonlight.

But this was only half of the race, and by far the easier half. Judson flung himself at the steep hillside, running, falling, clambering on hands and knees, bursting through the fir thickets and hurling himself blindly over the obstacles.

When he reached the summit of the hill, after what seemed like an eternity of lung-bursting struggles, his tongue was like a dry stick in his mouth, refusing to shape the curses his soul would have poured out upon the alcohol that had made him a wind-broken cripple in the prime of his manhood.

And, after all, he was too late. It was a rough half-mile farther down to the shadowy clump of buildings whence the purring of a dynamo and the quick exhausts of a high-speeded steam-engine rose on the still night air. The half-mile was not in Judson's legs or in the thumping heart and wind-broken lungs.

Worse, still, the path, if there were one, was either to the right or the left; fronting him was a steep cliff, trifling enough as to heights and depths, but a sufficient barrier for a spent runner. Judson crawled to the edge of the cliff and looked down into the gloom below.

He made them out, after a little; two shadowy figures moving about among the shacks and tumble-down ore-sheds clustering at the end of the old spur. Now and again a light glowed and died out, like the momentary flashing of a firefly, and Judson knew that they were guiding their movements by the help of a pocket electric lamp.

What they were doing did not long remain a mystery. Judson heard grating of wheels upon iron, and a shadowy thing glided out of one of the low sheds and took its place upon the rails of the old spur.

Followed a clanking of bars and hammers, a quick mounting of the shadowy vehicle by the two men, the *click-click* of wheels passing over rail-joints, and the hand-car sped away down the spur, the two figures bowing alternately each to the other like a pair of grotesque automatons.

Judson's impulse prompted him, broken as he was, to dash down the hill and give chase. But if he would have yielded, another was before him to show him the futility of that expedient.

While the clicking of the hand-car wheels was still audible, a man—the door-hammering madman, Judson thought it must be—materialized suddenly from somewhere in the undershadows, and raced off down the track after the disappearing hand-car.

Judson saw the foot-pursuer left behind so quickly that his own hope of overtaking the two fugitives died almost before it had taken shape.

"That puts it up to me again," he said, rising stiffly from the cliff's edge and facing once more toward the western valley and the point of the great triangle where the lights of Little Butte station twinkled uncertainly in the distant Timanyoni valley. "If I can get down yonder to Goodloe's wire in time to catch Lidgerwood's special before it passes Timanyoni——" He broke off suddenly and held the face of his watch up to the moonlight. "God!" he muttered brokenly, "I couldn't do it, unless I had wings! He said eleven o'clock; and it's ten-ten right now!"

There was the beginning of a frenzied outbreak of despairing cursings, quite as maniacal as that of the door-pounding pursuer, upbubbling to Judson's lips when he remembered that there was a telephone in the mine manager's office—that Flemister had used it to talk to Goodloe.

Here was the last slender chance of getting a warning to the agent at Little Butte, and through him to the superintendent's special; and Judson forgot his weariness and dashed off down the hill, prepared to fight his way to the telephone if the entire night-shift of the Wire-Silver should try to stop him.

It cost ten of the precious fifty minutes to make the descent of the steep hill, and five more to dodge the mine watchman, who, having recovered from the effects of Judson's body-blow, was up and prowling about the mine buildings, looking for his mysterious assailant.

After the watchman was out of the way, five other minutes went to the prying open of one of the small square windows in the valley-fronting side of the office. Judson's lips were dry when he crept through the opening into the unfamiliar interior, in which the darkness was merely diluted by the moonlight filtering through the small window squares.

He found the telephone quickly. It was an old-fashioned set, with a crank and bell for ringing up. One turn of the crank told him that it was cut off somewhere—doubtless by a switch in the office wire.

Instantly he began to search for the switch, following the wires which led from the instrument with his fingers because he dared not turn the key of the electric desk-light.

The wires ran around the room on the wainscoting, and the switch, which merely cut out the office instrument and connected the line with the telephones in the mine, was directly over a small table. Fumbling to set it, Judson's hand fell upon a bottle and a glass. The table was evidently Flemister's sideboard.

It was second nature in the engineer to grasp the bottle and to remove the cork. The fine bouquet of the liquor was in his nostrils, and the hand that clutched the bottle was half-way to his lips before he realized that the battle was on. Twice he lifted the bottle. His lips were parched: his tongue rattled in his mouth: the fires of hell were alight within him crying out for assuagement.

"God 'a' mercy!" he mumbled, only half-articulately. "If I drink, I'm damned to all eternity; and if I don't take just one swallow, I can't talk to make Goodloe understand me!"

It was the test of the man. Somewhere, away down deep in the soul-abysses of John Judson, a thing stirred, took shape, and arose to help him to fight the drink devil that was racking him. Slowly the fierce thirst burned itself out: a moment later the newly arisen soul-captain within him whispered: "*Now*, John Judson—once for all," and he flung the tempting bottle far through the open window.

His hands were trembling when he found and set the switch, and once more wound the crank of the telephone. There was a welcome skirl of the bell, and a voice said: "Hello!—this is Goodloe: what's wanted?"

"This is Judson—John Judson. Catch Mr. Lidgerwood's special at Timanyoni Pass and tell Bradford and Williams to run slow, looking for trouble. Do you get that?"

A confused medley of rumblings and clankings came over the wire, and in the midst of it Judson heard Goodloe put down the receiver. In a flash he knew what was happening at Little Butte Station. The delayed passenger-train from the west was just in, and the agent was obliged to attend to his duties.

Anxiously he turned the crank, again and again. Since Goodloe had not cut off the connection, the mingled clamor of the station came to Judson's ear: the clicking of the telegraph-instruments, the trundling roar of a baggage-truck, the scream of the passenger-engine's pop-valve, and a little later the conductor's cry: "All aboard!" and the long-drawn exhausts as Cranford started the train.

Judson knew that in all human probability the superintendent's special had already passed Timanyoni, the last chance for a telegraphic warning; and here was the passenger slipping away and he was powerless to stop it.

Goodloe came back to the telephone when the train clatter had died away, and took up the broken conversation.

"Are you there yet, John?" he called. "Now, what was that you were trying to tell me about the special?"

Judson did not swear, the seconds were too vitally precious; he merely repeated his warning.

"Can't reach the special," came back over the wire. "It left Timanyoni ten minutes ago."

Judson's heart was in his mouth. "Where does it meet the passenger?" he demanded.

"You can search me," replied the Little Butte night man, who was not of those who borrow trouble. Then, suddenly: "Hold the phone a minute; the despatcher's calling me right now!"

There was another trying wait for the man in the darkened room at the Wire-Silver, and then Goodloe called again.

"Trouble," he said curtly. "Angels didn't know Cranford had made up so much time. Now he gives me an order to hold the passenger—after it's gone by. So long. I'm going to take a lantern and mog up the track to see where they come together."

Judson hung up the ear-piece, reset the wire-switch as he had found it, climbed out upon the porch, and re-

placed the window-sash; all this methodically, as one who sets the death-chamber in order after the final hope has been extinguished. Then he set out to walk down the new spur toward Little Butte, limping painfully, and feeling mechanically in his pockets for his pipe, which seemed to have been lost in some of the quick scene-shiftings.

X.

AT SILVER SWITCH.

Like that of other railroad officials whose duties constrain them to spend much time in transit, Lidgerwood's desk-work went with him up and down and around and about on the division; and before leaving his office in the Crow's Nest on the evening of surprises, he had thrust a packet of letters and papers into his pocket to be ground through the mental mill on the run to Little Butte.

It was his surreptitious transference of this packet to the oblivion of the closed service-car desk, observed by Miss Brewster, that gave the president's daughter an opportunity to make partial amends for having turned his business trip into a car-party.

Before the special was well out of the Angels yard she was commanding silence, and laying down the law for the others, particularizing Carolyn Doty, though only by way of a transfixing eye.

"Listen a moment, all of you," she said. "We mustn't forget that this was originally a business trip for Mr. Lidgerwood, and that we are here by our own invitation. We must make ourselves small, accordingly, and not bother him. Do you hear?"

Van Lew laughed, spread his long arms, and swept them all out toward the rear platform. But Miss Eleanor escaped at the door and went back to Lidgerwood.

"There, now!" she whispered. "don't say I can't do a handsome thing when I try. Can you work at all, with these chatterers on the car?"

One shapely hand was on the edge of the desk, and he covered it with one of his own.

"I can work," he asserted. "The one thing impossible is not to love you, Eleanor. It's hard enough when you are unkind; don't make it harder by being kind to me."

"What a lover you are when you forget to be self-conscious!" she said softly; none the less, she freed the imprisoned hand with a hasty little jerk. Then she went on quite magisterially: "Now you are to do what you were meaning to do when you didn't know we were coming with you. I'll make them stay away from you as long as I can."

She kept her word so well that for an industrious hour Lidgerwood scarcely realized that he was not alone. For the greater part of the interval the sightseers were out on the rear platform, listening to Miss Brewster's stories of the red desert.

When she had told all she had ever heard, she began to invent; and she was in the midst of one of the most hair-crisping of the inventions when Lidgerwood opened the door and joined the platform-party. Miss Brewster's animation died out and her voice trailed away into—"And that's all: I don't know the rest of it."

Lidgerwood's laugh was as hearty as Van Lew's or the collegian's.

"Please go on," he teased. Then, quoting her: "'And after they had shot up all the peaceable people in the town, they fell to killing each other, and——' Don't let me spoil the dramatic conclusion."

"You are the dramatic conclusion to that story," retorted Miss Brewster gloomily. Whereupon she immediately wrenched the conversation aside into a new channel by asking how far it was to the cañon portal.

"Only a mile or two now," was Lidgerwood's rejoinder. "Williams has been making good time."

Two minutes later the train, with the foaming torrent of the Timanyoni for its pace-setter, plunged between the narrow walls of the upper cañon, and the race down the grade of the crooked wa-

ter-trail through the heart of the mountains began.

There was little room for speech, even if the overawing grandeurs of the stupendous crevice, seen at their most impressive presentment under the moonlight, had encouraged it. The hiss and whistle of the air-brakes, the harsh, sustained note of the shrieking wheel-flanges shearing the inner edges of the rails on the curves, and the stuttering roar of the 266's safety-valve were continuous: a deafening medley of sounds multiplied a hundred fold by the demoniac laughter of the echoes.

Miss Carolyn clung to the platform hand-rail, and once Lidgerwood thought he surprised Van Lew with his arm about her: thought it, and immediately concluded, in justice both to the young man and to Eleanor, that he was mistaken. Miriam Holcombe had the opposite corner of the platform, and Jefferis was making it his business to see that she was not entirely crushed by the grandeurs.

Miss Brewster, steadying herself by the knob of the closed door, was not overawed: she had seen Rocky Mountain cañons at their best and their worst, many times before. But excitement, and the relaxing of the conventional leash that accompanies it, roused the spirit of daring mockery which was never beyond call in Miss Brewster's mental processes.

With her lips to Lidgerwood's ear, she said: "Tell me, Howard, how soon should a chaperon begin to make a diversion? I'm only an apprentice, you know. Does it occur to you that these young persons need to be shocked alive?"

There was a small Pintsch globe in the hollow of the "umbrella roof," with its single burner turned down to a mere pea of light. Lidgerwood's answer was to reach up and flood the railed platform with a sudden glow of the artificial radiance. The chorus of protest was immediate and reproachful.

"Oh, Mr. Lidgerwood, don't spoil the perfect moonlight that way!" cried Miss Doty; and the others echoed the beseeching.

"You'll get used to it in a minute," asserted Lidgerwood, meaning to be sarcastic. "It's so dark here in the cañon that I'm afraid some of you might fall overboard."

"The idea!" scoffed Miss Carolyn. Then petulantly to Van Lew: "We may as well go in. There is nothing more to be seen out here."

Lidgerwood looked to Eleanor for his cue, or, at least, for a whiff of moral support. But she turned traitor.

"You can do the meanest things in the name of solicitude, Howard," she began; but before she could finish, he reached up and turned the gas off with a snap, saying: "All right; anything to please the children." After which, however, he spoke authoritatively to Van Lew and Jefferis. "Don't let your responsibilities lean out over the railing, you two. There are places below here where the rocks barely give a train room to pass."

"*I'm* not leaning out," said Miss Brewster, as if she resented his caretaking. Then, for his ear alone: "But I shall, if I want to."

"Not while I am here to prevent you."

"But you couldn't prevent me, you know."

"Yes, I could."

"How?"

The special was rushing through the darkest of the high-walled clefts in the lower part of the cañon. "This way," he said, his love suddenly breaking bounds; and he took her in his arms.

She freed herself quickly, breathless and indignantly reproachful.

"I am ashamed of you!" she panted. "What if Herbert had been looking?"

"I shouldn't care if all the world had been looking," was the stubborn rejoinder. Then, passionately: "Tell me one thing before we go any farther, Eleanor: have you given him the right to call me out?"

"How can you doubt it?" she said; but now she was laughing at him again.

There was safety only in flight, and he fled back to his desk and the work thereon. He was wading dismally through a thick mass of correspondence

relating to a cattleman's claim for stock killed, and thinking of nothing so little as the typewritten words, when the roar of the echoing cañon walls died away and the train came to a stand at Timanyoni Pass, the first telegraph-station in the shut-in valley between the mountains. A minute or two later the wheels began to revolve again, and Bradford came in.

"More maverick railroading," he said disgustedly. "Timanyoni had his red light out, and when I asked for orders he said he hadn't any—thought maybe we'd want to ask for 'em, being as we was running wild."

"What did you do?" queried Lidgerwood.

"Oh, as long as he had stopped us, I had him call up the Angels despatcher to find out where we were at. We're on 204's time, you know—ought to have met her here."

"Why didn't we?" asked the superintendent, taking the time-card from its pigeonhole and glancing at Train 204's schedule.

"She was late out of Red Butte: broke something, and had to wait and tie it up; lost a half-hour makin' her getaway."

"Then we make Little Butte before 204 reaches there—is that it?"

"That's about the way the night despatcher has it ciphered out. He gave the Timanyoni Pass plug operator hot stuff for holdin' us up."

Lidgerwood shook his head. The artless simplicity of Red Butte Western methods, or unmethods, died hard.

"Does the night despatcher know just where 204 is at this present moment?" he inquired mildly.

Bradford laughed.

"I'd be willing to bet a piebald pinto that he don't. But I reckon he won't be likely to let her get past Little Butte, comin' this way, when he has let us get by Timanyoni Pass, goin' t'other way."

"That is all right, Andy; that is the way you would figure it out if you were running a special on a normally healthy railroad—you'd be justified in running to your next telegraph-station, regardless. But the Red Butte Western is an abnormally unhealthy railroad, and you'd better feel your way—pretty carefully, too. From Point of Rocks you can see well down toward Little Butte. Watch for 204's headlight, and if you see it, take the siding at the old Wire-Silver spur."

Bradford nodded, and went forward to share Williams' watch in the cab of 266, and Lidgerwood reimmersed himself in the cattleman's claim papers.

Twenty minutes farther on the train slowed down again, made a momentary stop, and began to screech and grind slowly around a sharp curve. Lidgerwood looked out of the window at his right. The moon had gone behind a huge hill, a lantern was pricking a point in the shadows some little distance from the track, and the tumultuous river was no longer sweeping parallel with the embankment. He rose and went to the rear platform, projecting himself into the group of sightseers just as the train stopped for the second time.

"Where are we now?" asked Miss Brewster, looking up at the dark mass of the hill, whose forested ramparts loomed black in the near foreground.

"At Silver Switch," replied Lidgerwood; and when the bobbing lantern came nearer, he called to the bearer of it: "What is it, Bradford?"

"The passenger, I reckon," was the answer. "Williams thought he saw it as we came around Point o' Rocks, and he was afraid the despatcher had got balled up some and let 'em past Little Butte."

For the moment the group on the railed platform was silent, and in the little interval a low humming sound made itself felt rather than heard; a shuddering murmur, coming from all points of the compass at once, as it seemed, and filling the still night air with its vibrations.

"Williams was right!" rejoined the superintendent sharply. "She's coming!"

Even as he spoke, the white glare of an electric headlight burst into full view on the shelflike cutting along the north-

ern face of the great hill, pricking out the smallest details of the waiting special, the closed switch, and the gleaming lines of the rails.

With this powerful spot-light to project its cone of blinding rays upon the scene, the watchers on the railed platform of the superintendent's service-car saw all the swift outworking of the tragic spectacular.

When the oncoming passenger-train was three or four hundred yards from the spur-track switch, a man who seemed to the onlookers to rise up out of the ground in the train's path, ran down the track, waving his arms in the stop-signal frantically. For an instant that seemed an age, the engineer made no sign. Then came a short, sharp whistle scream, a spewing of sparks from rail-head and tire at the clip of the emergency-brakes, a crash as of the ripping asunder of the mechanical soul and body, and a wrecked train lay tilted at an angle of forty-five degrees against the bank of the hillside cutting.

It was a moment for action rather than for words, and when he cleared the platform hand-rail and dropped, running, Lidgerwood was only the fragment of a second ahead of Van Lew and Jefferis. With Bradford swinging his lantern for Williams and his fireman to come on, the four men were at the wreck before the cries of fright and agony had broken out upon the awful stillness following the crash.

There was quick work and heart-breaking to be done, and for the first few critical minutes a terrible lack of hands to do it. Cranford, the engineer, was still in his cab, pinned down by the coal which had shifted forward at the shock of the sudden stop. In the wreck of the tender, the ironwork of which was rammed into shapeless crumplings by the upreared trucks of the baggage-car, lay the fireman, past human help, as a hasty side swing of Bradford's lantern showed.

The baggage-car, riding high upon the crushed tender, was body-whole; but the smoker, day-coach, and sleeper were all more or less shattered, with the smoking-car already beginning to blaze from the broken lamps. In such crises the minutes are priceless, and a cool head is worth more than a king's ransom.

Lidgerwood's genius for swift and effective organization came out strong under the hammer-blow of the occasion.

"Stay here with Bradford and Jefferis, and get that engineer out!" he called to Van Lew. Then, with arms outspread, he charged down upon the train's company, escaping as it could through the broken windows of the cars. "This way, every man of you!" he yelled, his shout dominating the clamor of cries, crashing glass, and hissing steam. "The fire's what we've got to fight! Line up down to the river, and pass water in anything you can get hold of! Here, Groner"—to the train-conductor, who was picking himself up out of the ditch into which the shock had thrown him—"send somebody to the Pullman for blankets. Jump for it, man, before this fire gets headway!"

Luckily, there were by this time many willing hands to help. The Timanyoni is a man's country, and there were few women in the train's passenger-list. Quickly a line was formed to the nearby margin of the river, and water, in hats, in buckets improvised out of pieces of tin torn from the wrecked car roofs, in saturated coats, cushion-covers, and Pullman blankets, hissed upon the fire, beat it down, and presently extinguished it.

Then the work of extricating the imprisoned ones began, light for it being had by the backing of Williams' engine to the main line above the switch so that the headlight played upon the scene.

Lidgerwood was in the thick of the rescue work when Miss Brewster, walking down the track from the service-car and bringing the two young women who were afraid to be left behind, launched herself and her companions into the midst of the nerve-racking horror.

"Give us something to do," she commanded, when he would have sent them back; and he changed his mind and set them at work binding up wounds and caring for the injured quite as if they

had been trained nurses sent from heaven at the opportune moment.

In a very little time the length and breadth of the disaster were fully known, and its consequences alleviated, so far as they might be with the means at hand. There were three killed outright in the smoker, two in the half-filled day-coach, and none in the sleeper; six in all, including the fireman, pinned beneath the wreck of the tender.

Cranford, the engineer, was dug out of his coal-covered grave by Van Lew and Jefferis, badly burned and bruised, but still living; and there were a score of other woundings, more or less dreadful.

Red Butte was the nearest point from which a relief-train could be sent; and Lidgerwood cut the telegraph-wire, connected his pocket set of instruments, and sent in the call for help. That done, he transferred the pocket-relay to the other end of the cut wire and called up the night despatcher at Angels. Fortunately, McCloskey and Dawson were just in with the two wrecking-trains from the Crosswater Hills; and the superintendent ordered Dawson to come out immediately with his train and a fresh crew, if it could be obtained.

Dawson took the wire and replied in person. His crew was good for another tussle, he said, and his train was still in readiness. He would start west at once, or the moment the despatcher could clear for him, and would be at Silver Switch as soon as the intervening miles would permit.

Eleanor Brewster and her guests were grouped beside Lidgerwood when he disconnected the pocket-set from the cut wire and deftly repaired the break. The service-car had been turned into a temporary hospital for the wounded, and the car-party was homeless.

"We are all waiting to say how sorry we are that we insisted on coming and thus adding to your responsibilities, Howard," said the president's daughter, and now there was no trace of mockery in her voice.

His answer was entirely sympathetic.

"I'm sorry that you have been obliged to see and take part in such a horror; that's all. As for your being in the way—it's quite the other thing. Cranford owes his life to Mr. Van Lew and Jefferis; and as for you three"—including Eleanor and the two young women—"your work is beyond any praise of mine. I'm sweating now because I don't know what to do with you while we wait for the relief-train to come."

"Ignore us completely," said Eleanor promptly. "We are going over to that little level place by the side-track to make a camp-fire. We were only waiting to be comfortably forgiven."

Freed of the more crushing responsibilities, Lidgerwood found Bradford and Groner, and with the two conductors went down the track to the point of derailment.

Ordinarily, the mere fact of destruction leaves little to be discovered when the cause is sought afterward. But, singularly enough, the curved track was torn up only on the side toward the hill; the outer rail was still in place, and the cross-ties, deeply bedded in the hard gravel of the cutting, showed only the surface mutilation of the grinding wheels.

"Broken flange under the 215, I'll bet," said Groner, holding his lantern down to the gashed ties. But Bradford denied it.

"No," he contradicted; "Cranford was able to talk a little after we toted him back to the car. He says it was a broken rail; says he saw it, and the man that was flaggin' him down, and gave her the air before he hit it."

"What man was that?" asked Groner, whose point of view had not been that of an onlooker.

Lidgerwood answered for himself and Bradford.

"That is one of the things we'd like to know, Groner. Just before the smash, a man who was not one of us ran down the track and tried to give Cranford the stop-signal."

They had been walking on down the line, looking for the actual point of derailment. When it was found, it proved Cranford's assertion—in part. There was a gap in the rail on the river side of the line. But it was not a fracture.

At one of the joints the fish-plates were missing, and the rail-ends were sprung apart sidewise sufficiently to let the wheel-flanges through. Groner went down on his hands and knees with the lantern held low, and made another discovery.

"This ain't no happen-so, Mr. Lidgerwood," he said, when he got up. "*The spikes are pulled!*"

Lidgerwood said nothing. There are discoveries which are beyond speech. But he stooped to examine for himself. Groner was right. For a distance of six or seven feet the rail had been loosened, and the spikes were gone out of the corresponding cross-ties. After it was loosened the rail had been sprung aside, and the bit of rock inserted between the parted ends to keep them from springing together was still in place.

Lidgerwood's eyes were bloodshot when he stood up and said:

"I'd like to ask you two men, as men, what devil out of hell would set a trap like this for a train-load of unoffending passengers?"

Bradford's slow drawl dispelled a little of the mystery.

"It wasn't meant for Groner and his passenger-wagons, I reckon. In the natural run of things, it was the 266 and the service-car that ought to've hit this first—204 bein' supposed to be a half-hour off her schedule. It was aimed for us, right enough; and not to throw us into the hill, neither. If we'd hit it goin' west, we'd be in the river. That's why it was sprung out instead of in."

Lidgerwood's right hand, balled into a fist, smote the air, and his outburst was a fierce imprecation. In the midst of it Groner said: "Listen!" and a moment later a man, walking rapidly up the track from the direction of Little Butte station, came into the small circle of lantern-light.

Groner threw the light on his face, revealing the haggard features of the owner of the Wire-Silver mine.

"Heavens and earth, Mr. Lidgerwood, this is awful!" he exclaimed. "I just heard of it over the telephone, and hurried down to do what I could. My entire night shift is on the way, walking down the track, and the whole Wire-Silver outfit is at your disposal."

"I am afraid you are a little late, Mr. Flemister," said the superintendent, unreasoning antagonism making the words sound crisp and ungrateful. "Half an hour ago——"

"Yes, certainly; Goodloe should have phoned me, if he knew," cut in the mine-owner. "Anybody hurt?"

"Half of the number involved, and six dead," said Lidgerwood soberly; then the four of them walked slowly and in silence up the track toward the two camp-fires where the unhurt survivors and the service-car's guests were fighting the chill of the high-mountain midnight.

XI.

THE CHALLENGE.

Lidgerwood was singularly dissatisfied to find that the president's daughter knew the man whom her father had tersely characterized as "a born gentleman and a born buccaneer," but the fact remained. When he came with Flemister into the circle of light cast by the smaller of the two fires, Miss Brewster not only welcomed the mine-owner; she immediately introduced him to her friends and made room for him on the flat stone which served her for a seat.

Lidgerwood sat on a tie-end a little apart, keenly observant. It is the curse of the self-conscious soul to find itself often at the meeting-point of comparisons. The superintendent knew Flemister a little, as he had admitted to the president; knew that his evil qualities were of the sort which may appeal, by the law of opposites, to the woman who would condemn evil in the abstract.

The old aphorism that the worst of men can win the love of the best of women is something both more and less than a mere contradiction of terms; and since Eleanor Brewster's manly ideal was avowedly builded upon physical courage as its pedestal, Flemister was quite likely to be the man to embody it.

But just now the "gentleman bucca-

neer" was not living up to the full measure of his reputation in the courageous field, as Lidgerwood was not slow to observe. His replies to Miss Brewster and the others were not always coherent; and his face, seen in the flickering firelight, was almost ghastly.

True, the talk was in hushed whispers, and it was desultory enough to require little of any member of the group ringing the dying fire. Death in any form insists upon its rights, of silence and of respect, and the six rigid figures lying under the spread Pullman car sheets on the other side of the spur-track were not to be ignored.

Yet Lidgerwood fancied that of the group circling the fire, Flemister was the one whose eyes turned oftenest toward the sheeted figures across the track; sometimes in morbid starings, but now and again with the haggard side-glance of fear.

Fortunately, the waiting interval was not greatly prolonged; fortunately, since for the three young women the reaction was come, and the full horror of the disaster began to make itself felt. Lidgerwood made the necessary diversion when the relief-train from Red Butte shot around the curve of the hillside cutting.

"Van Lew, suppose you and Jefferis take the women out of the way for a few minutes while we are making the transfer," he suggested quietly. "There are enough of us to do the work, and we can spare you."

This left Flemister unaccounted for, but he shook himself free from the spell of whatever had been shackling him.

"That's right," he assented briskly. "I was just going to suggest that." Then, more particularly to the superintendent: "I see my men have come up on your train to lend a hand: command us just the same as if we belonged to you."

Van Lew and the collegian walked the three young women a little way up the old spur while the wrecked train's company, the living, the injured, and the dead, were being transferred down the line to the relief-train to be taken back to Red Butte.

Flemister helped with the other helpers, but Lidgerwood had an uncomfortable feeling that the man was always at his elbow; he was certainly there when the last of the wounded had been carried around the wreck and the relief-train was ready to back away to Little Butte where it could be turned upon the mine-spur.

It was while the conductor of the train was gathering his volunteers for departure that Flemister spoke for the first time.

"I can't help feeling somewhat responsible for this, Mr. Lidgerwood," he began, with something like a return of his habitual self-possession. "If I hadn't asked you to come over to-night —"

Lidgerwood interrupted sharply: "What possible difference would that have made?"

It was not a special weakness of Flemister's to say the damaging thing under the pressure of the untoward and anticipated event; it is a common failing of human nature. In a flash he realized that he had admitted too much.

"Why—I understood that it was the unexpected sight of your train that made the passenger engineer lose his head," he countered, recovering himself quickly.

It chanced that they were standing directly opposite the break in the track where the rail-ends were still held apart by the small stone. Lidgerwood pointed to the loosened rail, plainly visible under the volleying play of the two opposing headlights.

"There is the cause of the wreck, Mr. Flemister," he said hotly; "a trap set, not for the passenger-train, but for my special. Somebody set it: somebody who knew almost to a minute when we should reach it. Mr. Flemister, let me tell you something: I don't care much for my life, but the man who pulled the spikes on that rail reached out after the life of the woman I love. Because he did that, I'll spend the last dollar of the fortune my father left me in finding out and hanging him!"

It was the needed flick of the whip for the shaken nerve of the mine-owner.

"Ah," said he: "I am sure every one

will applaud that determination, Mr. Lidgerwood." And then, quite as calmly: "I suppose you will go back from here with your special, won't you? You can't get down to Little Butte until the track is repaired and the wreck is cleared. It will make no difference in the right-of-way matter; I can arrange for a meeting with Grofield at any time—in Angels, if you prefer."

"Yes," said Lidgerwood absently. "I am going back from here."

"Then I guess I may as well ride down to my jumping-off place with my men; you don't need us any longer. Make my adieus to Miss Brewster and the young ladies, will you, please?"

Lidgerwood stood at the break in the track for some minutes after the retreating relief-train had disappeared around the steep shoulder of the great hill; was still standing there when Bradford, having once more side-tracked the service-car on the abandoned mine spur, came down to ask for orders.

"We'll wait here until Dawson gets through with the wrecking-train," was the superintendent's reply. "He ought to show up before long. Where are Miss Brewster and her friends?"

"They are all up at the bonfire. I'm having the Jap launder the car a little before they move in."

There was another interval of delay, and Lidgerwood held aloof from the group at the fire, pacing a slow sentry-beat up and down beside the ditched train, and pausing at either turn to listen for the signal of Dawson's coming. It sounded at length: a series of shrill whistle shrieks, and presently the drumming of hasting wheels.

The draftsman was on the engine of the wrecking-train, and he dropped off to join the superintendent.

"Not so bad, for my part of it, this time," was his comment, when he had looked the wreck over. Then he asked the inevitable question: "What did it?"

Lidgerwood beckoned him down the line and showed him the sprung rail. Dawson examined it carefully before he rose up to say: "Why didn't they spring it the other way, if they wanted to make a thorough job of it. That would have put the train into the river."

Lidgerwood's reply was as laconic as the query: "Because the trap was set for my car, going west; not for the passenger, going east."

"Of course," said the draftsman, as one properly disgusted with his own lack of perspicuity. Then, after another and more searching scrutiny, in which the headlight glare of his own engine was helped out by the burning of half a dozen matches: "Whoever did that knew his business."

"How do you know?"

"Little things. A regular spike-puller claw-bar was used—the marks of its heel are still in the ties; the place was chosen to the exact rail-length—just where your engine would begin to hug the outside of the curve. Then the rail is sprung aside barely enough to let the wheel-flanges through, and not enough to attract an engineer's attention."

The superintendent nodded. "What is your inference?" he asked.

"Only what I say—that the man knew his business. He is no ordinary train-wrecker; he is more likely in your class, or mine."

Lidgerwood ground his heel into the gravel, and, with the feeling that he was wasting precious time which should go into the track-clearing, asked another question.

"Fred, tell me, you've known John Judson longer than I have; do you trust him—when he's sober?"

"Yes." The answer was unqualified.

"I think I do; but he talks too much. He is over here somewhere, shadowing the man who may have done this. He—and the man—came down on 205 this evening. I saw them both board the train at Angels as it was pulling out."

Dawson looked up quickly, and for once the reticence which was his surly shield was dropped.

"You're trusting me, now; who was the man—Gridley?"

"Gridley? No. Why, my dear boy, he is the last man I should suspect."

"All right; if you think so."

"Don't you think so?"

It was the draftsman's turn to hesitate.

"I'm prejudiced," he confessed, at length. "I know Gridley: he is a worse man than a good many people think he is—and not as bad as some others believe him to be. If he thought you—or Benson—was getting in his way—up at the house, you know——"

Lidgerwood smiled.

"You don't want him for a brother-in-law; is that it, Fred?"

"I'd cheerfully help to put my sister in her coffin, if that were the alternative," said Dawson quite calmly.

"Well," said the superintendent, "he can prove an alibi, so far as this wreck is concerned. He went east on 202 yesterday."

"And the other man—the man who came west on 205?"

"I hate to say it, Fred, but it was—Hallock. We saw the wreck—all of us—from the back platform of my car which was pulled out on the old spur. Just before Cranford put on the air-brakes, a man ran down the track, swinging his arms like a madman. Of course, there wasn't the time or the chance for me to identify him, and I saw him only for the second or two intervening, and with his back toward us. But it looked like Hallock; I'm afraid it was Hallock."

"But why should he weaken at the last moment and try to stop the train?" queried Dawson.

"You forget that it was the special and not the passenger that was to be wrecked."

"Sure," said the draftsman.

"I've told you this, Fred, because, if it were Hallock, he'll probably turn up while you are here at work: Hallock, and Judson at his heels. You'll know what to do in that event?"

"I guess so; keep an eye on Hallock, and make Judson chew his tongue. I'll do both."

"That's all," said the superintendent. "Now I'll have Bradford pull us up on the spur to give you room to get your baby crane ahead: then you can pull down and let us out."

The shifting took some few minutes, and more than a little skill. While it was in progress Lidgerwood was in the service-car trying to persuade the young women to go to his stateroom for a little sleep on the return run. In the midst of the argument, the car door opened, and Dawson came in. From the instant of his entrance it was plain that he expected to find the superintendent alone; that he was visibly and painfully embarrassed.

Lidgerwood excused himself and went quickly to Dawson, who was still holding the door-knob in his hand. "What is it, Fred?" he asked.

"Judson; he has just turned up, walking from Little Butte, he says, with a sprained ankle. He is loaded with news of some sort, and he wants to know if you'll take him with you to An——" The draftsman, facing the group under the drop-light at the other end of the open compartment, stopped suddenly, and his big jaw dropped. Then he said, in an awed whisper: "God! let me get out of here!"

"Tell Judson to come aboard," said Lidgerwood; and the draftsman was twisting at the door-knob when Miriam Holcombe came swiftly down the compartment.

"Fred," she said softly, "are you going to let it make us both desolate—for always?" She seemed not to see or to care that Lidgerwood made the third.

Dawson's eyes dropped, and he, too, ignored the superintendent.

"How can you, Miriam?" he said, almost gruffly. "I killed your brother——"

"No," she denied: "but you are killing me."

Lidgerwood stood by, manlike, because he did not know enough to vanish. But Miss Brewster suddenly came to drag him out of the way of the two who did not need him.

"You'd spoil it if you could, wouldn't you?" she whispered, in a fine feminine rage; "after I had moved heaven and earth to get Miriam to come out here for this special moment! Go and drive the others into a corner and keep them there."

Lidgerwood obeyed, quite meekly;

and when he looked again Dawson had gone, and Miss Holcombe was weeping comfortably in Eleanor's arms.

Judson boarded the service-car when it was pulled up to the switch; and when Lidgerwood had disposed of his passengers for the run back to Angels, he gave ear to the ex-engineer's report, sitting quietly while Judson told him of the plot and the plotters. At the close he said gravely: "You are sure it was Hallock who got off the night train at Silver Switch and went up the old spur?"

It was a test question, and the engineer did not answer it offhand.

"I'd say yes in a minute if there wasn't so much tied on to it, Mr. Lidgerwood. I was sure, at the time, that it was Hallock; and, besides, I heard him talking to Flemister, afterward. All I can say is that I didn't see his face; in the gulch, or in the office, or in the mine, or anywhere else."

"Yet you are convinced, in your own mind?"

"I am."

"I am afraid you are right, Judson," said Lidgerwood, after a long pause; and so the matter rested.

The early dawn of the summer morning was graying over the desert when the special drew into the Angels yard. Lidgerwood had the yard crew place the service-car on the same siding with the Nadia and near enough so that his guests on rising could pass across the platform.

That done, and he saw to the doing of it himself, he climbed the stair in the Crow's Nest, meaning to snatch a little sleep before the labors and hazards of a new day should claim him.

But McCloskey, the dour-faced, was waiting for him in the upper corridor—with news that would not wait.

"The trouble-makers have sent us their ultimatum at last," he said gruffly. "We cancel the new 'Book of Rules' and reinstate all the men that have been discharged, or a strike will be declared, and every wheel on the line will stop at midnight to-night."

Weary to the point of mental stagnation, Lidgerwood still had resilience enough left to rise to the new grapple.

"Is the strike authorized by the labor-union leaders?" he asked.

McCloskey shook his head. "I've been burning the wires to find out: it isn't; the Brotherhoods won't stand for it, and our men are making it by their lonesome. But it'll come off, just the same. The strikers are in the majority, and they'll scare the well-affected minority to a standstill. Business will stop at twelve o'clock to-night."

"Not entirely," said the superintendent, with anger rising. "The mails will be carried, and perishable freight will continue moving. Get every man you can enlist on our side, arm them, and prepare to fight with whatever weapons the other side may force us to use. Does the president know anything about this?"

"I guess not. They had all gone to bed in the Nadia when the grievance committees came up."

"That's good; he needn't know it. He is going over to the Copperette, and we must arrange to get him and his party out of town at once. That will eliminate the women. See to getting the buckboards for them, and call me when the president's party is ready to leave. I'm going to rest up a little before we lock horns with these pirates, and you'd better do the same after you get things shaped up for to-night's hustle."

"I'm needing it, all right," said the train-master. And then: "Was this passenger wreck another of the 'assisted' ones?"

"It was. Two men broke a rail-joint on Little Butte side-cutting for my special—and caught the delayed passenger instead. Flemister was one of the two."

"And the other?" said McCloskey.

Lidgerwood did not name the other.

"We'll get the other man in good time, and if there is any law in this God-forsaken desert, we'll hang both of them. Have you unloaded it all? If you have, I'll turn in."

"All but one little item, and maybe

you'll rest better if I don't tell you that, right now."

"Give it a name," said Lidgerwood crisply.

"Bart Rufford has broken jail, and he is here, in Angels."

McCloskey was watching his chief's face, and he was sorry to see the sudden pallor make it colorless. But the superintendent's voice was quite steady when he said:

"Find Judson, and tell him to look out for himself. Rufford won't forgive the episode of the S wrench. That's all—I'm going to bed."

XII.

THE EVE OF OCCASIONS.

Though Lidgerwood had been up for the better part of two nights and the day intervening, it was apparent to at least one member of the headquarters force that he did not go to bed immediately after the arrival of the service-car from the West: the proof being a freshly typed telegram which Operator Dix found impaled upon his sending-hook when he came on duty at seven o'clock.

The message was addressed to Leckhard, superintendent of the Pannikin division of the Pacific Southwestern System, at Copah; it was in cipher, and it contained two uncodified words, "Fort" and "McCook," which set Dix to thinking—Fort McCook being the army post twelve miles, as the crow flies, down the Pannikin from Copah.

Now, Dix was not one of the rebels. On the contrary, he was one of the few loyal telegraphers who had promised McCloskey to stand by the Lidgerwood management in case the rebellion grew into an organized attempt to tie the road up. But the young man had for his chief weakness a prying curiosity which had led him in times past to experiment with the private-office code, until he had finally discovered the key to it.

Hence, a little while after the sending of the Leckhard message, Callahan, the train-despatcher, heard an emphatic, "Gee whiz!" from Dix's corner, and looked up from his train-sheet to say: "What hit you, brother?"

"Nothing," said Dix shortly; but Callahan observed that he hastily folded and pocketed the top sheet of the pad upon which he had been writing.

Dix went off duty at eleven, his second trick beginning at three in the afternoon. It was between three and four when McCloskey, having strengthened his defenses in every way he could devise, rapped at the door of his chief's sleeping-room. Fifteen minutes later Lidgerwood joined the train-master in the private office.

"I couldn't let you sleep any longer," said McCloskey apologetically; "and I don't know but you'll ride me, as it is. Things are thickening up pretty fast."

"Put me in touch," was the command.

"All right; I'll begin at the front end. Along about ten o'clock this morning Davidson, the manager at the Copperette, came down to see Mr. Brewster. He gave the big boss a song and dance about the tough trail, and the poor accommodations for a pleasure-party up at the mine, and the upshot of it was that Mr. Brewster went up with him alone, leaving the party in the Nadia here."

Lidgerwood said "Damn!" and let it go at that for the moment. The thing was done, and it could not be undone. McCloskey went on with his report, his hat tilted to the bridge of his nose.

"Taking it for granted that you mean to fight this thing to a cold finish, I've done everything I could think of. Thanks to Williams and Bradford, and a few others like them, we can count on a good third of the trainmen, and I've got about the same proportion of the operators in line for us. Taking advantage of the twenty-four-hour notice the strikers gave us, I've scattered these men of ours east and west on the day trains to the points where the trouble will hit us at twelve o'clock to-night."

"Good," said Lidgerwood briefly. "How will you handle it?"

"It will handle itself, barring too many broken heads. At midnight, in every important office where a striker throws down his pen and grounds his wire, one of our men will walk in and keep the ball rolling. And on every train in transit at that time there will be a crew of some sort, deadheading over the road, and ready to fall in line and keep it coming when the other fellows fall out."

Again the superintendent nodded his approval. The train-master was showing himself at his loyal best.

"That brings us down to Angels and the present, Mac. How do we stand here?"

"That's what I'd give all my old shoes to know," said McCloskey, his homely face emphasizing his perplexity. "They say the shopmen are in it, and if that's so, we're outnumbered here six to one. I can't find out anything definitely. Gridley is still away, and Dawson hasn't got back, and nobody else knows anything about the shop force."

"You say Dawson isn't in? He didn't have more than four or five hours' work on that wreck. What is the matter?"

"He had a bit of bad luck. He got the main line cleared early this morning, but, in shifting his train and the 'cripples' on the abandoned spur, a culvert broke and let the big crane off. He has been all day getting it on again, but he'll be in before dark—so Goodloe says."

"And how about Benson?" queried Lidgerwood.

"He's on 203. I caught him on the other side of Crosswater, and took the liberty of signing your name to a wire calling him in."

"That was right. With this private-car party on our hands, we may need every man we can depend upon. I wish Gridley were here. He could handle the shop outfit. I'm rather surprised that he should be away. He must have known that the volcano was about ready to spout."

"Gridley's a law to himself," said the train-master. "Sometimes I think he's all right, and at other times I catch myself wondering if he would tread on me like I was a cockroach, if I happened to be in his way."

Having had exactly the same feeling, and quite without reason, Lidgerwood generously defended the absent master mechanic.

"That is prejudice, Mac, and you mustn't admit it. Gridley's all right. I wish I could say as much for the force here in the Crow's Nest."

"With a single exception you can," said McCloskey quickly. "I've cleaned house. There is only one man under this roof at this minute who won't fight for you at the drop of the hat."

"And that one is——?"

The train-master jerked his head toward the outer office. "It's the man out there; the one you and I don't agree on."

"Hallock? Is he here?"

"Sure—he's been here since early this morning."

"But — how——" Lidgerwood's thought went swiftly backward over the events of the preceding night. If he could believe his own eyes and Judson's circumstantial story, Hallock was at Silver Switch at the moment of the wreck. It was McCloskey who relieved the strain of bewilderment.

"How did he get here, you were going to say? You brought him from somewhere down the road, on your special. He rode on the engine with Williams."

Lidgerwood rose. It was high time for a reckoning of some sort with the chief clerk.

"Is there anything else, Mac?" he asked, closing his desk.

"Yes; one more thing. The committees are in session up at the Celestial. They sent down word a little while ago that they'd wreck every dollar's worth of company property in Angels if you didn't countermand your wire of this morning to Superintendent Leckhard."

"I haven't wired Leckhard."

"They say you did; and when I asked 'em what about it, they said you'd know."

The superintendent's hand was on the knob of the corridor door.

"Look it up in Callahan's office," he said. "If any message has gone to Leckhard to-day, I didn't write it."

Five minutes later he had presented himself at the door of the Nadia. Happily for his purpose, he found only Mrs. Brewster and Judge Holcombe in possession, the young people having gone to climb the bare hills above the town.

Lidgerwood left the judge out of the proposal which he made without prelude to his great-aunt. He told her briefly of the threatened strike and its promise of violence and rioting. The presence of the private-car party was a menace alike to its members and to him, and he desired to send the Nadia back to Copah while there was yet time.

Mrs. Brewster objected strenuously; forbade the expedient in so many words. Her reason was loyal and wifely. She would not think of leaving Mr. Brewster behind under such conditions; and she was sure no member of the party would be either afraid to stay or willing to run away.

Lidgerwood did not press the argument too anxiously. He merely asked his aunt to state the case to the others when they should return to the car; to decide in open council what was to be done, and to send him word at the earliest possible moment.

It was Eleanor who brought the word an hour later, after McCloskey had reported that there was no message to Leckhard in Callahan's sending-file, that Dix had disappeared and could not be found, and that Hallock's desk was closed and his room empty. Lidgerwood was grappling with these minor mysteries when his office door opened, and Eleanor entered.

"So this is where you live?" she said curiously, and quite as if the air were not thick with threatening possibilities. "What a bleak, blank place!"

"It was a moment ago; it isn't any more now," he said; and his soberness made the saying something more than a bit of gallantry. Then he gave her his swing-chair as the only comfortable one in the bare room, adding: "I hope you have come to tell me that your mother has changed her mind?"

"Indeed, I haven't! What do you take us for, Howard?"

"For a very rash party of pleasurers—if you have decided to stay here through what is likely to happen before to-morrow morning. Besides, you are making it desperately difficult for me."

She laughed lightly. "If you can't be afraid for yourself, you'll be afraid for other people, won't you, Howard? It's one of your necessities."

He let the taunt go unanswered.

"I can't believe that you know what you are facing, any of you, Eleanor. I'll tell you what I told your mother; there will be battle, murder, and sudden death let loose here before morning. And it is so unnecessary for any of you to be involved."

She rose and stood before him; put a hand on his shoulder, and looked him fairly in the eyes.

"You may send the Nadia back to Copah, Howard, on one condition—that you go with it," she said steadily.

At first he thought it was a deliberate insult; the cruelest indignity she had ever put upon him. Then the steadfast look in her eyes made him uncertain.

"If I thought you could say that and mean it," he began; and then he looked away.

"Well?" she prompted, and the hand slipped from his shoulder.

His eyes were coming back to hers. "If I thought you meant that," he repeated; "if I believed you could despise me so utterly——"

She left him quickly, and went to stand at the window which looked out across the many-tracked railroad yard to the snow-crowned barrier of the Timanyonis, crimsoning now in the sunset glories. When she turned to face him again, the look that he could not fathom was in her eyes.

"You think it is your duty to stay?" she said, quite gravely. Then she went on, in the same steady tone: "I have heard some things to-day—some of the

things you said I would hear. You are well hated in the red desert, Howard."

He nodded.

"They will kill you if you stay and let them."

"Quite possibly."

"*Howard!* And you are facing it without flinching?"

"I didn't say that."

"But you are facing it, at all events."

He smiled. "As I told you yesterday, that is one of the things I draw my salary for."

She left that phase of the subject abruptly.

"Tell me in so many words what will be done to-night—what you are expecting."

"I told you a few moments ago—in the words of the prayer-book—battle, murder, and sudden death. A strike has been ordered—it will fail. Five minutes after the failure to tie up the road becomes known—which will be just that many minutes after the first of the strike-abandoned trains arrives—the town will go mad."

She had come close to him again.

"Mother will not go away and leave poppa; that is settled. What will you do with us, Howard?"

"I have been thinking about that. The farther you can get away from the Crow's Nest, which will be the storm-center, the safer you will be—I can have the Nadia set out on the end of the Copperette switch, which is a good half-mile below the yards. With Van Lew and Jefferis to stand guard——"

"They will both be here with you."

"Then the alternative is to place the car as near as possible to this building, which will be defended. If there is a riot, you can all come up here and be out of the way of chance pistol-shots, at least."

"Ugh!" she shivered. "Is this really civilized America?"

"It's America—without the other. Now, will you go and tell Van Lew that I want to see him—while I have time to tell him just what to do and how to do it?"

At seven o'clock, just after Lidgerwood had finished the lunch sent up from the counter in the passenger-room below, Train 203 pulled in from the east: and a little later Dawson's wrecking-train trailed up from the west. Lidgerwood summoned McCloskey with a touch of the buzzer.

"Go down-stairs, Mac, and see if Gridley came in on 203. If he did, bring him and Benson up here, and we'll hold a council of war. If you see Dawson, send him home to his mother and sister. Tell him he can report to me later, if he wants to."

The door was barely closed behind McCloskey when it opened to admit the master mechanic. He was dusty and travel-stained, but nothing seemed to stale his debonair good nature.

"Well, well, Mr. Lidgerwood! They've asked to see your hand at last, have they?" he began genially. "I heard of it in Copah, just in time to let me catch 203. You'll not lay down, will you?"

"No," said Lidgerwood.

"That's right: that's the way to stack it up. Of course you know you can count on me. I've got a frightful lot of pirates over in the shops, but we'll try to hold them level. They tell me we went into it again over at Little Butte last night. Pretty bad?"

"Yes: six killed, and as many more to bury later on, I'm afraid."

"Heavens! The men say it was a broken rail—was it?"

"A loosened rail," corrected Lidgerwood.

The master mechanic's eyes grew narrow. "Natural?" he asked.

"No: artificial."

Gridley swore a savage oath. "This thing's got to stop, Lidgerwood! Sift it: sift it to the bottom! Whom do you suspect?"

It was a plain truth, though an unintentionally misleading one, that the superintendent put into his reply.

"I don't suspect any one, Gridley," he began: and he was going on to say that suspicion had become all but certainty, when the door opened again, and McCloskey came in with Benson.

The master mechanic excused himself at once.

"I'll go and get something to eat; after which I'll pick up a few of the men who can be depended on and garrison the shops. Send over for me if you want me."

Benson looked at the door, which was still quivering under Gridley's outgoing slam. And when the big man's tread was no longer audible in the corridor: "What tickled the boss machinist, Lidgerwood?"

"I don't know. Why?"

Benson looked at McCloskey.

"Just as we came in he was standing over you with a look on his face as if he were about to murder you. It changed to his usual cast-iron smile in the flirt of a flea's hind leg—at some joke you were telling, I took it."

But Lidgerwood, being devoid of a sense of humor, missed the point; could not remember, when he tried, just what he had been saying to Gridley when the interruption came.

Having his two chief lieutenants before him, the superintendent gave his instructions and detailed his plan of campaign for the night. McCloskey was to stay by the wires, with Callahan to share his watch. Dawson was to report to Gridley. Benson was to take charge of the yards, keeping an eye on the Nadia. At the first sign of lawlessness, he was to pass the word to Van Lew, who would immediately transfer the private-car party to the second-floor offices in the Crow's Nest.

"That is all," said Lidgerwood; "all but one thing. Mac, have you seen anything of Hallock?"

"Not since about the middle of the afternoon."

"Well—this is for you two only—when Hepburn comes down, have him deputize Judson as assistant marshal. Then, quietly, instruct Judson to look for Hallock, and, when he finds him, to put him under arrest."

The train-master's eyes snapped.

"Then you're convinced at last?"

"I am sorry to say that I am. Let it be done quietly. Judson can bring him up here for safe-keeping until we see what is going to happen. I've promised to hang him, but there is another one to hang with him, and we'll wait till we get them both."

McCloskey's scowl was grotesquely hideous.

"Can you hang him?" he demanded.

"Yes. He and the other man ditched 204 at Silver Switch last night."

The train-master smote the desk with his fist. "I'll add one more strand to his rope," he gritted ferociously. "You remember what I told you about the loosened rail that caused the wreck in the Crosswater Hills—you said Hallock had gone to Navajo to see Cruikshanks. So he did; but he got there four hours after 202 passed there, and he came afoot, walking down the track from the hills!"

It was later in the evening, when the tense strain of waiting was fully on, that Benson came up to the superintendent's office to report the situation in the yards.

"Everything quiet, so far," was his news. "We've got the Nadia on the east spur, where the folkses can make their dodge, if they have to. There is a lot of the out-of-a-jobs hanging around, but not many more than usual. Yard's clear, and the three midnight freights are crewed and ready to pull out when the time comes. Folkses are playing dummy-whist in the Nadia; and Gridley is holding the fort at the shops with the toughest-looking lot of myrmidons you ever laid eyes on."

Lidgerwood was once more making squares on the desk blotter.

"I'm glad the news of the strike got to Copah in time to bring Gridley over on 203," he remarked.

Benson's boyish eyes opened to their widest. "Did he say he came in on Two-three?" he asked.

"He did."

"Well, that's funny," said the young engineer. "I was on that train, and I rambled it from one end to the other, as I always do, and Gridley isn't a man to be overlooked. Reckon he was riding the trucks? He was dirty enough to make the guess good. Hello, Fred!"—this to Dawson, who had just let

himself in through the despatcher's room. "We were just talking about your boss, and wondering how he got here from Copah without anybody's seeing him."

"He didn't come from Copah," said the draftsman quietly. "He came in with me from the west. He was in Red Butte, and he had an engine bring him down to Silver Switch, where he caught the wrecking-train."

XIII.

ARMS, AND THE MAN.

It was Judson, wearing a marshal's star—which he kept carefully concealed under the lapel of his coat—and prowling in search of the man he was to arrest, who first brought authentic news from the camp of the enemy.

The strikers had transferred their headquarters from the Celestial to Cat Biggs', with the committees safeguarded and sitting "in permanance" in the back room. Naturally, since he was known to be a Lidgerwood partizan, Judson was denied admission to the committee-room; but the thronged barroom was public, and the liquor which was circulating freely had loosened many tongues.

Two or three things Judson classed as certainties, and some others he guessed at. For one of the certainties, the strikers evidently knew nothing of McCloskey's plan to keep the trains in motion; hence, unless the whisky hastened it, there would probably be no rioting before midnight. As an offset to this, however, the ex-engineer had heard enough to convince him that the Copah wire had been tapped; that Dix, the day operator, had been either bribed or coerced into the strikers' service; and that some important message had been intercepted which was, in Judson's phrase, "raising sand" in the camp of the disaffected.

Just how the raised "sand" would express itself in terms of action Judson could not say. Tryon, whose half-drunken bluster he had overheard, had boasted that he would steal a locomotive and captain any squad of volunteers who would go over into the desert and tear up the track—to blockade something or somebody coming, or planning to come, from Copah.

Thus far Judson dealt with facts. In the inferential field his guesses all centered in the name of a man. He insisted that the strength of the insurrection did not lie in the dissatisfied employees of the road, or even in the ex-employees. It was rather in the lawless element which lived and fattened upon the earnings of the railway men—the saloon-keepers, the gamblers, the "tin-horns" of every stripe.

Moreover, it was buttressed by some one high in authority in the railroad service; a chief to whom the men gave the title of "the boss," or "the big boss."

"And that same big boss is sittin' up yonder in Cat Biggs' back room right now, tellin' 'em what to do; and his name's Lincoln Hallock," was Judson's summing up of the net result of the guesses. And, since Hallock had not been at his desk in the Crow's Nest for a number of hours, the burden of refutation rested very conclusively upon his shoulders.

Judson's report was grave enough, but it brought a good hope that the crucial moment might be postponed until many of the men would be too far gone in liquor to take an active part.

Lidgerwood took the precautions made advisable by Tryon's threat to steal an engine, sending word to Benson to double his guards on the locomotives in the yard, and to Dawson to block the turntable so that none might be taken from the roundhouse.

Afterward he went out to look over the field in person. Everything was quiet; almost suspiciously so. Gridley was found alone in his office at the shops, smoking a cigar, with his chair tilted to a comfortable angle, and his feet on the desk. His guards, he said, were posted in and around the shops, and he hoped they were not asleep. Thus far there had been little enough to keep them awake.

Lidgerwood, passing out through the

door opening upon the electric-lighted yard, surprised a man in the act of turning the knob to enter. It was the merest incident, and he would not have remarked it if the door, closing behind Gridley's visitor, had not bisected a violent outburst of profanity, vocalizing itself in the deep tones of the master mechanic, as thus:

"You —— —— chuckle-headed fool! Haven't you any better sense than to come——" Here was where the closing door cut the sentence of objurgation; and Lidgerwood continued his round of inspection trying vainly to recall the identity of the chance-met man, whose face, half-hidden under the drooping brim of a worn campaign-hat, was vaguely familiar. The recollection came at length, with the impact of a blow. The "chuckle-headed fool" of Gridley's malediction was Richard Rufford, "The Killer's" younger brother.

Lidgerwood said nothing of this incident to Dawson, whom he found patrolling the roundhouse. Here, as at the shops and in the yard, everything was quiet and orderly. The crews for the three sections of the midnight freight were all out, guarding their trains and engines, and Dawson had only Bradford and the roundhouse night men for company.

"Nothing stirring, Fred?" said the superintendent.

"Less than nothing; it's almost too quiet," was the sober reply. And then: "I see you haven't sent the Nadia out—wouldn't it be a good scheme to get a couple of buckboards and have the women driven up to our place on the mesa? The trouble, when it comes, will come this way."

Lidgerwood smiled.

"My stake in the Nadia is precisely the same size as yours, Fred, and I don't want to risk the buckboard business. Get your smartest passenger flyer out on the table, head it east, and when I send for it, let me have it—with Williams for engineer. Has Benson had any trouble in the yard?"

"There has been nobody to make any. Tryon came down a few minutes ago considerably more than half-seas over, and said he was ready to take his engine and the first section of the eastbound midnight—which would have been his regular run. But he went back up-town peaceably enough when Benson told him he was down and out."

Lidgerwood did not extend his round to include Benson's post at the yard office, which was below the coal-chutes. Instead, he went over to the Nadia, thinking pointedly of two added mysteries—the fact that Gridley had told a deliberate lie to account for his appearance in Angels, and the other and more recent fact that the master mechanic was conferring, even in terms of profanity, with Rufford's brother, who was not, and never had been, in his department.

Under the "umbrella-roof" of the Nadia's rear platform the young people of the party were sitting out the early half of the perfect summer night, the card-tables having been abandoned when Benson had brought word of the tacit armistice. There was an unoccupied camp-chair, and Miss Brewster pointed it out to the superintendent.

"Climb over and sit with us, Howard," she said hospitably. "You know you haven't a thing in the world to do."

Lidgerwood swung himself over the railing and took the proffered chair.

"You are right; I haven't very much to do just now," he admitted.

"Has your strike materialized yet?" she asked.

"No; it isn't due until midnight."

"I don't believe there is going to be any."

"Don't you? I wish I might share your incredulity—with reason."

Miss Doty and the others were talking about the curious blending of the moonlight with the masthead electrics, and the two in the shadowed corner of the deep platform were temporarily ignored. Miss Brewster took advantage of the momentary isolation to say: "Confess that you were a little bit overwrought, this afternoon when you wanted to send us away—weren't you?"

"I only hope the event will prove that I was," he rejoined patiently.

"You still believe there will be trouble?"

"Yes."

"Then I'm afraid you are still overwrought," she countered lightly. "Why, the very atmosphere of this beautiful night breathes peace."

Before he could reply, a man came up to the platform railing, touched his hat, and said: "Is Mr. Lidgerwood here?"

Lidgerwood answered in person, crossing to the railing to hear Judson's latest report, which was given in hoarse whispers. Miss Brewster could distinguish no word of it, but she heard Lidgerwood's reply. "Tell Benson and Dawson, and say that the engine had better be sent up at once."

When Lidgerwood had resumed his chair he was promptly put upon the question-rack of Miss Eleanor's curiosity.

"Was that one of your scouts?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Did he come to tell you that there wasn't going to be any strike?"

"No."

"How lucidly communicative you are! Can't you see that I am fairly asphyxiated with curiosity?"

"I'm sorry. But you shall not have the chance to say that I was overwrought twice in the same half-day."

"*Howard!* Don't be little and spiteful. I'll eat humble pie and call myself hard names, if you insist; only—— Gracious goodness! is that engine going to smash into our car?"

The anxious query hinged itself upon the approach of a big, eight-wheeled passenger flyer, which was thundering down the yard on the track occupied by the Nadia. Within half a car-length of a collision, the air-brake hissed, the side-rods clanked and chattered, and the shuddering monster rolled gently to a touch-coupling with the president's car.

Eleanor's hand was on her cousin's arm. "Howard, what does that mean?" she demanded.

"Nothing just at present; it is merely a precaution."

"You are not going to have us taken away from Angels?"

"Not now—not at all, unless your safety demands it." Then he rose and spoke to the others. "I'm sorry to have to shut off your moon-vista with that noisy beast, but it may be necessary to move the car later on. Don't get out of touch with the Nadia, any of you, please."

He had vaulted the hand-rail and was saying good night, when Eleanor left her chair and entered the car. He was not greatly surprised to find her waiting for him at the steps of the forward vestibule when he had gone that far on his way to his office.

"One moment," she pleaded. "I'll be good, Howard; and I know there *is* danger. Be very careful of yourself, won't you?—for my sake."

He stopped short, and his arms went out to her. Then his self-control returned, and his rejoinder was almost bitter.

"Eleanor, you must not!—you tempt me past endurance! Go back to Van—to the others, and, whatever happens, don't let any one leave the car."

"I'll do anything you say; only you *must* tell me where you are going," she insisted.

"Certainly; I am going up to my office—where you found me this afternoon. I shall be there from this on, if you wish to send any word. I'll see that you have a messenger. Good-by."

He left her before her sympathetic mood should unman him, his soul crying out at the kindness which cut so much deeper than her mockery. At the top of the corridor stair McCloskey was waiting for him.

"Judson told you what had happened?" queried the train-master.

"He told me to look for swift trouble; that somebody had betrayed your strike-breaking scheme."

"He says they'll try to keep the eastbound freights from going out."

"That would be a small matter. But we mustn't lose the moral effect of taking the first trick in the game. Are

the sections all in line on the long siding?"

"Yes."

"Good. We'll start them a little ahead of time, and let them kill back to schedule after they get out on the road. Send Bogard down with their clearance-orders, and phone Benson at the yard office to couple them up as one train, engine to the caboose in front, and send them out. When they have cleared the danger limit, they can split up and take the proper time intervals —ten minutes apart."

"Call it done," said the train-master, and he went to carry out the order. Two minutes later, Bogard, the night relief operator off duty, darted out of the despatcher's room with the clearances for the three sections. Lidgerwood stopped him in mid-flight.

"One second, Robert—when you have done your errand, come back to the president's car, ask for Miss Brewster, and say that I sent you. Then stay within call, and be ready to do whatever she wants you to do."

Bogard did the first part of his errand swiftly, and he was taking the duplicate signatures of the engineer and conductor of the third and last section when Benson ran up to put the solid-train order into effect. The couplings were made deftly, and without unnecessary stir. Then Benson stepped back and gave the starting-signal, swinging his lantern in wide circles.

Synchronized as perfectly as if a single throttle-lever controlled them all, the three heavy freight-pullers hissed, strained, belched fire, and the long train began to move out.

As if the blasts of the three tearing exhausts had been the signal it was awaiting, the strike storm broke with the suddenness and fury of a tropical hurricane. From a hundred hiding-places in the car-strewn yard men came running, some to swarm thickly upon the moving engines and cabooses, others swinging by the drawheads to cut the air-brake hose.

Benson was swept aside and overpowered before he could strike a blow. Bogard, speeding across to take his post beside the Nadia, was struck down before he could get clear of the pouring hornet swarm. Shots were fired; shrill yells arose. Into the midst of the clamor the great steam siren at the shops boomed out the fire-alarm, and almost at the same instant a red glow, capped by a rolling nimbus of sooty oil smoke, rose to beacon the destruction already begun in the shop yards.

And, while the roar of the siren was still jarring upon the windless air, the electric-light circuits were cut out, leaving the Crow's Nest in darkness, and the frantic battle for the trains to be lighted only by the moon and the lurid glow of destruction spreading slowly under its black canopy of smoke.

In the Crow's Nest, the sudden coup of the strikers had the effect which its originator had doubtless counted upon. It was some minutes after the lights were cut off, and the irruption had swept past the captured and disabled trains to the shops, when Lidgerwood got his small garrison together, and sent it, with McCloskey for its leader, to reenforce the shop-guard, which was presumably fighting desperately for the control of the power-plant and the fire-pumps.

Only McCloskey's protest, and his own anxiety for the safety of the Nadia's company, kept Lidgerwood from leading the little relief column of loyal trainmen and headquarters clerks in person. Strangely enough, he was eager to lead it. The lust of battle was upon him, and the shrinking palsy of physical fear held aloof.

It was mere mechanical habit that sent him across the room to close his desk before going down to order the Nadia out of the zone of immediate danger.

There was a chair in the way, and in the darkness and in his haste he stumbled over it. When he recovered his balance, two men, with black masks over their faces, had stolen in from the corridor, and his hour was come.

For the first rememberable time in his life, Howard Lidgerwood met the challenge of violence fiercely with muscle and nerve, and a huge willing-

ness to slay or be slain hurling him into the hand-to-hand struggle.

Twice he broke away, and once he got a deadly wrestler's hold, and would have killed his man if the free accomplice had not torn his locked fingers apart by main strength.

But it was two against one: and when it was over, the light of whatever was burning in the shop yards, reddening the southern windows, sufficed for the knotting of the rope with which the two masked garroters were binding their victim in his chair.

Meanwhile, the pandemonium raging at the shops was beginning to surge backward into the railroad yard. Some one had fired a box car, and the upblaze centered a fresh fury of destruction. Up at the head of the three-sectioned freight-train a mad mob was cutting the leading locomotive free.

Dawson, crouching in the roundhouse door directly opposite, knew all that Judson could tell him, and he instantly divined the purpose of the engine thieves. They were preparing to send the freight-engine eastward, to collide with and wreck whatever coming thing it was that they feared.

The dreadful deed wrought itself out before he could even attempt to prevent it. A man sprang to the footboard of the freed locomotive, jerked the throttle open, stayed at the levers long enough to hook up to the most effective cut-off for speed, and jumped for his life.

Dawson was deliberate, but not slow-witted. The abandoned engine was, as yet, only gathering speed for the eastward dash when he was dodging the straggling rioters in the yard, racing purposefully for the only locomotive ready, and headed right, to chase the runaway—namely, the big eight-wheeler coupled to the president's car. He set the switch to the main line as he passed it, but there was no time to uncouple the engine from the private car, even if he had been willing to leave the woman he loved and those with her helpless in the midst of the rioting.

So there was no more than a gasped-out word to Williams as he climbed to the cab, and the eight-wheeler, with the Nadia in tow, shot away from the Crow's Nest platform.

And it was not until the car was growling angrily over the switches that Van Lew burst into the central compartment, where three women were cowering, terror-stricken, to demand excitedly: "Where is Miss Eleanor?"

Only Miss Brewster herself could have answered that question at the moment. She was left behind, standing aghast in the midst of alarms, on the platform of the Crow's Nest. Terrified, like the others, at the sudden outburst of violence, she had ventured from the car to look for Lidgerwood's messenger: and in the moment of frightened bewilderment the Nadia had been whisked away.

Naturally, her first impulse was to fly, and the only refuge that offered was the superintendent's office on the second floor. The stairway door was only a little way down the platform, and she was presently groping her way up the stair, praying that she might not find the offices as dark and deserted as the lower story of the building seemed.

The light of the shop-yard fire, and that of the burning box-car nearer at had, shone redly through the upper corridor windows, enabling her to go directly to the open door of the superintendent's office. But when she reached the door and looked within, the trembling terror returned, and held her spellbound, speechless, unable to move or even to cry out.

Two men, masked and armed, were covering with their revolvers a third, who was tied helpless in a chair. The captive's face was ghastly and livid, and at first she thought he was dead. Then she saw his lips move in curious twitchings that showed his teeth. He seemed to be trying to speak, but the ruffian at his right would not give him leave.

"This is where you pass out, Mr. Lidgerwood," the man was saying threateningly. "You give us your word that you will resign and leave the Red Butte Western for keeps, or you'll sit in that chair till somebody comes to take you out and bury you."

The twitching lips were controlled with what appeared to be an almost superhuman effort, but the words came jerkily:

"What would my word, extorted—under such conditions—be worth to you?"

Eleanor could hear, in spite of the terror that would not let her cry out or run for help. He was yielding to them, bargaining for his life!

"We'll take it," said the spokesman coolly. "If you break faith with us, there are more than two of us who will see to it that you don't live long enough to brag about it."

"And if I refuse?" Eleanor made sure that the voice was steadier now.

"It's this—here and now," said the taller man, who had hitherto kept silence; and he cocked his revolver.

The captive straightened himself in his chair as his bonds would let him.

"You've let the psychological moment go by, gentlemen—I've got my second wind. You may burn and destroy and shoot as you please, but, while I'm alive, I'll stay with you. Blaze away, if that's what you want to do."

There was an instant's pause, then Lidgerwood's voice, calm and even-toned and taunting, broke the silence again.

"Well, gentlemen, I am waiting. Why don't you shoot? You are greater cowards than I have ever been, with all my shiverings and teeth-chatterings. Isn't the stake big enough to warrant your last desperate play? I'll make it bigger. You are the two men who broke the rail-joint at Silver Switch. Ah, that hits you, doesn't it?"

"Shut up!" growled the tall man, with a frightful imprecation. But the smaller of the two was silent.

Lidgerwood's smile showed his teeth.

"You curs!" he scoffed. "You haven't even the courage of your own necessities. Why don't you pluck up nerve to shoot and be done with it? I'll make it still more binding upon you—if you don't kill me now, while you have the chance, I'll hang you both for those murders last night at Silver Switch. I know you, in spite of your flimsy disguise; *I can call you both by name!*"

Out in the yard the yellings and shoutings had taken on a new note, and the windows of the upper room were jarring with the thunder of incoming trains. Eleanor Brewster heard the new sounds vaguely; the quick, steady tramp of disciplined men, snapped-out words of command, the sudden cessation of the riot clamor, and now a shuffling of feet on the stairway behind her.

Still she could not move; still she was speechless and spellbound, but no longer from terror. Her cousin—her lover—how she had misjudged him! He a coward?—the man who was holding his two executioners at bay, quelling them, cowing them, by the sheer force of the stronger will, and of a courage that was greater than theirs?

The shuffling footsteps came nearer, and once again Lidgerwood straightened himself in his chair, this time slipping the knotted cords from his arms and springing to his feet.

"I said I could name you, and I will!" he cried. "You"—pointing to the smaller man—"you are Pennington Flemister; and you"—wheeling upon the tall man and lowering his voice—"you are Lincoln Hallock, and I had a right to expect better things of you!"

The light of the fire in the shop yard had died down until its red glow no longer drove the shadows from the corners of the room. Eleanor shrank aside when a dozen men pushed their way into the private office. Then suddenly the electric lights went on, and a gruff voice said: "Drop them guns, you two. The show's over."

It was McCloskey who gave the order, and it was obeyed sullenly. With the clatter of the weapons on the floor, the door into the business office opened with a jerk, and Judson thrust a handcuffed prisoner of his own capturing into the lighted room.

"There he is, Mr. Lidgerwood," chuckled the ex-engineer. "I nabbed him over yonder at the fire, workin' as if he hadn't told his men to set it!"

"Hallock!" exclaimed the superintendent, starting as if he had seen a ghost. "How is this? Are there two of you?"

Hallock looked down moodily. "There were two of us who wanted your job; and the other man needed it badly enough to wreck trains and to kill people, and to lead a lot of pig-headed trainmen and mechanics into a riot to cover his tracks."

Lidgerwood turned quickly. "Unmask those men, McCloskey!"

It was the signal for a tumult. The tall man fought for his disguise, but Flemister's mask was torn off in the first rush. Then came a diversion, sudden and tragic. With a cry of rage that was almost inhuman, Hallock flung himself upon the mine-owner, beating him down with his manacled hands, choking him, grinding him into the dust of the floor.

Lidgerwood, looking past the death-grapple, saw the figure of a woman swaying at the corridor door; saw the awful horror in her eyes. In the turning of a leaf he had fought his way to her.

"Good heavens, Eleanor!" he gasped. "What are you doing here?" And he faced her about quickly, and led her into the corridor lest she should see the distorted figure of the victim of Hallock's rage.

"I came—they took the car away, and I—I was left behind," she faltered. And then: "Oh, Howard! take me away; hide me somewhere! It's too horrible!"

There was a bull-bellow of rage from the room they had just left, and Lidgerwood hurried his companion into the first refuge that offered, which chanced to be the train-master's room. Out of the private office came the taller of the two garroters, holding his mask in place as he ran, with McCloskey, Judson, and all but one or two of the others in hot pursuit.

Notwithstanding, the fugitive gained the stair and fell, rather than ran, to the bottom. There was the crash of a bursting door, a soldierly command of "Halt!" the crack of a cavalry rifle, and McCloskey came back, wiping his homely face with a bandanna.

"They got him," he said; and then, seeing Eleanor for the first time, his jaw dropped, and he tried to apologize. "Excuse me, Miss Brewster; I didn't have the least idea you were up here."

"Nothing matters now," said Eleanor, pale to the lips. "Come in here and tell us about it. And—and—is mama safe?"

"She's down stairs in the Nadia, with the others—where I supposed you were," McCloskey began; but Lidgerwood heard the feet of those who were carrying Flemister's body from the chamber of horrors, rose quickly, shut the door on sight and sounds, and started the train-master on the story which must be made to last until the way was clear of things a woman should not see.

"Who was the tall man?" he asked. "I thought he was Hallock—I called him Hallock."

The train-master shook his ponderous head. "They're about the same build; but we were all off wrong, Mr. Lidgerwood. It was Gridley—Gridley and his side-partner, Flemister, all along. He was the man who jumped the passenger at Crosswater Hills and took up the rail to ditch Clay's freight—with Hallock chasing him and trying to prevent it. He was the man who helped Flemister last night at Silver Switch—with Hallock trying again to stop him, and Judson trying to keep tab on Hallock. He was the man who stole the switch-engine and ran it over the old Wire-Silver spur to the mine to sell it to Flemister for his light-plant power—they've got it boxed up and running there, right now. He was the man who made all the trouble with the men, bossing the job to get you out and to get himself in, so he could cover up his thieveries. He was the man——"

"Hold on, Mac," interrupted the superintendent. "How did you learn all this?"

"Part of it through some of our men, who came over to us in the pinch and gave him away; part of it through Dick Rufford, who was keeping tab on him

for the money he could squeeze out of him afterward."

"How did Rufford come to tell you?"

"Why, Bradford—that is—er—the two Ruffords started a little shooting-match with Andy after Dawson had chased off with the Nadia; and—m—m—Dick lived long enough to tell Bradford a few things—for old cowboy times' sake, I suppose. I feel mighty cheap, Mr. Lidgerwood, for rubbing it into Hallock the way I did, when he was doing his levelest to help out. But it's partly his own fault. He wanted to play a lone hand, and he was scheming to get them both in the same frying-pan—Gridley and Flemister."

"What was his grudge against Flemister?"

"The worst a man could have. Flemister first robbed him of his mine—the Wire-Silver—and afterward of his wife," said McCloskey soberly. Then he added: "I've got a few thousand dollars saved up that says that Hallock isn't going to hang for what he did in the other room a few minutes ago. I knew it would come to that if the time ever ripened right suddenly, and I tried to find Judson to choke him off. But John got ahead of me."

Lidgerwood switched the subject abruptly, in deference to Eleanor's deep breathing.

"I must take Miss Brewster to her friends. You say the Nadia is back? Who moved it without orders?"

"Yes; she's back, all right, and Dawson was the man who comes in for the blessing. He wanted an engine—needed one right bad—and he couldn't wait to uncouple the car. It was Hallock who sent that message to Leckhard that we've been hearing so much about, and it was a beg for the loan of a few of Uncle Sam's boys from Fort McCook. Gridley got onto it through Dix, and he also cut us out of Leckhard's answer telling us that the cavalry boys were on 73. At his orders, the two Ruffords and some others turned an engine loose to run down the road for a head-ender with the freight that was bringing the soldiers. Dawson chased the runaway engine with the coupled-up Nadia outfit, caught it, and brought it back."

Miss Brewster got up out of her chair, found she could stand without tottering, and said: "Howard, I *must* go back to mama. She will be perfectly frantic if some one hasn't told her that I am safe. We can go now, can't we, Mr. McCloskey? The strike is over?"

The train-master nodded gravely. "It's over; all but the paying of the bills. That rifle-shot we heard a little spell ago settled it. No, he isn't dead"—this in answer to Lidgerwood's unspoken question—"but it will be a heap better for all concerned if he don't get over it. You can go down. Lieutenant Baldwin has posted his men around the shops and the Crow's Nest."

Together they left the shelter of the train-master's room, and passed down the dark stair and out upon the platform, where the cavalrymen were mounting guard. There was no word spoken by either until they reached the Nadia's forward vestibule, and then it was Lidgerwood who broke the silence, to say: "I have discovered something to-night, Eleanor—I'm not quite all the different kinds of a coward I thought I was."

"Don't tell me," she said, in keenest self-reproach, and her voice thrilled him like the subtle melody of a passion-song. "Howard, dear, I'm sitting in sackcloth and ashes. I saw it all—with my own eyes; and I could neither run nor scream. It was splendid! I never dreamed that any man could rise by the sheer power of his will to such a height of courage. Does that make amends—just a little? And won't you come to breakfast with us to-morrow, and let me tell you afterward how miserable I've been—how I just badgered poppa into bringing this party out here so that I might have an excuse to see you?"

"But Van Lew," he stammered; and then he took her in his arms and kissed her, while a young man with a bandaged head—a man who answered to the name of Jack Benson, and who was hastening up to get permission to go home to Faith Dawson—turned his back considerately, and walked away.

Sound-of-many-guns

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

Author of "A Red, Red Trail," "The Lair of the Sun-dogs," "The 'Long X' Man," Etc.

The Indian is still but little understood by the white man. It has been a pet theory with many modern reformers that within a decade you can make a farmer of the red man who lived only for war and buffalo-running. Mr. Sinclair's dramatic story proves the fallacy of the theory. It is a splendid picture of the real Indian, untamed amid his modern environment.

O'CONNOR, the artist, painter of Indian pictures, lolled in his saddle and regarded the immaculate figure of the Honorable Owen Hildebrand Perry with half-amused impatience. The Honorable O. H. P. might have been transferred by some occult means from an English bridle-path to the wind-blown stretches of the Blackfoot Reservation on Bow River, if one judged by his garb. From his carefully adjusted monocle to the pancake saddle on his bang-tailed pony he conformed to the British mode. But the Honorable Perry was Canadian to the backbone, for all that, and he was likewise Indian agent in charge of the Blackfoot; and he spoke to O'Connor of Indians and Indian ways with the voice of authority.

"Not at all, not at all, my dear fellow," he said. "It's really a very simple matter. Common sense, and a show of firmness now and then; that's the best method."

"Then you think that one generation of schools and manual training and being herded within certain limits will change the whole current of the red brother's nature?" O'Connor mildly inquired. "How many centuries do you suppose the Blackfoot have lived for war and buffalo-running? And you're going to make farmers of them in one decade! Don't you take heredity into account?"

"Oh, pshaw!" the agent countered airily. "Heredity doesn't begin to weigh in the balance against environment. The human race is the most adaptable thing on earth. The buffalo are gone, the tribal wars are a thing of the past, and the Indian will naturally adjust himself to conditions as he finds them. Take Eddie Many Guns, for instance. Can you imagine him in a breech-clout and war-paint? Why, he is no more a savage than you or I. Yet his father, I have been told, was a noted scalp-taker. *That* shows what education and environment will accomplish."

O'Connor shrugged his shoulders, and dropped the subject. The Honorable Perry was newly appointed to care for the dark-skinned wards of the Canadian Government, and his experience with Indians had previously been confined to reading agency reports as an attaché of the Indian department. Yet he was positive that he knew Indians better than they knew themselves; he bristled with mental and physical metamorphosis theories as a porcupine with quills. If O'Connor had been minded, he could have told him much that would have been well for an unsophisticated Indian agent to know, for

O'Connor had spent many years among the people of the smoke-blackened lodges—Crows, Crees, Sioux, Gros Ventres, and Blackfoot. O'Connor spoke their language as he did his own mother tongue, and he knew the heart of an Indian as well as it is given any white man to know. But to the Honorable Perry he was simply an agreeable, itinerant picture-maker, albeit a surpassing clever one; and O'Connor shrugged his shoulders, knowing that in time the most obtuse of agents would acquire wisdom from his wards, though the manner of its acquisition might be none too agreeable.

O'Connor smiled to himself when his eyes rested for a moment on Eddie Many Guns. That the agent had grounds for his assertion no one beholding Eddie could deny. Straw hat, tan shoes, a neatly cut serge suit, and beautifully laundered linen decked Eddie's person, and O'Connor had already learned that he was a graduate of the Industrial School at Regina, where Indian students are made acquainted with Greek and Latin, and the arts and sciences, in conjunction with some useful trade—in fact, Eddie had shown O'Connor his certificate, which was equivalent to a B. A. from any college in Canada. The idea of associating war-paint and scalping forays with Eddie *was* incongruous. Eddie was a very mild-spoken young man, rather proud of his accomplishments; and he was a representative specimen of several score of the younger generation of his tribe. O'Connor, out of curiosity, had been at some pains to cultivate his acquaintance; though, as a rule, the civilized Indian didn't appeal to him from either a picturesque or human-interest standpoint. And he had gathered that "Eddie" was a superfluity tagged on by the school—his tribal cognomen was "Sound-of-Many-Guns."

It was Dominion Day on the reservation, which meant horse-racing, Indian dances (which the Honorable Perry frowned upon as a relic of savagery, and confided to O'Connor that he would forbid thereafter), and general hilarity. The Honorable Perry found much to frown upon before the end of that day. O'Connor sat with him upon a hillside and watched the shifting crowd, gay in beaded and quill-worked buckskin and gaudy blankets. They had gathered from the four corners of the reservation for the three days' frolic, and the bucks sported the best of their wardrobe and the pick of their ponies. Crowfoot Agency is the abiding-place of two thousand of the Blackfoot, and they were all there.

Throughout the afternoon the agent and O'Connor rode from place to place, threading their way in a weaving mass of color that made O'Connor's fingers itch for a brush. Horse-races here, a foot-race there; yonder a barbecue, where four-year-old steers were roasted whole; a little farther, slim, supple young bucks, stripped to a breech-clout, wrestled for a prize, and the plaudits of their partizans till the sweat stood in beads on the bronze bodies.

At six o'clock the Honorable Perry bethought him of dinner, but O'Connor was loath to ride three miles to the agency and back again, for the big dance of the celebration was to begin at sundown. So the agent, with perfunctory regrets, rode away and left him. O'Connor was nowise mealy-mouthed, and barbecued beef was to be had in abundance for the taking.

O'Connor got him a piece of beef, and with a tin cupful of tea to wash it down squatted in the grass beside the lodge of Snarling Dog to eat it; and when he had finished he and Snarling Dog indulged in a friendly pipe and the luxury of mutual silence. A little way off a knot of young Indians were gathered about an older one, who sat upon a blanket and spoke to them, orally and with sign-talk.

"Who is the man of many words?" O'Connor finally broke into Snarling Dog's reverie.

A slight grin wrinkled the old Indian's mouth. "It is Running Horses, The Boaster," he replied. "A Cree. His tongue is like a river in flood-time. He loves to tell the young men of the scalps he took in the buffalo days."

O'Connor rose and walked over to

the group. A straw hat and high white collar denoted the presence of Eddie Many Guns in the listening circle, and O'Connor edged around till he was near Eddie before he found a place where he could see and hear. The Boaster was living up to his nickname. Also, from the thickness of his speech and the unnatural brightness of his deep-set eyes, O'Connor guessed that he had made connections with some "boot-legger's" stock of forbidden fire-water. Otherwise no such wily old warrior as Running Horses would have been foolish enough to boast of lifting Blackfoot hair while he was a guest of the Blackfoot tribe.

"The glory of the old days is forgotten, since the white man overruns the prairie, and the war-trails are blotted out by his feet," The Boaster was saying. "But there be old men among the Blackfoot who remember the last time the Crees and Piegans fought. Three Wolves, of your people, led a party of warriors against us at our camp by Old Wives Lake. They struck us hard, and left our lodges burning, and took away many scalps.

"I, Running Horses, was first to strike the war-post. Soon many braves were with me. Our medicine was strong, and we followed their trail for many days, till they came at last to their own camp—thirty lodges at Seven Persons Spring. There, while they feasted, and danced the scalps they had taken from the Cree, we came down on them like the whirlwind that licks up the dust in the dry time. It was a great fight! Many of our best warriors gave their last war-whoop at Seven Persons Spring. At the last we cornered the chief and a few others, who could not get away, and I, Running Horses, fought Three Wolves hand to hand, and killed him with my knife. We would have taken many squaws and much plunder, but another party of Blackfoot, camped a little way beyond, heard the noise of the fight, and came galloping on their war-ponies—a great many of them. So we took the scalps and all the ponies of Three Wolves and his braves and came away. It was a great fight! We are friends now; though we have had many great battles. Is it not so? But I have kept the scalp-lock of Three Wolves, because he was a great warrior, as I am. Behold!"

The Boaster rose to his feet, thrust a hand into the folds of his blanket, and drew forth the gruesome relic—a bushy, black lock of hair, with its two-inch circle of scalp strung taut in a little willow hoop. He held it up vainglorously, as proof of his prowess in battle.

There was a slight stir close by O'Connor, and Eddie Many Guns stepped close to The Boaster, snatched the scalp from his hand, and spat deliberately in his face.

"Loud-mouthed dog of a Cree," Eddie said, in the throaty tongue of his tribe, "get to the lodges of your people, and bid them strike their teepee-poles. No warrior boasts at a peace-feast of the scalps he has taken from the givers of the feast. The Cree is a coward—an old woman. He has the mouth of a buffalo bull, and the heart of a prairie-chicken! See! I spit in his face again."

The Boaster stared an instant, wiping his face with the back of one hand. Then he drew his blanket close around him and stalked away. Many Guns looked after him, and laughed deep in his throat; then he, too, turned away in the midst of a group of young men, looking down at the scalp in his hand.

O'Connor watched the retreating form of The Boaster till a little cluster of lodges hid him from sight. Then he went back to his horse and asked Snarling Dog where sat the teepees of the visiting Crees. The old Indian pointed out the place, and O'Connor rode up on a rise where he could see. As he looked, the squaws stripped off the teepee-covers, yanked down the slim poles, and loaded the *travois* with their belongings. In half an hour the ten lodges of the Cree were packed and under way, pulling toward the Blackfoot agency. O'Connor watched them string down the trail and pitch their camp again in the very shadow of the

agency walls. Then he lit his pipe and went thoughtfully back to look on at the big dance.

Late that evening, when night had shut down thickly and the yellow tongues of many camp-fires pierced the dark, O'Connor stood watching the Blackfoot disport themselves in the firelight. It struck him of a sudden that the crowd about the dancing-place had thinned unaccountably. He turned his back on the half-naked figures that leaped and pirouetted in the firelit circle, and sought for the cause.

By ones and twos, in little bunches of eight and ten, the Blackfoot were breaking away from the outer edges of the throng, and slipping quietly through the night toward a hollow on the farther side of the great camp: a hollow from whence, as O'Connor neared it, came the steady beat of tom-toms and a yelling declamation, sounds that made O'Connor's blood jump faster—he knew their import. He went a little farther, and stopped to listen. The shrill, half-chanted words floated up out of the hollow:

Hear my voice, ye birds that follow the war-trails;
I go to prepare a feast for you to batten on;
I see you cross the enemy's lines:
Like you, I shall go.
I wish the swiftness of your wings:
I wish the vengeance of your claws.
I muster my friends—follow me, follow me.
Much blood will be spilt: scalps will be taken.
Ho! Ho! ye young men that are warriors,
Look with joy on the battle-field.

While he stood there, hesitating, nerves a-tingle, a hand was laid gently on his arm, and the voice of Snarling Dog spoke in his ear.

"Turn, O maker of pictures," he said to O'Connor. "Let us go back to my lodge." It was a command as much as an invitation, and O'Connor turned back with him.

They threaded their way to the old Indian's teepee, and sat there a few minutes over a pipe. Snarling Dog vouchsafed no information, and O'Connor asked no questions, though he thought—well, many things. In a little while he bade Snarling Dog good night and rode away to the agency, for he was tired and sleepy. As he mounted, Snarling Dog laid hand on the mane of his horse.

"The picture-maker is wise—he knows the heart of the Indian," he said softly. "If he hears a noise in the night, let him not be afraid. It is but the foolishness of the young men."

Some time in the little hours that precede the summer dawn, O'Connor wakened to the popping of guns and a chorus of savage whooping. He sprang from his bed and peered out of a window that faced toward where the Cree had pitched their camp that evening. Red flashes spat angrily in the dark, and the crack of a rifle followed every flash. That was all O'Connor could see and hear for a minute; just the shooting and the yells and the red flashes in the dark.

Away on the opposite side of the agency a bugle shrilled in the night, clear and sweet above the noise about the Cree lodges. By the time O'Connor slipped on his trousers and got outside a squad of mounted police thundered by. Before they reached the camp the shooting had died away. A few vague forms hovered about the lodges, inside of which the squaws hugged the ground and howled lamentation; and when the heavy-footed cavalry-horses swung round a corner on the jump, the flitting, stooping shapes broke for their ponies with the Blackfoot war-cry. And pursuers and pursued vanished from O'Connor's sight and hearing with a rush of hoofs and a fresh burst of gun-fire.

From here and there about the agency men came running—even the Honorable Perry, in silk pajamas and bearing a shotgun—and joined O'Connor. With lanterns and candles they went from lodge to lodge. In each the raiders had left their grim handiwork; of forty Crees that pulled to the agency walls at dusk, no more than a dozen would see the sun rise again. Three Wolves, The Boaster, his squaw, and two sons lay half-in, half-out their lodge, and the bare, raw circle on top

of each head shone ghastly red in the flickering lantern-light.

Thereafter, scattering shots sounded faintly at intervals to the north of the agency. South, where lay the main Blackfoot camp, not a glint of fire showed till daylight shot the sky with rose and yellow, and then the blue smoke spirals went trailing lazily up from around many breakfast-pots. Then O'Connor and the agent, watching silently with field-glasses from an up-stairs window, saw the police shooting from the shelter of rocks and buffalo-wallows at a patch of brush that crowned a tiny butte; and from the butte crest came answering white puffs for every shot the police fired.

"They've got some of them corralled on that hill," O'Connor said. "Let us ride over and see what's going on." And the Honorable Perry, inclined to wonder if he were really awake and not dreaming that some of his charges had actually gone "bad," followed O'Connor to the stable.

A mile from the agency Sergeant Wells, hatless, a bloody streak on one side of his face, and his left hand bandaged in a handkerchief, met them in the fork of a coulée.

"Better not get too close to that bunch," he warned. "We've lost three men already trying to come to handholds with them. Damn an Indian, anyway!" The sergeant stuck the spurs in his horse and was gone again before O'Connor could ask him a single question.

The cause of his haste became apparent before they got within speaking distance of the police, who were bombarding perfunctorily the brush-patch from the shelter of the surrounding hills. O'Connor looked back and snorted. The sergeant had impressed a gun-crew of agency clerks, and was bringing up the artillery—a four-inch field-gun, relic of the Riel Rebellion. O'Connor and the agent, out of rifle-range of that clump of berry-bushes, waited and watched breathlessly the passing of Sergeant Wells, the horses on a gallop, the four-inch gun swaying and creaking on its rusty limber. Wells halted it on a hilltop, cut the horses loose, and brought the black muzzle to bear on the butte.

The first shell flew high, droned over the scrub like a giant bee, and burst in mid-air two hundred yards beyond. The second fell short, and sent up a miniature geyser of dirt and gravel. But the third—that time the sergeant got his sights alined and the elevation just right before he let her go, and the shell dropped fair in the midst of the thicket.

With the *bang* of the shell's explosion, three — just three! — Blackfoot bucks, stripped to a loin-cloth and an eagle-feather in their braided scalp-locks, burst from shelter and flung themselves in a wild charge against the mounted police. It made O'Connor's breath come faster and his hands clench into hard-knuckled fists to see them gallop straight against the barking Winchesters, the red-hand war-sign painted large on the hips of the ponies, and the Piegan war-whoop in their mouths. For a moment it seemed as if they would cross the open space safely and lock horns with the boulder-protected police: but the men behind the carbines got the range, and one after another the three Indians dropped. The last down fell within fifty yards of two troopers crouched behind a rock. His horse fell first, and the brave alighted on his feet, running, but a dozen rifles spoke together, and he crumpled without a sound.

Sergeant Wells, as a matter of caution, dropped three more shells among the berry-bushes on that butte. Then his men arose from boulder and buffalo-wallow, and came down to look at the dead. O'Connor spurred down to them hastily, for he had a theory, and he was anxious to know if it was correct. As it happened, he came first to the brave who had fallen last. The Honorable Owen Hildebrand Perry, right behind him, looked down and went ghastly white. For the body, slim, bronze in the slanting rays of the morning sun, and the face smeared and daubed with the red-and-yellow war-paint, was that of Edward Sound-of-Many-Guns, late-

ly graduated from a white man's school. And tied fast in the forelock of his dead war-pony, fluttering lightly in the morning wind, was the fresh-taken scalp of Running Horses, The Boaster.

"There's five dead 'uns in the brush, sir," a trooper reported. "I don't think a bloomin' one of the bunch got away."

O'Connor turned his horse and rode away. He wasn't in the mood just then to discuss the relative merits of environment and heredity with any one, and least of all the Honorable O. H. P. He passed through the agency, and went straight to the Blackfoot camp, and dismounted at the lodge of Snarling Dog. Him O'Connor led a little way from the lodge door, and told in few words what he had seen. Then he asked Snarling Dog for the answer to the riddle.

The old man puffed solemnly at his little stone pipe, took it from his mouth, and tapped out the ashes in his hand.

"It is an ill thing, O maker of pictures," he muttered sententiously, "to boast to a son of lifting his father's scalp."

THE PLAY OF THE DUELISTS

"REVOLVER fencing" is a new sport that suddenly came into favor this summer and autumn in the smart shooting-galleries of the Paris clubs and of the casinos at watering-places.

This novel pastime consists of fighting dummy duels with revolvers or pistols, loaded with five cartridges, but which only discharge inoffensive balls made of carefully measured proportions of tallow and of wax, kneaded together with a skill and adroitness worthy of a clever pastry cook.

Doctor Devillers, an exceedingly good amateur shot with the pistol, has at last made a projectile and cartridge that enable a man to go into training for a duel with pistols, just as the art of fencing permits a swordsman to prepare himself for encounters with cold steel.

The game is begun by the two adversaries clothing themselves in jackets of black leather, trousers of the same material, and providing themselves with black masks such as are worn by fencers and leather gloves with gauntlets protecting the wrist and forearm.

The director of the dummy duel stands midway between them, but well out of the line of fire. He has with him a metronome that marks at a cadence of eighty to one hundred swings of the pendulum to the minute.

The director of the combat, as soon as the two players are in proper position, begins in accordance with the movement of the metronome: "Fire! One, two, three!"

At the command "Fire!" the adversaries have the right to raise their arms, take aim, and fire. The two shots must, however, be discharged before the word "three" is pronounced.

It is very much more difficult to fire accurately at the word of command than when firing at will at an artificial target. The Devillers' method thus provides excellent practise for amateur shooters.

The balls, if aimed with accuracy, hit with a smart, audible "tap," and with the force of a bean discharged by an ordinary pea-shooter.

The exercise is highly advantageous for all who use firearms. One must have eye, nerve, and muscle under perfect control in order to raise the arm, aim, fire, and hit an adversary at the word of command at twenty-five paces distance, and all in less than two seconds.

In a recent contest at Neuilly the players in this game of "revolver fencing" managed to hit each other on an average of six times out of eight shots.

The Boss of the Bonnechere

By A. M. Chisholm

Author of "Where Friendship Ceases," "In Sheep's Clothing," Etc.

The manner of the dethronement of the hard-hitting boss of a logging camp, and how the new boss was forced to try conclusions with the supreme lord of the Bonnechere River

JONES, of Pringle & Jones, lumber operators, looked at the applicant for a job. He saw a strongly built man, broad-shouldered, lean, and compact, reddish hair inclined to curl, a prominent jaw, and what were normally a pair of cold blue eyes. The eyes, however, were bloodshot and watery, and the entire aspect of the man was dejected.

"Just off a drunk," thought Jones, "but a good man, if he knows anything of the work." Aloud, he asked: "What's your name?"

"McPike, sor; James McPike."

"What can you do?"

"Anything in the bush or on the river."

"Old hand, eh? Where have you worked?"

The applicant reflected a moment, and mentioned a number of camps, widely scattered. Mr. Jones referred to a list taken from a drawer of his desk, and nodded.

"We'll give you a job; usual wages. You'll go to Foley's camp on the Bonnechere. I judge you're able to look out for yourself, and you'll need to there. You won't find it a quiet camp."

The ghost of a smile flickered around the man's mouth, and glinted in his eyes.

"I'm well used to taking care of meself, sor."

When James McPike, one of a motley crew of newly hired lumberjacks, piled out of the sleigh at Foley's camp, on the Bonnechere River, all traces of liquor had blown out of him, and his eyes were bright and clear. He moved with the lithe grace of a panther, and whistled as he lugged his slender dunnage into the bunk-house where he selected a vacant bunk and proceeded to make himself very much at home.

Foley was at that time a small operator who owned a limit on the Bonnechere River, and was under contract to supply Pringle & Jones with a certain quantity of logs in the following spring. He did his own hiring, but men were scarce, and he had asked Pringle & Jones to send on a few new hands, if they could be obtained; hence the hiring of McPike and his fellows.

Foley's camp methods differed in detail from those usually followed. Himself a rough, uneducated man of enormous physical strength and unbridled appetites and passions, he brought into his business the theory that the roughest and toughest men were capable of the most work.

This theory received aid by the force of his personal example. He threw himself into the work in the woods with savage intensity, using ax or saw himself, striding back and forth among the men, cursing, bullying, and occasionally striking. At night, his habit was to drink himself into slumber, but he was always up with the first call of the cookee, and ready for the day's work. His wonderful vitality, reenforced by the pure air and exercise, enabled him to do this with apparent impunity.

His ability as a driver and the fear

that he inspired obtained surprising results in work, and his predilection for "hard" men being widely known, his camps were, as a rule, filled with the most notorious drinkers and fighters among the rivermen.

They worked hard; they drank hard, the "whisky blanc," that is mostly high-wines, being always forthcoming; and when occasion offered they fought hard, either among themselves or with any rival gang they met on the spring drive. Their reputation was unenviable from the view-point of the quiet citizen, but they were proud of it, and openly boasted of the toughness of the camp, looking forward eagerly to the spring when they would drive the brown logs down the swollen river and meet the crews from other camps, meetings often signaled by pitched battles between the entire gangs or champions of each.

It was into this company, then, that McPike, a stranger, found himself pitchforked.

The return of the gang with Foley at its head, in the dusk of the early winter night, was heralded by shouting and much cheerful profanity. They stamped into camp noisily, leaving behind them all thoughts of the daily toil.

From dawn to dusk they labored mightily in the snapping cold and the driving sleet, while the sweat of their toil soaked through their garments and froze white without; they labored ferociously, doggedly, with a fierce personal hate of the woods that their saws and axes bit into—the timber that forever ringed them around, that represented an unending labor more than their means of sustaining life.

But their day's work done, they might forget it, and in the heat and light of the camp, in their numbers, in song, and in such liquor as they could obtain, find a few brief hours of enjoyment, a bright color-patch on the dull, gray winter of their lives.

Why not? And if the whoop of the cookee at four o'clock fell on reluctant ears and if they snarled curses in the dark of the morning hours, still there was the memory of the heat and light and the song and the like, to look forward to at the end of another stint of toil.

The gang hit the camp as an invading army. They stripped off heavy clothing, wet mitts, larrigans, and socks, and hung them up in festoons, donning dry socks and moccasins, and they ate like famished wolves. Bacon, beans, bread, rice, and molasses simply vanished before their attack, and scalding tea washed them down. Aloud they cursed the cook and cookee, and called for more food and yet more, eating ferociously, voraciously, tearing at the meat and bread like animals.

At last, however, their appetites were satisfied, and they trooped back to the sleeping-camp, leaving the wreck behind to the care of the cook and cookee. Men disposed themselves in bunks or on benches in attitudes of ease; pipes were lit; a pack of cards was produced, and a game of forty-five started; a mouth-organ gave forth sentimental strains. The camp was in full swing of an enjoyable evening.

Foley entered, sought out the new men with his eye, and beckoned to them. They lined up in front of him, and he looked them up and down. It was not a friendly inspection, nor was it unfriendly; merely impersonal and very keen. One by one he questioned them and allotted their work. McPike was the last.

Foley looked him over appreciatively, noting the set of the firm neck into the broad shoulders, the poise and solidity of the body, and the direct gaze of the cold blue eyes. Here was a man after his own heart, so far as physical qualifications went. Remained, the question of "hardness."

"Where've you been workin'?" he asked.

"Moore's camps on the Pick," replied McPike.

"What'd you leave for? Fired?"

"Th' air," said McPike slowly, "was unhealthy."

Foley grinned. It was no concern of his how the man happened to come to him. Enough that he was there, and if he had got into trouble elsewhere, so much the better.

"So long's you work," he announced, "I don't care a whoop what else you do. If a man does a man's work in his hours, he may raise all the hell he wants after. But"—with a stare of momentary ferocity and a clenching of his enormous hands—"let me catch a man sojering! Let me catch you sojering, just once!"

"I work enough to earn me pay," said McPike briefly, "an' no more. I'll not work the heart out av me for any pay I ever got yet. You'll find I do as much as anny man."

"See you do," said Foley grimly, and turned on his heel.

McPike went back reflectively to his bunk, where he sat smoking, a quiet observer of what was going on.

In the course of the evening trouble developed between two of the card-players. After an interchange of curses a blow was struck. Immediately they fought—fought like dogs, rolling on the floor, biting and gouging. Finally one man was choked into insensibility, and the victor, rising, kicked him back into consciousness. No one interfered. The defeated man rose and staggered to his bunk, and the incident was closed.

McPike had watched the fight critically and dispassionately. When it was over he refilled his pipe and asked a question of a man sitting near him.

"Fights go here to a finish," was the answer. "So long's a man can work next day Foley don't care."

"Who's the best man in the camp?" asked McPike.

"Foley claims to be, but, o' course, no one climbs him none. Among the men it's sixes between Plouffe an' Rory Mackay. That's Plouffe that just done up Holmes—surly, bad-actin' brute he is, too—an' that's Red Rory over there on the bench. They ain't scrapped yet, but they're due to most any day. The Frenchmen swear by Plouffe, o' course; the rest of us back Rory. Where do you come from? Oh, the Pickanock! Well, they've some tough camps up there, but this has them all beat. You're new to it, but you'll get yours soon enough; though by your looks I guess you can handle yourself some."

"If anny lad wants to take a birl out of me all he has got to do is to say so," said McPike, with emphasis. "There's no man in this camp going to run on me, and if you or your friends has notions of tryin' the same, I'll cure you of 'em quick."

"I ain't no star fighter," said the man deprecatingly, "an' I was just telling you for your own good. By the free way you swing your tongue you're due for a heap of trouble, or to make some."

"Me tongue may be free," said McPike truculently, "but me fists is freer. What you said I take friendly, an' what I say to you is the same. It's no brag I make, but the man that climbs me will get hurted, an' ye may tell it to anny one here."

By the first glint of dawn the gang was in the woods and at work. Then McPike, swinging an ax with the effortless rapidity of the expert, saw a sample of Foley's powers as a driver of men. The man was everywhere, storming from place to place, getting the last pound of work out of his hands. The saws screeched and ripped, the axes bit deep and hard, and the teams moved at a trot. The gang was doing just about a third more work than the ordinary crew, and doing it well.

Foley stood for a moment watching the steady rise and fall of McPike's ax.

"You'll do," he said briefly; "keep it up." And the next moment McPike heard him fairly inundating a lagging teamster with a flood of picturesque blasphemy.

The nooning brought a needed rest. On the sunny side of a knoll the cookee had built a fire, and tea boiled in a huge pail. Bread and bacon in thick sandwiches formed the staples of the meal, with a handful of doughnuts thrown in for good measure. When the meal was over there was time for a brief smoke. Then the work began again, and continued till the sun set at four o'clock.

Back in camp, supper over, McPike puffed contentedly at his pipe and talked with new acquaintances. One brought out a bottle of "whisky blanc" from his bunk, and they drank, cementing their

friendship. This was the hour of relaxation. Tales were in order. A musician produced an accordion, and, throwing back his head with a preliminary whine, broke forth into the "Ballad of Jimmie Judge," a classic of the Upper Ottawa.

"'Twas on the Bonnechere River,
A little below Renfrew,
This young man went for to break a jam
And in the jam fell through."

wailed the singer, his nose pointed skyward, as a dog that howls to the moon.

"His hair hung down in ring-gu-lets
And his skin was white as snow,
And I mane for to sound his prai-ai-ses
Wherever I—do—go."

And then with a crash the whole camp sailed into the chorus.

"For this young man's name was Jimmie Judge,
As we mane for to let yeez know;
An' we mane for to sound his prai-ai-ses
Wherever we—do—go."

The praises of the heroic Judge were sounded to the extent of some thirty stanzas, and the accordion-player, after one or two attempts at tunes that came to nothing, suddenly began to play "The Protestant Boys" with vigor.

It was like a match in a powder-mill. Crash! Arsene Plouffe's larrigan kicked the accordion into the player's face, and at the same instant a Protestant fist landed behind Plouffe's ear, stretching him neatly. With a bellow, Red Rory Mackay leaped from his bench and plunged into the fray. Short and sweet was the scrap, quelled by the arrival of Foley, who would not have troubled to interfere with anything less than a wholesale riot. By sheer brute strength he flung the fighting men apart, and hurled at them a blast of invective that made them pause in respectful admiration.

"What started this?" he roared angrily in conclusion.

"He," said one, indicating the accordion-player, "played 'The Protestant Boys'!"

Foley grimly surveyed the battered features of the musician, and a spark of humor lit in his eye.

"If that's it," he said, "go to it again, the whole pack of you, if you like!" With which, he turned on his heel and strode to his own quarters.

But the fight was over. When it began, McPike had leaped lightly into an upper bunk, from which vantage-point he had enjoyed himself hugely, his pipe between his teeth. He sat there swinging his legs and grinning as Foley departed, and so drew upon himself the displeasure of one Doran, whose features had suffered in the affray.

"You, sitting grinning there, kept far enough out of harm's way," he observed. "It's careful ye are of yourself."

"It is," said McPike. "I do be takin' the best of care of meself, bein' well able to. Which, by the look of your face, you can't. An' have ye anny objections to mention, I'd like to know?"

"A man," declared Doran loftily, "as will climb to get out of a scrap, is no man at all."

"I can climb down to get into wan, if so be you're anxious," suggested McPike.

"Do," said Doran briefly, and at the word McPike launched himself into the air. It was over in a minute. Doran was simply smothered by the avalanche of blows rained on him, and went down holding both hands over his face. McPike, disdaining to follow up his advantage, faced the crowd.

"If there's another man w'u'd rather see me in a row than watching it," he observed, with meaning, "all he has to do is to say so."

But the men had had enough fighting for one night. No one of them felt like tackling this newcomer who seemed abundantly able to look after himself. Sulkily growling at each other, they proceeded to their bunks, rolled themselves in their blankets, and slept the sound sleep of open-air workers.

Gradually the cherry-red glow of the huge stove faded out; the cold of the outside world drew closer; strange cracking sounds issued from the timbers of the camp; white rime appeared on the blankets, where the breath of the sleepers struck and congealed.

In the months that followed, Mc-

Pike established himself. The license of the camp suited him. Whisky, usually forbidden, was plentiful, and he drank while there was anything to drink. A row of any kind, or particularly rough horse-play, was his delight, but he never picked a quarrel or avoided one. His readiness to fight at the drop of a hat became universally recognized, and after one or two encounters in which the result was never in doubt, no one ventured to molest him. Indeed, it became a matter of speculation as to whether he could whip Arsene Plouffe or Rory Mackay, between whom the question of supremacy remained undecided.

One night Plouffe and Mackay collided. The cause was trifling, having to do with a tale as to wolves, told Mackay by his father and by the son related, but Plouffe saw fit to cast a doubt upon the truth of the story, and Mackay's filial pride took hurt.

"I will haf you to understand that what I haf said my father told me, and she iss the truth," said Red Rory.

"She's dam' fonnee story, hall de same," said Plouffe sturdily. "I t'ink your fader she's dronk w'en she see dose wolf, me."

And then they fought, a genuine, old-time, rough-and-tumble battle, from which Red Rory emerged victorious and Plouffe spent the next day in his bunk, thereby drawing on himself and his opponent the wrath of Foley, who, having the working efficiency of his men in view, issued an edict that henceforth no fights should be fought save on a Saturday night.

In this manner Rory Mackay became undisputed boss of Foley's camp, reputed the toughest on the Bonnechere, and gave himself airs accordingly. And the manner of his dethronement was thus:

Rory, in sportive mood, superinduced by "whisky blanc," had slyly taken a clay pipe lying on the table and thrust the stem into the red coals at the stove-door until it became thoroughly heated, after which he replaced it.

This pipe belonged to McPike, who had laid it down in the excitement of a good hand of cards. The hand played, he laid hold of the pipe by the bowl, tamped the load with one finger, and placed the stem between his teeth.

Thereupon, as the hot clay seared his lips and tongue, he sprang up with a yell and a volley of profanity and hurled the pipe from him. After which, in cold rage, he demanded the name of him who had played the trick, seeking the circle of faces with his eyes and at last pitching on an entirely innocent person, and inviting him to stand up and settle it, man to man.

The person invited was naturally reluctant, and protested his innocence, whereupon McPike reviled him afresh and was about to proceed to violence, when Rory took the affair over.

"Let the man alone," he said. "It wass me that did it, and I did it in joke. What you haf to say can be said to me."

"Can it?" cried McPike, whirling on him ferociously. "Then it's this, ye bandy-legged, Glengarry Scotchman! You're no man, but a thing; ye think bekase ye licked Plouffe, there, ye're the boss o' this camp! I'll show ye who's boss, an' show ye quick. Sthrip, ye red-hided divil, an' fight it out!"

"If you will be hating a fight ofer a joke——" began Rory, in no way disturbed, beginning to remove his coat.

"A joke!" roared McPike furiously. "Burn a man raw in the mouth an' call it a joke! You——" and he gave vent to his feelings in a perfect torrent of expletives.

"Fery well," said Red Rory, his face darkening into a scowl as the bitter words cut home; "now I will show you a thing that iss not a joke."

The fight went down in the annals of Foley's as great. Rory was strong as a bull and quick as a cat, with a long experience of rough fighting and the prestige of past victories to back it.

But McPike in action, fighting with his temper aroused, was a wonder. There was no trick of foul fighting that he did not know, and he was not to be taken by surprise. In addition, he had what Rory had not, an intimate knowledge of the art of self-defense; also his

hitting-power was enormous and his strength fully equal to his opponent's. And, further, in spite of his passion, he was deadly cool.

If Red Rory had a string of scalps at his belt McPike had a longer string, fairly won from the best men of half a dozen lumbering districts. He went into the fight to punish his man, and rushed matters from the start. When they clinched and wrestled he fought himself loose and came on again. Counter rushes he met, stiff and unyielding.

The spectators stood in a circle, breathing hard. This was to their liking; such a fight had not been seen for years; they reveled in it. Bets were offered and taken. Foley entered unnoticed and watched, likewise.

At last came a clinch from which McPike, hard-hitter though he was, could not escape. The two went down together, and finished the fight on the ground. It was McPike who finally came uppermost, and, freeing his right arm, smashed Red Rory twice, driving his head against the boards, whereupon the latter's hold grew limp, and he lay without movement.

McPike rose, breathing heavily and badly marked. The men assisted Red Rory to his feet, and for a moment he stood swaying. Then, as full consciousness returned to him, he offered his hand to McPike.

"It wass a fery coot fight, and you haf won," he said. "And I will be saying that there iss no man on the Bonnechere, unless it iss Black Angus Fraser—who iss a fery hard fighter—that can whip you. Will you shake hands, being a petter man than I?"

"Sure I will," said McPike, grasping the outstretched hand. "It's a good man ye are, Rory Mackay. No better have I ever met—a raunching good man."

"And I will say now," said Red Rory, "that I am sorry that I played that little joke. It was thoughtless, and I am sorry."

"That's all right," said McPike. "It's over, and I have no hard feelings. You're as good a fighter as ever I met, an' that's no small thing to say, let me tell you. There's McRae over there has a bottle. Let's drink to better friendship."

In this manner McPike won to leadership at Foley's, which meant much. It meant that he was proved the best fighter in a camp of good fighting men; it meant, also, that in the spring when all hands went down river with the drive of logs he must be the champion of the camp, and maintain its honor against all and sundry. And that, on the Bonnechere, was no light thing.

Meantime Mackay's reference to Black Angus Fraser had found a lodgment in McPike's mind. From time to time he gleaned information as to this worthy. He learned, for one thing, that Fraser was regarded and styled himself the "Boss of the Bonnechere," which proud title he had held for several years, having obtained it by the decisive defeat of one Aubichon, who formerly laid claim thereto.

Fraser was reputed to be a man of enormous size, whose strength and activity were without parallel. Tales were told of him—how he could grip a barrel of pork with his teeth and throw it over his head behind him; how he bent horseshoes with his hands; how, on a bet, he had split a two-inch oak plank with a blow of his fist. Also, there were tales of his numberless battles, in which his ferocity and merciless treatment of a defeated opponent figured largely. It appeared that he invariably "put the boots" to a whipped man.

Now, the soles of a river driver's boots are studded with "corks," which are small spikes on the principle of hobnails, but long and sharp. These enable him to maintain his footing on wet, slippery logs. They are his salvation in a wild race for shore when a jam breaks and his way leads across a writhing, groaning mass of up-ending timbers.

They are also weapons of offense and defense. By time-honored custom among lumbermen the victor may stamp upon the features and body of a fallen foe with boots thus armed—"put the boots to him," as the phrase goes. The

results are lasting. As to the face, when the foot is set down sharply and lifted perpendicularly, scars like smallpox are left. When it is twisted when down a thing of horror remains.

And it was the habit of Black Angus Fraser to set his boot on his victim's face and twist it, after having almost trampled out the life from the body. This gave him his reputation. He brooded over the Bonnechere, a great shadow, and embodied dread to his fellows, a man cursed coming and going, living and dead, by a score of men to whom he had shown no mercy in his hour of triumph.

These things McPike heard at first hand from the mouths of eye-witnesses; he digested them at his leisure. Also, by careful questioning, he elicited much information as to the methods of attack pursued by Fraser. It appeared that he rushed an adversary off his feet and once down finished the job; all of which McPike stored away in his memory.

But his questioning gave rise to questions.

"What you hax me hall dose t'ing for?" demanded burly Arsene Plouffe, scowling at his interlocutor. "Mebbe you t'ink you fight dat Hangus Noir! By gar, I t'ink you crazee, me!"

"Don't you think too hard, Arsene, an' hurt yourself," said McPike cheerfully. "Near's I can find out, I'm due to see this Angus man on the dhrive, an' it'll do me no harm to know all I can about him. Th' more I hear, th' farther off I can keep."

Plouffe shrugged his shoulders, filling his pipe with unspeakable tabac rouge.

"She's not my bizness w'at you do," he said. "But I'll tol' you dat mans he's keel somebody some tam. You'll be good mans—mos' dam' good—but dis mans he's fight *comme le diable*, an' you don't stan' no show for because he's too moch beeg an' strong. I'll know heem, me, an' I keep bout hees road."

"Tell me, now," said McPike, "can he punch? I know all that about his splitting boards with his fist, but can he punch hard an' straight an' fast in a fight, an' keep on punchin'? An' did ever anny one punch him in a good spot with weight back o' th' arrm? An' has he anny gyard to speak of, or does he just take to give?"

But these were matters too high for Plouffe.

"He's fight lak hell," he said solemnly. "He's ponch lak hit wit' ax, an' he's not feel heem w'en you ponch back. An' then he's jus' jomp in wit' de boots."

The rumor of McPike's interest in Black Angus spread through the camp, and increasing as it spread, became a statement that McPike had sworn to fight him on sight. This reached the ears of Foley, who took occasion to give advice.

"I'm not saying you're not an able man," he observed to McPike, "but take my advice and let this Fraser alone. He's bad. He's too big for you, for one thing, and he's apt to cripple you for life, if you give him a hard scrap. I wouldn't want to tackle him myself. Let him be, like a sensible lad."

"Mister Foley," said McPike, "I'm not looking for a fight with him or anny other man, but if I happen across him and he runs on me we will have it. I'll be run on by no man. I never was, without a fight, an' I never will be. He may be th' boss of the Bonnechere, an' bad, as you say, but I'm not afeard to take a chance at him, if so be he crowds me."

"Take it, then," said Foley, "but pay your own doctor's bills. I've warned you."

Slowly the long winter wore away. The days lengthened: the sun grew stronger. The snow mounds sank and dwindled, and little trickles of water appeared on the southern slopes by day and froze by night. The air, from being dry, hard, and edged, grew soft and moist. The ice blackened and honeycombed in the river. The birds began to return. Then came a day with a heavy south wind and a warm rain. Groanings and crackings came from the river; tremblings ran through the ice. Then, with much noise, it began to shove, and went out, a mass of tossing

floes and cakes, and the blue water danced and sparkled beneath the soft sunshine of spring.

On the banks of the river the winter's cut of logs lay corded in great piles on the skidways, gently sloping toward the water. These were broken out. The logs rolled and plunged into the water, being held by a boom until all was in readiness. Then the boom was opened and the drive was on.

Men followed the drive on either bank with pike-poles and peavies, releasing such logs as were caught in shallows. Others in "peakies" swung down the stream. These peakies are big boats, sharp and high at bow and stern. They pull from six oars upward, the oars being set in thole-pins. One man stands in the bow and another in the stern, each with a long, strong paddle, both steering and paddling. The boats held tents for the crew, grub, and outfit. The pace of the drive was the pace of the hindmost log.

And so, it being spring, and the water good though not at its highest because the more northern snows had not yet melted, Foley's drive came down the Bonnechere without mishap and without the logs once jamming. By night they pitched tents and built great fires to dry their garments, for on the drive the men are for the most part wet to the waist from daylight to dark.

They ate hungrily and dropped to sleep immediately thereafter, hugging the luxury of dry clothes and blankets, till the whoop of the cookee roused them to herd the floating logs once more. But, on the whole, in spite of icy water, wet clothes, and such discomforts, it was pleasant, and, moreover, each slow mile brought them nearer to the delights of civilization, from which they had been cut off for many months.

It was at White's Sney below the Big Slides that they ran into McCall's drive. This entire drive was hung up in the Narrows, a series of shallow rock-ledges. The men were working like demons to break not one but a dozen jams, and because of want of water were making small progress.

Foley managed to boom most of his logs, but some ran down and into the mass of McCall's and added to the trouble. The two gangs thereupon joined forces and turned in to get the river clear, holding it a waste of time to wait for a rise of water. And under these circumstances McPike, boosting an obstinate stick of pine with a peavie, got his first glimpse of Black Angus Fraser, the boss of the Bonnechere.

A man leaped lightly on a near-by log, and stood for an instant looking over the mass of timber. Six feet three he stood in his boots, but looked less because of his breadth. A bushy, black beard growing almost to his eyes hid the lower part of his features, but his forehead was broad and high and his eyes black, keen, and alert. His weight was perhaps two hundred and ten pounds, and this was all fighting meat, muscle, and bone, without a soft tissue or an ounce of fat. The muscles on his neck and arms stood out like ropes beneath the open collar and rolled-up sleeves. For a moment the man stood erect, perfectly poised, and then he leaped ten feet to another log, alighting surely, with catlike certainty and grace.

McPike, boosting once more with his peavie, shook his head reflectively. He needed no one to tell him that this was Black Angus Fraser. "The best set-up man ever I see," he muttered. "Big an' hard an' quick, an' be th' look av him ongodly strong. An' thirty pounds more than me if an ounce. Jimmie, me buck, you've had some bad fights in your time, but you don't want one with this man—unless he crowds you. If he does——" And McPike's teeth closed with a snap, as he twirled the big log out of its resting-place with a contraction of his splendid muscles and a heave of the body, and sent it spinning into the water.

White's Sney, besides a motley collection of houses, a blacksmith's shop, and a store, boasted a house of entertainment called the "Repos du Voyageur," as set forth on a sign-board representing an impossible canoe manned by a weird crew, in the grip of

a particularly fierce bit of rapids. The owner of the house, one Baptiste Potvin, was celebrated for two things, namely, that he had once tried to hang himself, and for the quality of the "whisky blanc" that he dispensed.

On this night, then, following a hard day with the logs, McPike, Rory Mackay, and several more of Foley's men betook themselves to the "Repos du Voyageur" with intent to offset the effects of a day's work in cold water.

They found the bar already filled with McCall's crew, and mingled with them sociably. Head and shoulders above his fellows towered Black Angus, hoisting in white whisky in liberal doses. The effect of the liquor acting on a gloomy temperament, was to make him quarrelsome, a result indicated by a smoldering fire in his eyes and two perpendicular furrows between them. He greeted the newcomers with a scowl and a surly nod and a swift scanning of each man.

McPike drank, and as the scarcely diluted high-wines tingled in his veins all desire to avoid trouble vanished. Instead, he desired it greatly. The opportunity was not long in coming, and was not of his seeking.

An altercation began between one of Foley's men and one of McCall's, touching the respective merits of their camps and the men composing them. Instances of prowess were cited on both sides; individuals were compared. Roundly, McCall's man swore that his camp was unequaled, and in conclusion pointed to Fraser, as one who clinches an argument.

The argument of Foley's man in rebuttal was mostly personal, and included a sneer at Fraser, with a statement as to a man in his own camp who could "beat th' head off of Fraser or any other man in McCall's gang." The voices were loud and the attention of the room was attracted.

Fraser shoved forward to the disputants. McPike, from the other direction, came forward also. As boss of Foley's camp, it was incumbent on him to take part in any affair touching its honor.

"What is all this you are talking of?" demanded Fraser ominously, scowling down at the two men. "Who is this man of yours who will beat my head off?"

The Foley partizan, fairly caught, qualified his statement in apprehension of the great man before him.

"I didn't say he would; I said maybe he could."

Fraser laughed scornfully, regarding him with a baleful eye.

"Maybe? Yes. There is not a man in your camp that dares to try. Is it Mackay you mean? I see Mackay there, and he knows better. If there is a man among you at all, bring him out. There is much talk with you men of Foley's, but little else. Let me see this man—this big man who is such a fighter, but who fears to show himself."

Foley's man, at this moment, became aware of the proximity of McPike by his side, and, looking at him, took heart of grace.

"That's him," he announced briefly, and straightway backed into the crowd.

McPike, thus singled out, accepted the situation without question. He bore Fraser's stare and gave it back with interest. Eye held eye without a waver, and Fraser spoke.

"You will be on Foley's drive."

"I am," said McPike shortly.

"What is your name? I have never seen you before."

"McPike is my name—Jimmie McPike," replied the other; "and you are Black Angus Fraser, by your looks."

"I am Angus Fraser, the boss of the Bonnechere," was the reply. "If I am black, you are red."

"Red I may be," said McPike. "Me blood is red; they say 'tis the blood gives the color."

Fraser's eyes narrowed at the insult, and his muscles tensed.

"For less than that," he said, "I have broken half the bones in a man's body. You are a little red cock that crows loudly, and your comb needs cutting. It is not safe to play with me, and no red-headed Irish thief shall do it."

"That's as it may be," said McPike insolently. "I know who ye arre, well

enough. Ye call yerself boss o' the Bonnechere! Well, here's what I think of you!"

McPike had scratched a match coolly, while speaking, as if to light his pipe. With a sudden movement he thrust the flame into the black tangle of Fraser's beard. The hair caught fire with a crackle and a smell of singeing. With a yell Fraser grasped the flame in his hands and crushed it out, but not before it had burned beard, mustache, and eyebrows badly. Then he turned on McPike with a whirl of Gaelic curses.

McPike was prepared. In the commotion he had removed his coat, and stood, stripped to shirt and trousers, ready, his hands half-lifted, his head thrust forward and slightly sunk between his shoulders, and feet apart.

"Take off yer coat," he said, as the men formed a ring around the two. "It's fair warning I give you. You'll need it off. You an' me will settle who's boss of the river. It's my belief you're a windbag an' a quitter."

Never in all his career had Black Angus met with such defiance. Especially of recent years the men with whom he had fought had been half-whipped before the fight began, by his reputation merely. But this individual appeared indifferent to that reputation, and invited hostilities instead of avoiding them. Very well. He would show him what it meant to meet Angus Fraser in a single combat. After that it would be many a long day before this McPike desired a fight with any one.

His first fury was gone, and a cold rage possessed him. He took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and stepped forward, his heavy river-boots clumping on the floor.

His antagonist waited quietly, and, as he advanced, Fraser took note of the compactness of the body, the solidity with which the neck was set into the shoulders, and the steadiness of the cold blue eyes that bored into his. Here was a man—obviously here was a fighting man, no doubt of some local reputation, who thought to usurp his title. He might be capable of a good fight, but to beat him, Angus Fraser—pshaw! it was too absurd. None the less, he closed in cautiously, feeling his opponent out.

McPike broke ground with equal caution. He was taking no chances on a sudden rush. The lighter man, sure to be half-killed if defeated, he was careful. His moccasins—he had purposely discarded the heavy river-boots that night to give him quicker action in case of trouble—pad-padded softly on the boards as he circled to the right.

With a bound Black Angus drove in, swinging heavily. McPike was outside the blow, and came back like a flash with a right and a left to the body; then he danced out again, and Angus followed him, endeavoring to find an opening. He found it, and got home, but lightly, on McPike's forehead. McPike missed a vicious swing for the jaw, and still retreated. Black Angus rushed, hitting with both hands as he came. McPike met the rush, and a furious rally took place, both men banging away for all that was in them. Then McPike broke again, his face showing the effect of the encounter. Fraser, for his part, was bleeding, and his temper was getting the better of caution.

In a furious rush he landed a round arm-blow that sent McPike to the floor, and leaped for him intent on trampling out all further fight. But McPike, even as he fell, rolled to his hands and knees, and was on his feet with a bound. As Black Angus came he was hit once, twice, and again. Blows at close range that went home solidly checked his rush, and made him stagger. McPike was at him, following up his advantage. Fraser fought back wildly. There was a power behind those fists that thudded on his body and smashed into his face that he had never felt before. It maddened him. He plunged forward, and came to grips with his foe.

This was not to McPike's liking. It was the thing he was trying to avoid. He felt Fraser's arms around him in a mighty grip that sank into his flesh and compressed his vitals. Desperately he hit with one free hand, and, though

each blow brought a gasp from Black Angus, his grip did not relax.

Then McPike found that he was being slowly lifted from his feet. Strong as he was, and though he bowed his back and strained to break loose until his muscles cracked, he could not break the hold. He brought his feet down with force on the foot of Black Angus, but even as he did so he remembered that he was wearing moccasins, and not the corked river-boots, that would have punctured the leather and driven through into the flesh and bone. Then he was lifted clear of the ground and thrown.

The two men went down, and, as they did so, Fraser's hold relaxed by a very little. It was enough, however, for McPike to draw up his knee and plant it with force in his antagonist's stomach, at the same time getting his forearm across the throat. That broke the hold, and the two men, gasping for breath, came to their feet.

Once caught, McPike was wary. Try as he might, Fraser could not get grip of him again. And all the time he was being hit, and hit hard. Did he rush, his head was rocked back by blows that jarred him throughout his entire body; did he merely hold his ground he was attacked ferociously. It never occurred to him to break ground or retreat; that was no part of his method. To get to close quarters and finish the thing—that was the way. Therefore he forced the fighting, confident in his splendid strength to carry him in.

But McPike was far from having it all his own way; he was taking punishment that it required all his superb physique to stand. His face was cut and swollen, a dull pain, alternating with sharp spasms, was in his left side, and he knew that one or more ribs were broken. His feet had been stamped upon by the corks until each movement was torture, and his moccasins were wet with blood. He felt that unless something happened soon, superior weight and strength would wear him out. And that meant the worst. His jaw set hard, his cold blue eyes hid themselves beneath drawn brows, and he called upon his reserves of vitality and grit for a final effort.

Slowly he retreated, stalling to get wind. Back he was driven, around the circle. Here and there in the crowd he could see the faces of Foley's men, leaning forward, intent, breathless, following every motion; as he was forced back he could read foreboding in their eyes. But he had brief time for such observations. The business before him demanded great attention.

And now he felt that the time had come to win if he was to win at all. His wind had come back, and strength surged up in him again. Thereupon he met Black Angus stiffly with a whirlwind of blows that drove the latter back. McPike rushed, and Black Angus tripped and fell, amid a roar from the crowd. Never had they seen him go down before. But he was on his feet again in one motion, and, losing all control of himself, ran blindly at his adversary, his arms outstretched and his hands clutching for a hold.

McPike stepped back and stood, his left arm extended, his right hand drawn back and on a level with his armpit. As Black Angus came within range, McPike's right hand and right foot came forward together with a powerful thrust of the body. The blow was delivered as a shot-putter makes his throw. It landed squarely at the base of the ear, and Black Angus simply dropped in his tracks. As he fell, McPike leaped on him and drove his feet into the limp body. Then a look of utter disgust came over his battered face. He was wearing moccasins.

"Did ever anny one," he said, "try for to put the boots till a man wid moccasins on?"

A roar of laughter burst from the crowd. They surged around him, shaking his hands and congratulating him.

"Be careful av that right hand," said McPike, releasing it unceremoniously from the grasp of an admirer. "There's something bruk in it from that last punch I give him. Try an' get him on his feet, some av yeez. I hope he's not hurted bad, for it's a good man he is."

Black Angus Fraser rolled over and rose to his feet, staggering blindly. McPike stepped forward and supported him. He guided the man to the bar, and forced a glass of whisky into his unwilling hand.

"Drink that," he said, "and you'll feel better. 'Twas th' fine fight you put up, Fraser. 'Tis meself that knows it."

Black Angus gulped down the liquor and regarded him curiously.

"I was never beaten before," he said, "and I have fought many fights, and I have put the boots to all the men that I have beaten. I would have done the same to you had I won. Why did you not do it to me?"

"I tried," said McPike simply, "but I'm wearing moccasins. Lucky for you I am. Are ye satisfied, or shall we go to it again when you're rested?"

Black Angus shook his head.

"You are the better man. I have always said when I met a better man I would fight no more. Therefore this is my last fight. You are the boss of the Bonnechere, till such time as your turn comes to be beaten."

That night saw high revelry at the "Repos du Voyageur." Such a combat had rarely been seen, and the ousting of Black Angus from his proud position was an opportunity for celebration that it would have been sinful to neglect. To these lumbermen it was an event as all important as the founding of Rome, the Battle of Waterloo, or Lee's surrender to the men of these periods.

To them it was history in the making; it was an epoch from which other and lesser events might date. Wherefore, Baptiste Potvin reaped a harvest; and until away into the small hours the village dogs bayed fiercely at lumbermen returning to camp by twos and threes, more or less unsteadily, singing unexpurgated versions of interminable "Come—all—ye's."

But in the sleeping tent of McCall's crew a man lay in the farthest corner, his face hidden in the blankets and his body shaken with noiseless sobs, the grief of a strong man who has lost the pride of his strength—the loser, the ex-boss of the Bonnechere.

And in Foley's tent lay another man, asleep; a man battered and disfigured, whose every movement gave him pain, whose muscles twitched and hands clenched convulsively in his slumbers—the victor, the new boss of the Bonnechere.

WHEN THE MOTOR STRUCK

"TOOT, toot, toot!" went the horn of the big automobile as it thumped along the road.

But the old farmer, who was very deaf, walked on quietly in blissful ignorance of the engine of destruction that was thundering toward him.

A sudden whir, a dull thud on the road, a bang, and the farmer was groveling in the dust.

"Hurt?" asked the chauffeur, jumping out.

"Ah, thankee, sir," chuckled the old man as he picked himself up and looked very pleased. "You might come round these 'ere parts again some time, will 'e?"

"But aren't you hurt?" gasped the chauffeur.

"Not at all. It's done me a power o' good."

"Well, I'm blessed!" gasped the motor man. "How's that?"

"Well, mister," replied the old farmer, "that jolt you gave me unloosened a mustard plaster on my shoulder that I've been trying to get off for more than a week."

The Devil's Pulpit

By H. B. Marriott Watson

Author of "Hurricane Island," "Twisted Eglantine," "Captain Fortune," "Galloping Dick," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Captain Mark Wade and Ned Herapath, chief engineer (who tells the story), are offered berths on the English tramp steamer *Duncannon* by a smooth-talking American, Vincent Halliday, and his friend Davenant. The probable destination of the tramp is Baltimore, but there is some mystery about the cruise—a mystery that appeals to Captain Wade, who is something of a free-lance. Arrangements are concluded, and Wade and Herapath board the tramp and put to sea, accompanied by Halliday and several of his friends. On the way out from Southampton they run down a yawl and rescue Jean Carvaulx and his niece, Miss Sylvester, who at their urgent request, are allowed to buy a passage for America on the *Duncannon*.

CHAPTER III. *(Continued.)*

By ten o'clock next morning we were off Plymouth, for the engines were banging her along, and Wade was on the bridge when I came on deck for some air. He beckoned me to join him, and I did so.

"I say, Ned," he broke out, without greeting, "she's a stunner."

"The *Duncannon?*" said I dryly.

"Our young guest, there, Miss Sylvester. She's all right. I saw her this morning, when she insisted on thanking me prettily for hauling her out of the water. I don't know but I'm glad Halliday's taken the old chap along."

"We are a mixed lot," said I.

"That's life. What's the odds? Ned, keep an eye on that doctor. He's a gorilla."

"Oh, no, he's not," I answered. "Doctor McLeod's only a Scotch barbarian. I'll comb his hair, if he needs it."

"It's a pity you had that row," he said thoughtfully.

"It's only part of the fun, isn't it?" I retorted significantly, and he laughed.

"Oh, I don't mind," he replied, as he looked toward the land. "We've got to drop that ancient mariner."

"But the ancient bird we keep," I added.

"And the niece."

He dropped the mariner and the pilot in safety inside the breakwater, while Monsieur Carvaulx looked on with shining eyes. It was as if he were congratulating himself on his good fortune in not being landed. And as he leaned over the rail and watched, a figure stole to his side and looked landward, also. I recognized her at once as the girl I had seen on the quay. She gave me one glance of meditative inquiry, and then addressed her uncle in French. For some time they remained chatting in good spirits, and once or twice a dry cackle sounded mirthlessly in the old man's throat.

He was distinctive in appearance, but not prepossessing. On the other hand, Miss Sylvester fully justified Wade's enconium. She was of a youthful slightness, but her slim body denoted vigor and energy, and her face was vivid and sparkling with interest. Her cheeks were flying a little color, and the soft bronze of her hair took the fire of the morning sun.

The screw began to churn in the wa-

ter, the *Duncannon* turned her nose, and the Frenchman uttered a sigh—almost, as it seemed, of contentment. His eyes were directed shoreward still, as if he watched for some one who never came, and watched with growing relief.

I had transferred my attention from the niece to the uncle for the moment, though she was the prettier picture, but now I noticed that she was joined by McLeod, tall, sandy of head, and off-hand of manner. He was in an amiable, jocund mood, quite different from the raging Scot I had seen on a previous occasion. He talked freely and laughed loudly, and I could see that he was doing his best with the lady. Presently they began to promenade the deck together, and she presented a beaming, bright face to me as she came aft, talking merrily with her companion.

I shrugged my shoulders and looked over the taffrail at the receding hills and breakwater, and fell into a little mood of reflection. From this I was awakened by a voice, and found Miss Sylvester addressing me. McLeod stood some distance aft, with darkling brows.

"Mr. Herapath, isn't it?" she said prettily, holding out her hand. "I have only just learned your identity. The captain told me of your brave conduct in jumping overboard to save me. Believe me, Mr. Herapath, I am deeply indebted to you, and I thank you from my heart."

It was phrased almost formally, but there was no mistaking the cordiality of her tone. She spoke with great confidence, and also with earnestness. She was complete mistress of herself for so young a girl—for I judged her to be no more than twenty—and I thought I detected something un-English not only in her manner, but in her voice. And it was not quite explained by her French uncle. I took her hand, and murmured my reply, apologizing for not having found her. "It was the only excuse for my absurd act," I said, "and it failed."

"Oh, you mustn't say that, Mr. Herapath," she said, in a high, light voice, opening a pretty mouth and showing the even whiteness of her small teeth. "You must let me think I was worth trying to save. Leave me in the delusion, anyway."

The depreciation was daintily attractive, and here I guessed at her. She was American. I felt sure of it as I examined her with a little closer interest.

"Ah, it was of myself I was thinking," I said, smiling. "It was absurd because unnecessary. The boat would have rescued you."

"You couldn't tell," she said, and then glanced at the fading land. "I would have given much to have landed in Plymouth for an hour, but uncle wouldn't hear of it," she said, with regret in her voice.

"You would like to see Plymouth?" I inquired.

She shook her head. "No; I have been there before; but, Mr. Herapath"—and she gave me a charming smile—"I wanted to shop. I could have put in quite a long time shopping. Do you realize, Mr. Herapath," she pursued, laughing, "that I have no clothes?" She fingered her handsome gown, which, I supposed, had been dried for her use overnight.

I stared toward the old man, who was still looking landward, and I wondered.

"Well, I don't suppose it will take us more than a fortnight to get to Baltimore," I suggested, with an awkward attempt at consolation.

"A fortnight!" she echoed, and held up her hands in horror. "Uncle said a week."

I shook my head. "We're no greyhound," I observed; "only a common, limping tramp, and with neither fare nor equipments for young and fashionable ladies. But we're going to do our best."

"And I'm not going to make it hard for you," returned Miss Sylvester, smiling. "Just you go on in your own way, and I'll suit myself to the ship. I'm sorry uncle's business put him in all this haste. I don't understand business," she added demurely.

It sounded like "pumping" her, but I could not help saying: "He might have reached New York more easily

by the German boat, and so got to Baltimore before we shall."

"My uncle," said she doubtfully, "would never go by a crowded boat. He hates crowds. It would have made him ill. He has been overworking, and has caused me a lot of anxiety. But he is better already." She followed my eyes to the Frenchman. "He has been much more like himself since he has been on board."

Certainly he had a more cheerful air; for at this moment he went down the deck briskly, and engaged McLeod, who was still waiting, in conversation. My companion, I was pleased to see, had obviously forgotten all about the doctor. She made no movement to get away, and I made some remark which drew her out. Monsieur Carvaulx, I discovered, was a well-known banker, who had married her mother's sister, and she had gone to live with her aunt and uncle after the death of her own parents in New York. That was ten years before, and her aunt had been dead some three years. Since then she had lived with her uncle and kept house for him.

"He is a great politician," she explained to me rather proudly. "All the great leaders come to his house, and artists and literary men, too. It is very interesting. I hope he will soon get better, and then when we get back to Paris we shall see all our old friends. But I'm glad I'm going to America again. I'll have a lovely time seeing all the old places and all my old school friends. I've not been back since I was a little girl."

She babbled on frankly and without the slightest self-consciousness, and I was enabled to conjecture that with all her assurance she was but a child.

I had enjoyed our chat very much, but here it was abruptly interrupted. McLeod, having shaken off the Frenchman, bore down on us. To me he paid not the slightest attention, and addressed himself to my companion.

"Miss Sylvester, it's time for your tonic," he said, with a proprietorial air that rasped my nerves.

"Why, I'd forgotten," she said, in a lively way. "I don't feel much like tonics, doctor. This air's as good as any medicine."

"Pardon me," he said ceremoniously. "I think it is necessary. Will you allow me?"

He led her toward the saloon companion, and I like to think that she went with reluctance.

"Tonic!" said a voice in my ear, a voice that clipped each word with almost vicious decision. "Tonic's the motive. Cæsar's ghost! I'll have some tonic myself. What do you say?"

It could only be Clifford, whose black-red, grinning face met me as I turned. "*Vestigia nulla retrorsum!* We're off, Herapath. I guess we're off, and we'll drink a bumper to good luck. Luck's everything. There is no God but Chance—Chance and the rhino, otherwise the good yellow dust. Luck and pluck will carry everything. Come along."

I was inclined to refuse, but I have a certain sense of prudence that comes to my aid in restraint of impulse. If I had knocked McLeod down, I might make amends toward this remarkable rapscallion. I could not place him. Every feature of his face spoke of a loose liver; he had the relics at least of a classical knowledge, and a sense of language. He was both glib and deft of tongue; and he appeared to be good-natured.

"It's rather early," I answered, "but I don't mind."

"Early or late, there's nothing like tonic," he declared, as he shambled along the deck. "I'm the gentleman with the keys, like Peter. What's your poison? Look here, we'll have fizz."

He seized a bottle of champagne, drew the cork, and filled two tumblers.

"A prosperous voyage!" I said, raising my glass.

"Here's how," he retorted, "and to Eldorado!" His eyes twinkled at me over the glass, which he emptied at a draft.

"At it again, my boy," called a cheerful Irish voice outside, and Byrne entered. He was given a glass, and sat down on a barrel to drink comfortably.

Also presently there was drawn into our company Digley, my stage boatswain, with his proud but weary countenance. It was he who ventured a criticism of the wine, and arguments were bandied about.

"Have a drink, monsieur," called out Clifford, in the thick of the disagreement.

The face of the Frenchman was visible, passing along the passage. He hesitated.

"I thank you," he said, "just a little glass for good fortune."

"Fill monsieur one, Byrne," said Clifford lazily. "Here's to good old Luck." He emptied his third glass and winked at me.

"A very successful voyage," said Monsieur Carvaulx cautiously, raising his glass. "May we sail prosperously into Baltimore."

"Baltimore!" Clifford bubbled out in a lower voice. "Does the blithering ass still think he's going to Baltimore?" Byrne jogged him hard in the ribs. "Steady," he said, "I'm not a professional pugilist like Herapath. What's the odds?" He laughed vacantly.

I passed out to go to my engine-room, for it was obvious that they would still sit and drink; and, after all, I had learned as much as I wanted to know just then, certainly as much as I was likely to learn after that warning jog. We were not bound for Baltimore. Then what the mischief was our destination, and what were we, anyway, as Halliday might have said? I cannot say that Wade supplied the answer to my riddle; he merely confirmed my discovery. When I met him on deck his face wore a curious smile. His eyes encountered mine, and he laughed outright.

"Ned," he said, "the cream of the joke's come. What do you guess? I've just received sealed orders."

"Sealed orders!" I echoed, in amazement.

"Yes; from Halliday. I'm to open them next Wednesday. What do you make of that?"

"I've just discovered that we don't go to Baltimore. Clifford's let it out—what are you going to do?"

He stood musing, an unbroken envelope between his fingers.

"Do?" he said at last. "Nothing. Everything. Anything you please. Great Scott! this beats ocean racing!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE THIRD DAY OUT.

Halliday made his appearance next morning, recovered from his sickness, but very pallid and shaky. He distributed politeness, however, like largess, and seemed nervously anxious to be all things to all men. He was certainly not at home on board ship, and his stomach rose in revolt against the situation. His sprightly mind, however, struggled undaunted against all the embarrassments and disabilities of his body. He had presented Wade with sealed orders, and had come out of the seclusion and protection of his cabin to "face the music."

"You understand, captain, exactly what I mean to convey by that packet?" he asked anxiously but firmly.

Wade turned the packet over. "I'm to open this three days from now?" he said. Halliday nodded. "And, having been led to believe our destination was Baltimore, I shall here find another port indicated?" he continued.

"The advantage of sealed orders, captain," said the American, "is that they talk, not me, and they talk at the right time."

"Of course you know I can put her about and go back," said Wade slowly.

Halliday's long thin fingers worked nervously. "It would be within your legal right," he said. "But I guess you won't."

"You're right, I won't," said Wade, with a laugh. "I see you wanted the sort of man you took me for."

"Precisely, captain," said Halliday, "and I put it to my credit that I took you for the sort of man you are. You've got to take risks all the way in life, and a man who doesn't jump sometimes without looking the other side of the

hedge is not going far. No, you fit us to a 't,' and I'm very well satisfied. I hope you are, captain."

"I should be all the better satisfied," said Wade, in another voice, "if there wasn't so much drinking about. See here, Mr. Halliday, there's some of these people I can't interfere with—these owners of mine," he said, with a sneer. "There's Mr. Byrne, and—well, I don't know if Mr. McLeod is or is not ship's doctor, but I assume Mr. Clifford's the storekeeper and under my orders. And I want it clearly understood that I won't have my men drunk or drinking."

"How so, captain?" asked Halliday.

"Why, last night there was a merry party in Mr. Byrne's cabin, and some of the stuff has got among the sailors—how, I don't know. But I'm not going to have it. Grog has wrecked many a better ship than this, and I'm not going to have the grog tap on."

"You're right, captain," said Halliday. "You're right all the time."

"In that case what I propose is this," pursued Wade, "I don't like the look of my owner, Mr. Clifford, and I'll trouble him for the key of the wine-cellar. That shall remain in your charge, as I signed on to you, and it is to you I look for orders. You're responsible, then, and I can come to you. How's that?"

"A good idea," said Halliday approvingly. "I'll speak to Clifford, and take the key myself."

This, I discovered, was done, much to the dudgeon of the storekeeper, whose sharp tongue I overheard. He had realized it was through Wade's action that he had been deprived of his opportunities, and he came as near being insubordinate as ever man that was not clapped in irons. Byrne was a good deal in his company all that day, and I think it was through Byrne's influence that he did not actually break out into an open act of hostility to the captain. But, oddly enough, he was himself again by night, and with the contents of a bottle of whisky conceded by Halliday was the center of his little party as usual. McLeod was of this gang, and Digby at times, but never Davenant, and Marley but seldom.

Now that Marley was at sea and at work he was very businesslike. He was still free and easy, and had little idea of discipline, but he took a thorough interest in his duties, and made a very capable first officer. Davenant was little in evidence: as navigating officer he was a good deal in the chart-room, and otherwise held himself aloof. He was of a different class, I guessed, from his fellows: at least of a different training and association. He had almost the air of a schoolmaster or a professor, and his dress was as immaculate as his voice.

The crew was decent enough, but was well sprinkled with foreigners. There were only two of them whom I noticed much at this time. One was the steward, Headon, a heavy-moving fellow, with a face like pink wax, and glassy eyes.

"The chap's been dead a fortnight," said Marley of him. "Gosh! What a face!"

"A deuced fine simulacrum!" laughed Clifford, and seemed to find him attractive as such. For this it was drew my attention more immediately. Clifford cultivated the steward, hung about him in a friendly way, and was soon exchanging sallies with him in corners. Clifford had no conception of maintaining his own dignity: he had none. He would hobnob with a chimney-sweep. He hobnobbed with Headon. And once more he began to roll about the passageways, plying his fluent tongue and discharging his caustic vulgarisms. He was once more supplied with liquor, and I ought to have guessed its source. But I did not then, and it was only later that I discovered that the steward had a secret store.

Byrne and Clifford would repair to his cabin, and share the private stock of his pantry, free from interference, indeed free from the knowledge of the captain: and McLeod was in the habit of joining them. But he was in a better frame just then, delighting to dance attendance on Miss Sylvester under the specious excuse that she needed medical supervision.

As a matter of fact, she had completely recovered, and was just a very healthy and happy young girl, with no troubles on her mind, and nothing on her conscience. Her gaze was wayward; her will was wanton. She liked exercising her splendid fascinations, or, at least, I thought so. McLeod's devotion pleased her, lank and ugly as he was; but I cannot say that she favored him more than any other of us. She was like a child, delighting in her own beauty almost without consciousness of it. It was instinctive.

The other member of the crew to whom I have alluded was a tall fellow, with bold eyes that looked insult at you, and with an indifferent, rough voice. He did his work well, but his insolent carriage was an offense, which made me wonder why Headon had taken him into his favor. The two were frequently together forward, the "simulacrum" with his uncanny suggestion of disease and decay singularly contrasted with the lean bold mark of interrogation that was Crashaw.

But the steward's store was not the widow's cruse, and that fact brought about the first crisis of our voyage. Halliday had by now gained his sea-legs, and recaptured his assurance. He was never in doubt of himself now, and dealt his favors all round liberally, paying specially courteous attentions to Miss Sylvester, whom he claimed as a compatriot. He had not the air of a suitor, but rather of an obedient henchman, as if in her he did honor to the American woman.

"I guess we raise a fine creature out there," he told me, as we conversed on deck. He had just left Miss Sylvester, who had joined her uncle in a promenade, and he was following her with his eyes. "There's beauty enough knocking about these old islands of yours, Mr. Herapath, but for style I'll back the United States. Not but what a European residence rubs up a bit of extra polish," he added meditatively.

Then he turned to the sea. "Say, we're getting on pretty well," he remarked complacently. "We're getting on like a happy family, eh?"

As he spoke there was a noise behind us, and we turned about, to see McLeod and Clifford emerging tumultuously from the companion-ladder. They came out on deck in a sort of scuffle, laughing uproariously.

"Yes, a happy family," I said dryly.

Halliday saw my meaning. "Well, they don't get much now," he observed, puckering his brows.

I had begun to suspect the steward by this time, and so I remarked: "Not from the ship's cellars."

He looked at me quickly with his alert eyes. "Do you think they get it somewhere else?"

"Look at them," said I, and he looked. Clifford was making an ineffectual attempt to mash in McLeod's hat—ineffectual because of his short stature. "If they go on," I added, "they'll have the captain down on them."

"I'll look into this," said Halliday promptly, and wandered off toward the men.

I feared he would get worsted in any encounter with them, but I wished him luck. He joined them, received a facetious dig in the ribs from Clifford, and began to talk. A few minutes later he had taken them round the deck-house, and I lost sight of them. I was left wondering if he had succeeded in taming those undisciplined animals. Then I went down to my engines.

I did not come on deck again till it was dusk. A cold wind came off the sea, which was still and dark, and I buttoned my coat closer. It was a change from the warmth of the engine-room. In the half-light I perceived Miss Sylvester walking to and fro; and when she came near to me she laughingly explained that she was taking a constitutional. I saw no one else on deck at this time. The evening dropped on us quickly, and one of the men climbed up from the lower deck with lights. I heard voices away aft, and suddenly a cry of alarm.

It was a woman's voice, and, of course, Miss Sylvester's.

I ran back as it was repeated, and when I came up with the dark figures I could discern her voice rang with an-

ger and indignation and dismay, all in one.

"How dared you? Oh, you—you beast!"

I took in the scene, and, putting my arm about the man's waist, tore him away from her and threw him against the deck-house with a bang. Then I turned my attention to the girl. She was frightened and furious.

"How dared he—the brute!" she panted.

He had had his arm about her, but there was no fight in him now. He lay still where I had thrown him.

"How dared he—the wretch! He—he tried to kiss me!" she cried, tears of mortification and shame in her eyes. She stamped her foot.

I apologized. "The beast was in liquor," I told her. "He didn't know what he was doing."

I led her away, soothed her rumpled feelings, and finally she descended to her cabin, forgetting to thank me.

I went back aft, and found Clifford sitting up.

"Well, I'll be darned!" he said stupidly, and felt his head. He stared at me. "Was that you?" he asked.

"A small instalment," I said shortly.

He put out a hand, and, steadying himself by the deck-house, got to his feet.

"I'll take a bill at sight for it, please," he said, and laughed uneasily. "Great Cæsar! I thought it was the day of judgment."

"This ship is too small for your talents, Mr. Clifford," I said. "If I were you I should quit at Baltimore, or wherever it is we are bound for."

"Oh, sure, sure; I leave the field," he agreed. "I'm not starting. Left at the post, my warrior. Avast! Belay! Ship ahoy! Where's that blamed doctor? Lord! I've got a head. I forgot your sledge-hammers."

He staggered off toward the hatchway with his incredible cheerfulness and indifference, and I stood considering him. He was an unpleasant cad with all the vices, but his unsuperable amiability surely redeemed him a little. I could not feel as angry with him as I should have felt with McLeod. And the man was drunk. My thoughts went to Halliday and his hopeless task. He had evidently had no success. I descended into the saloon, and there were Byrne, McLeod, and Digby listening to a blasphemous and lurid account of my onslaught.

"Only one measly kiss! What a lot of fuss over a kiss! It's not worth it. I don't buy kisses at that price, my masters. McLeod, where's that sticking-plaster?"

"Serve you blank well right," growled the angry Scot. "A little cad like you insulting a lady!"

"Steady, Mac, or I'll put the hard hitter onto you," threatened the unabashed Clifford. "Keep your hair on, and get me something to keep mine on. Here, Headon, get out the whisky. Now, fetch the fizz, Byrne, like a good chap."

I heard no more, for I turned out of the saloon, unobserved by them, but I had heard enough to know that the resources of their cellar were not exhausted, and I wondered. I had not been more than five minutes in my cabin, when there was a rap, and Wade's face was poked through the door.

"What's all this I hear about Clifford's insulting Miss Sylvester?" he asked bluntly.

"He was drunk," said I, going on with the adjustment of my tie.

"Drunk!" he echoed. "Why, I thought we'd stopped all that." He paused. "So you came the knight-errant, Ned, eh?"

"I had to get even with you, you see," I said lightly.

A smile shadowed his eyes. "All right. Well, we don't want any more gallant deeds aboard; at least, I hope not. I'm getting sick of that gang."

"They've got a private supply somewhere," I told him.

"I must see Halliday again," he remarked, after a pause. "Come up, now. Here's a young lady looking for you to thank you for your kind offices."

So that was how he knew. I followed him on deck, and he jocularly

presented me. "Here's the hero, Miss Sylvester, with all his blushing honors thick upon him."

She put her hand on my arm. "Mr. Herapath, it's just wonderful of you, and I can't say anything more than that. I can't forgive myself for running off without thanking you." Her hand trembled on my arm, and it was plain she had not got over her agitation.

"I'm glad I was at hand," I said. "And I'm glad it was *my* privilege this time, not Captain Wade's."

She uttered a little laugh. "So am I," she said, with something like her characteristic courage; "and as for the man——"

"I'll clap him in irons," said Wade sharply. "I won't have brutes like that loose, tramp or no tramp."

"Is that you, captain?" called a voice through the darkness.

Halliday came up. "I want to see you, captain," he said, with evident excitement. "Come along, now. Mr. Herapath's a friend of yours, isn't he? Yes, I guess he's all right. I want both of you. Oh, good evening, Miss Sylvester. It's a right-down fine evening, isn't it? And there's a good moon on the way up."

He spoke hurriedly, and his address to her was obviously most perfunctory. He was anxious to get us away. Two minutes later we were in the deck-cabin, which he used as an office. He waved us to some seats with what remained of his ceremoniousness.

"Sit down. I've got something to tell you," he went on quickly: "something, I dare say, that you'll say you ought to have known before. Well, you can blame me for that, if you like. I've got to tell it now. I made up my mind right away."

He fidgeted with the papers on the table, and was displaying every sign of mental disturbance, but his eyes were bright and eager, as if his spirit still dominated proudly a tottering house. "You've got to know, captain, and I guess Mr. Herapath, here, might as well know, too. I don't know anything about the others. I'm not sure about them. Anyway, they know enough to go on with, and you don't. I'm figuring out it isn't fair to you."

He glanced at us questioningly, and resumed:

"You got an envelope there, captain, and there's something inside it."

"Sealed orders," said Wade shortly. "To be opened latitude——"

"Well, I guess we won't bother about that, and after what I say, you needn't open it at all. Say, what do you suppose this ship's after?"

"I understood from the principal owner," said Wade dryly, "that she was a tramp, laden for Baltimore."

"Oh, twenty-three!" said Halliday, with a small laugh. "Let's quit that, captain. After getting that sealed packet I reckon you know better."

Wade said nothing; and his expression betrayed nothing of the interest which he must have felt.

"This boat's chartered on a treasure-hunt," said Halliday.

I started. Wade stroked his mustache, and waited, as if he had heard the most usual thing in the world.

Halliday seemed disappointed. He had expected a sensation, and it had not come. I think he liked his dramatic curtains, but he continued quickly:

"It's a long story, but I can keep it warm for another time. Anyway, you've got to fix on to these points. There's treasure in an island in the West Indies—treasure that's been there for two hundred years; and there's a map which came into my possession; and there's the *Duncannon* chartered for a cruise."

"And the owners?" asked Wade laconically.

"That's where my new story begins," said Halliday, frowning. "And that's why I come to you. Buried treasure requires big handling, captain, and I'm not in a big way myself—not yet, that is. I came upon the map while on your side, while I was rustling for one of your insurance companies. But this beats rustling. It's a dead cert, sir."

He struck the table sharply to emphasize his conviction.

"But, anyway, I couldn't run to it as a lone hand," he continued, with a certain sadness, "and I figured out that I

could make a joint-stock company of it, or a simple partnership. Blamed if I don't wish I'd floated it right on to the public!" he said. "But there was a lot against it—publicity and the write-me-downs in the financial papers, and so on. And then there was the chance that the scheme would be flooded out with laughter. Anyway, after toting it up, I settled on a partnership"—he paused—"and advertised."

"Hence this galley," said Wade.

"Precisely; as you remark, captain, 'Hence this galley.' They're a mixed crew, assorted to taste, but that taste's not mine. I could have picked a better lot on the East Side in New York in half a day. When you buy a bag, I reckon you must expect to find something in it that don't square with your taste. And that's my case. And it makes me look a fool and feel a fool."

Wade crossed his legs. "If you would get on, Mr. Halliday," he said, "I assume you want assistance or advice in something?"

"I don't know," Halliday mused. "I believe I'm merely relieving my feelings, and my conscience, maybe. I'm pouring this into your ears by way of belated compensation. No: fact is you've got to know it now. But I don't know, anyway, that I can't squeeze out for myself. That advertisement brought me hundreds of offers. I had some little money myself, and I asked for six partners to put up five thousand dollars each. That gave us our charter. And I drew up a deed of sharing profits, by which we shared alike on the score of our money invested, but I came out on top with the map. Say, now, it was like this. There were twelve shares, and each man took one share, and left me five over—five-twelfths for the purchase price of the scheme, see?"

Wade nodded. "You get half," he said laconically.

Halliday's eyes glowed as he rehearsed the financial arrangements, as I had no doubt they had glowed when he propounded them to his partners. "Well, I fixed it up with the six along there, selecting some by reason of their knowledge of the sea. There's Marley, for instance, a good sailor, eh, captain?"

"Decent," said Wade.

"Then there's Davenant," he added hopefully.

"Tolerable," said Wade.

I thought Halliday was somewhat crestfallen at this damping reception, but he rattled on:

"But I chose some for other properties, same as I chose you, captain. I don't want in this business conventional hymn-singing, top-hat, frock-coat fellows."

"Well, you haven't got 'em, so far as my acquaintance goes," I interjected, with a laugh.

He eyed me. "No: that's so," he said thoughtfully: "I guess I overstepped the limit, and have to stand the racket. I guess I ought to have sifted 'em better. But I'm blamed if I know now where I am!" he ended sadly.

"I wish we knew exactly where we were, Mr. Halliday," said Wade, in his blunt way.

"I guess you will," he smiled back. "The key of the cellar's gone from my bureau."

"That explains it," I said.

Wade whistled.

Halliday watched us, not averse from a certain satisfaction in the dramatic surprise. "And the map," he added.

"The map!" said Wade.

Halliday nodded. "Little Willie's lost the map," he said, "and one of his partners has got it."

"This," said Wade, stirring—"this begins to get interesting."

CHAPTER V.

HUNT THE SLIPPER.

"The existence of the map was known to all?" asked Wade.

"The map was shown to all," said Halliday. "It was in evidence to prove the bona-fides of the scheme. But it never left my possession—not till now. All copartners are privy to the history of the map, but I was the only one in possession of it—till now."

"The question is—which? Your half-

share was presumably the temptation," said Wade.

"I'll lay a dollar to a cent I know who has the key," I said, "and it would be making two bites at a cherry to look elsewhere."

"Meaning Clifford?" said Wade, looking at me thoughtfully. "Yes, I nose Clifford in this somehow. It doesn't appear to me insoluble."

"Well, I don't know," said Halliday slowly. "It isn't quite so simple, maybe, as it seems. There's six of them, and we've got to settle between 'em. Personally, I don't feel like hitching the job on to any one in particular. I don't fancy sorting out their claims. At the same time I'm not saying that Clifford won't pouch his share of the liquor."

"He's already been pouching it," said I. "When did you discover your loss?"

"About half an hour ago, when I was opening my bureau. I kept the map in a locked drawer, and the bureau was locked on the top of that. But that didn't seem to worry the thief any."

He indicated the bureau lock, which had been ruthlessly shattered.

"When last did you notice it was all right?" I asked.

"Just before dusk," he answered.

"Well," said I, "that doesn't somehow look like Clifford. The bureau must evidently have been rifled during the last two hours. Clifford was drunk then."

"Doesn't it look like the work of a drunken man?" inquired Wade.

"Possibly," I assented, "but I happen to be able to account for the movements of Clifford during part of that time. Still, it's a difficult point."

"Captain, we've got to find out," said Halliday earnestly.

"*You* have," retorted Wade coolly. "I don't know that it interests me. I've got to fetch up at this island, wherever it is. I can do that if the teapot holds together."

"Captain," said Halliday, with a faint smile, "you're reckoning you ought to be in this for something. I'm not saying you shouldn't. But seems to me I want your assistance pretty bad, and I'll pay for it. This is going to look nasty for me, if I don't take care. See, I'm frank. I'm prepared to make you an offer."

"Well, let's see how you figure it out," said Wade. "All I see is that one of your partners purloined the map, but I don't see that it's going to make any material difference to you. You've got the bearings, I presume."

"I know the map by heart; and, what's more, I've got a copy," said Halliday. "But that's not the point. The point is that they have the original."

"You mean——"

"I mean that if they are so disposed they can make trouble for me on the score of that agreement. You see, that's gone with the other things, and rather floors me."

"Oh!" Wade straightened himself. "So that's your pickle? It leaves you on a lee shore." He considered. "You want to be in a position of leverage again? All right, I'm in it for all I'm worth, and here's Herapath, too, a good man at need."

"Thank you, captain. I guess I'm obliged to you, and it won't be any loss to you."

Wade shrugged his shoulders; he was indifferent to money, but he liked a sporting hazard. He rose.

"Then we've got to run the thief to earth. I'll go bail for Marley."

Halliday nodded, but doubtfully. "I guess he and Davenant are all right."

"That narrows it to four," said Wade. "Oh, come, we're not far off it. Let's begin at once."

He went out on deck, and we followed him. "What are you going to do?" inquired Halliday.

"You forget I have two passengers aboard who, I believe, have paid their fares; and I have the unpleasant duty of explaining to them that they cannot now be landed at Baltimore."

"Yes, I'd clean forgot that," confessed Halliday. "Though it did cross my mind at the time, only a little ready cash was needed, and the old man paid up nobly—offered five hundred dollars!"

"Five hundred!" echoed Wade.

"Well, he ought to get a bit more than a desert island for that. Anyway, it's not my funeral."

He stalked away, leaving us together. "Has he got anything in his head?" asked Halliday anxiously.

"I don't know," I replied. "That's his way. Will you acquaint Marley?"

"That's worrying me some," he returned. "Yet if it was Marley, I should not be telling him anything he didn't know. Confound this sea! It's roughing up."

"I'll give you a tip," said I. "Tell each one in secrecy, and let him see you suspect all the others, and not himself."

"Gee whizz! That's a notion," he said. "Say, I'll think over that. Mr. Herapath, you're all right." He walked up and down, and then stopped. "Hear any noise?"

My engines were pounding, but through that sound emerged a strain of song from below.

"Hitting it up," I commented. "The owners make merry. Whatever's become of the map and the deed, I reckon the key's there."

"And the key might have been a separate theft," he remarked. "It's a puzzle. Well, I give to-night to it. Don't think a ghost walks if you hear footsteps in the small hours. I've got to worry this out."

He called good night, and left us, and I went below for some supper. The saloon was rowdy and hilarious, and Headon, the steward, was seated at a table with the usual gang. I called to him sharply, and gave him my order, and his glassy eyes met mine as he went off.

"Hello, Samson!" cried the irrepressible Clifford from the other end, his head wrapped in a bandage. "Let's bury the hatchet in a pipe of peace. Come along. Great Cæsar, that was a thundering thwack! What's your gargle? Mac, pass that fizz."

I said nothing, but stood staring at them, and Clifford fell into ribaldry, his face flushed purple with his potations.

"Where's the key?" he demanded, feigning to look about him anxiously. "I say, Herapath, come along. It's a game of hunt the slipper. You got it, Mac? No. Hello! Jiggered if I don't have a go at Barney's boots! He's got 'em on. Gosh! how your pockets bulge, old cock! Come and join the fun, old man. We're all in for a game of hunt the slipper."

Byrne sat with his significant and humorous Irish smile on his pasty face, and McLeod scowled. I turned my back on them. It was not I who could execute the plan I had suggested to Halliday. I had too much feeling against the crew. No: Halliday alone could carry it out, and was at that moment, no doubt, turning it round in his ingenious mind.

I visited Wade before I went below, and found him placid.

"It's no affair of ours if they have lost this blessed chart," he said; "but it may be amusing. It's either Clifford or Byrne, and I'll just open accounts to-morrow with them. There's more than one lock in a ship; but only one master. I say, Ned," he added, as he turned, "that's a rum joker, that Frenchman. I told him Baltimore was off, and he looked at me so fiercely I thought he could have knifed me.

"'It is outrage,' he cried, in his Frenchy way, and he was beginning to carry on so that I hurried to get it over.

"'You must settle it with the owners. I obey orders,' I told him. 'But it appears they are bent on going to an unknown island for some reason of their own.'

"'Island?' says he. 'Unknown?' And was silent for a bit; after which he said quite calmly: 'Very well, Monsieur le Capitaine, I accept my destiny. I see you are not to blame.'

"There's fatalism for you! But he probably meant to say destination. I don't know how the girl will like it."

I was wondering myself, for she was bound to know next morning. She had been cheated into making a voyage to Baltimore without adequate preparations; and now even that limit was to be denied her, and she would find herself committed to an expedition the

end of which no one could see. Certainly I could not see the end. From all signs we carried a quarrelsome party, in which were the seeds of possible mutiny. Halliday had been robbed by one of his companions: that was bad enough for a start. And his anxiety was not to flourish his loss in public, but to pursue his detective investigations quietly. Wade, however, was of a very different cast. He would truckle to no one, and would stand no nonsense. He was as reckless in dealing with men as with his ship. The chart, he declared, was Halliday's affair, but the key was his, and he tackled it at once.

He had Clifford and McLeod in his cabin by eight bells next day, and gave them the rough side of his tongue.

"Where's that key?" he demanded, after some straight talk.

"What key?" said Clifford, blinking at him foolishly.

"Look you here, my man," said Wade sharply, "I understand you're a sort of owner of this boat, and, as such, I suppose you'll get your reward: but I'll have you know that you're also under me, and that I'll have discipline aboard. Where's that key?"

A grin spread on Clifford's mottled face. "Do you mean the key of the cellar, captain?" he asked.

"Yes," said Wade curtly.

Clifford took something from his pocket, and threw it on the table with a clank. "I'm glad to get rid of it," he said, with a deep sigh. "It's been a bally responsibility. I thought Mr. Halliday was going to take charge of it: and he might have told me he was going to leave it in the door."

"Leave it in the door!" repeated Wade.

"That's where I found it," said innocent Clifford. "I suppose it was Mr. Halliday put it there."

Wade's brow clouded. "The key was stolen, and you know it," he said sternly. "Now in future I'll take charge of this, and I don't think you'll find it an easy matter to fool me." He got up, as if to end the audience, and added, in his most significant voice: "And in the event of any trouble I'm not one to hesitate. I've used irons before now."

"This is very interesting," said Clifford politely, turning to his companion, McLeod; "isn't it, doctor? When was the last time you used irons, captain, and under what fell circumstances?"

Wade flushed slightly, but made no reply. Instead, he pointed to the door, and Clifford civilly gave him good morning, and went out with his companion.

"Butter wouldn't melt in the scoundrel's mouth," Wade told me; "but I didn't like the look of that man McLeod. He's the fellow we've got to keep our eyes on. He's dangerous. I shouldn't be surprised to find him run amuck some fine day. Ugh! what swine!"

The phrase seemed to describe them very well, which made me all the more annoyed to notice the friendly manner Miss Sylvester showed to the doctor. His duties were nominal, and he had all his time on his hands; with the result that he was constantly in attendance upon the girl, whom I frequently overheard laughing and talking with him. He was plain-looking, but had a fine figure, yet his appearance, to my mind, was disfigured at the root by the latent passion in his face. Of this, however, I must confess there was no trace when he was in Miss Sylvester's company. She had taken the news of the ship's destination with admirable good nature. I do not think she realized for one moment what it meant or might mean, and she was most probably taken with the romance of the expedition.

"Oh, Mr. Herapath, aren't you excited?" she said once, joining me breathlessly at the side of the steamer. Her face sparkled with beauty, and her eyes with light. "I'm just dying to get to the island," she added ecstatically: "and then uncle and I will take our passages in another boat, and I can get my baggage in Baltimore."

That was the tale, then, that she had received, and in her innocence believed. She imagined that she could tranship from our treasure island when she had

exhausted its interest and her own curiosity! I did not undeceive her, for it was no business of mine, and, besides, it would have been ruthless. By this time, you see, it was known through the ship that our destination was not Baltimore. The sealed orders should have been opened by now, and Halliday's copartners, no doubt, believed that this was what had happened. They were not aware that Wade and myself had been taken into Halliday's confidence. But the word "treasure" had gone fore and aft, and had stimulated all hands, as if it had been an extra glass of grog. There was wonderful good temper among the crew: even the dagoes, of whom there were several, showing smiling countenances. We had run into good weather, and were laying our new course, Wade authoritative and inscrutable as ever.

There was no trouble among the partners for some days, and we appeared to have weathered the threatened storm. That, however, was but a delusive interlude, as you shall see. It was not many days before some signs of insubordination were visible among the crew. I noticed louder voices, and less reputable behavior than is consistent with good seamanship and strict discipline. And at last, as I was descending to the lower deck, one of the hands ran into me, obviously drunk.

He didn't wait for my question, but lurched off. I gave Wade the information, and he caused inquiries to be made. Marley, having investigated, came back with a bad report.

"I'm very sorry, old man," he said, seated opposite his captain, whom he thus cavalierly addressed. "But there's some mischief down there. And I can't get at the bottom of it. I found two of the beggars drunk, and several have had quite as much as was good for them. I gave them a call down, but they're a cheeky lot, and I wouldn't trust some of them."

Wade rose. "We'll soon get to the bottom of this," he declared. "Give me the names."

"Atkins and Desprez, drunk," said Marley, consulting his notes; "and a lot of others—Santoni, Millevois, Garsch, Anton, Peters—had been drinking."

"Mr. Marley, be so good as to instruct Mr. Davenant to have the crew piped on deck," said Wade formally.

Marley went out, and presently the boatswain's whistle was heard. I think it was a great occasion for Digby, "part owner." No one knew what was coming, not even I, though I had looked interrogatively at Wade. His face was set like a bulldog's; his jaw stiff.

It was dark, and the men were assembled facing the upper deck, the captain on the bridge.

"My lads," shouted Wade, from above, "there's some bad eggs among you, half-seas over. I want to know where you come by that stuff before I take action."

There was no reply from below, but a sort of deep murmur passed along the ranks.

"Very well. I'll have it sooner or later out of you, if I've got to hammer it out. Best be sensible," said Wade's cool voice. "I'm not going to come down hard on you. Only this has got to end."

Still there was no reply. "I'll give you four minutes," said Wade, and left the bridge. He joined me, breathing heavily.

"You can see it now, Herapath," he said. "It's warming up. We've bit off as much as we can chew. I've seen crews all my life, and I know it."

"What's old Spy-glass at?" inquired Clifford, as he brushed past me.

"He's discovered that some of his hands are drunk," I replied deliberately; "and more are fractious."

"Jiminy!" he exclaimed. "Here's a go! I wish I'd not left my mammy. Let's see the fun." He pushed on precipitately, and when I turned, Wade had remounted to the bridge.

"Well?" he shouted.

"There's nothing to say, sir," shouted back several voices.

"Very well," said he. "Atkins, Desprez, Santoni, Garsch, Millevois, Peters, Anton——" he completed the list. "Remain! All others resume duty, or go below."

There was a movement visible among the squad; a movement of disintegration, and then suddenly, and without a further word on any one's part, a fierce stream of water from two hoses began to play upon them from the upper deck. There followed at once a stampede and confusion, and savage oaths reached us. But the hoses played on, and the victims bolted in various directions. The batteries sought them in hiding-places; the deck was searched, until at last it was empty, untenanted, and dripping in the faint light. Wade descended from the bridge now, and not a muscle of his face moved. He went to his cabin without a remark. It was Clifford who made the comment:

"Gosh! How's that for high? The dook is on his hind legs."

"Idiotic thing to do," growled Marley in my ears. "It wasn't bad fun, and it'll sober them up. But an idiotic thing to do."

Davenant was beside us blinking through his glasses at the scene.

CHAPTER VI.

M'LEOD.

Halliday was confined to his cabin again, for the wind had swollen to half a gale, and the sea was running heavily. He had stood out against his weakness in a gallant manner, but had been forced to capitulate. Red-eyed, pink-nosed, and pinched of face he had retired, and we did not see him for two days. But during those two days we were not idle. Indeed, things became very lively for us, owing, in the main, to Wade's high-handed action. He had the temper of an autocrat, and he had the right, but I question if it was wise to take the step he did. And yet, when one thinks of what afterward happened at the island, it is impossible to say whether events would have been affected had he stayed his hand.

The trouble began, as usual, with Clifford, that cheerful, leering scoundrel, who seemed absolutely to delight in disorder and rows out of sheer wantonness. With this news of the crew in his ears, Wade summoned the storekeeper before him again. He did not beat about the bush with useless threats, but went straight to the point. He demanded of Clifford his accounts and books.

"Books?" Clifford stared. "I didn't know you had to keep books!"

"Think they kept themselves?" sneered Wade.

Clifford grinned. Nothing could perturb that shameless bosom.

"Well, if I'd known there was any of that tommy-rot, I wouldn't have taken it on," he said. "Anyway, I've got the cash, and I'll hand over."

He reappeared presently with a piece of paper on which were some accounts.

"This isn't the slightest use to me," Wade remarked shortly, when he had inspected it. "This purports to give the amount of stores dispensed; but where is the account of the stores shipped?"

"How the deuce was I to know that was wanted?" asked Clifford, with apparent vexation; but I could see the glint in his eyes that spoke of vicious laughter. "I've got some of the invoices," he added, as if in mitigation of his negligence.

"Including those for wine and rum?" asked Wade, once more with his sneer.

"It's possible—I couldn't say," said Clifford easily. "I'll have a look, if you like."

"Pray do," said Wade politely, and we waited. "That man's very clever," he remarked, in an even voice. "It's a rare combination, cunning and audacity, and goes far to make a first-class scoundrel."

Clifford returned jauntily. "No; I find there's no wine or spirits invoices," he said cheerfully, and grinned at both of us. Then he went off into laughter.

"You may go," said Wade curtly, and, when he was gone, turned to me. "He's one of my owners! Great Scott! The mischief of it is, we can't discover how much of the spirits they've cached. No one but this cherub knows how much came aboard. We must only reckon on this now, that they've got

their separate cellar, and are going to use it when they like."

This was exactly what happened. We were unable to trace the source of the drinking, but drinking continued. The men were well supplied with rum from some secret fount; and the discipline of the ship deteriorated in a marked degree. Both Marley and Davenant reported their inability to stem the growing disorder. It was not that the hands were mutinous, but they were in a lax state, and resented the routine of duty. Also they assumed a familiarity to which they were ordinarily foreign. I cannot imagine that the man Crashaw could ever have developed a greater offense of manner than was natural to his bold gait, but the demoralization showed in almost all the others, who were wont on occasion to indulge in winks and nudges and significant grins in the presence of any of their officers. If the sousing to which some of them had been subjected rankled in their minds we saw nothing of that. It was merely now that they shared a joke against us.

Marley fumed, Davenant shrugged his shoulders, and Wade was philosophically silent—I think he expected something worse, and was saving up for it. Halliday reappeared for a short time, and in his sharp way noted the altered behavior of the crew. But he took it with nonchalance. His indomitable spirit could be nothing but optimistic.

"Say, they'll settle down, the boys will," he remarked. "They're going a bit free, I don't doubt, but that's the liquor. If I thought it was that blamed Clifford—but, anyway, they'll settle down."

I inquired on this occasion as to his progress in discovering the thief, and he looked down his nose.

"Fact is, Mr. Herapath," he said, "I didn't have time get a hold of it. I quite cottoned to your notion, and I acted on it."

"Well?" I queried, with interest.

He stroked his clean-shaven face demurely. "Well, I told each of them in private that I had lost a document, and that of the whole lot, I was only perfectly sure of him. Do you see? That was the lay, wasn't it? Well"—his voice became dry, and his manner drier—"they each said they guessed that was so, and that they suspected the other five. That didn't seem to get us much farther." A furtive smile dawned on his face.

"What! Did Marley and Davenant say that?" I asked.

"I kinder left them out," he answered. "But the other four did, and Digby gave me to understand bluntly that he had never kept company with such trash in his life, having been born a gentleman."

"He drinks with them," said I; "and, after all, it is possible they were all born gentlemen."

"It's a word that puzzles me," said Halliday. "What does it signify, anyway? Still, if it is going to count as an umbrella, I'll bet my last greenback that it doesn't cover Clifford."

No, Clifford defied analysis. He quoted the classics, and he had a varied vocabulary, but he had no pretensions to having ever once been a gentleman. He was born a "bounder." And an amazing "bounder"! For here my narrative touches farce. Halliday driven back into his cabin by stress of weather, Clifford approached Wade, and offered his assistance to quell the insubordinate crew!

"Before they get ugly," he urged, with his grin.

I was not present at the interview, and I never heard exactly what happened, but I know Clifford ran the risk of having his head broken a second time. "I sent him to the right about," was all Wade said. But, having been cheated of his office of peacemaker, Clifford apparently decided to go out as a volunteer. He mingled with the men a good deal, hobnobbed with them, and chaffed them, but I did not observe that his missionary efforts were much rewarded. On the contrary, the hands' familiarity was increased, though it was good-natured enough.

Meanwhile the voyage had been uneventful for Miss Sylvester and her uncle, but both seemed quite satisfied with

their surroundings. The girl enjoyed the novelty of her position, and pelted me, and all of us, with questions as to the island and the treasure. I could honestly say I knew nothing, but that could not be McLeod's excuse for silence. And, indeed, I have reasons to believe that he told her as much as he knew. Clifford, of course, she never condescended to notice in any way, and to Byrne, his constant associate and boon companion, she paid scant attention. She confined herself socially to Wade, McLeod, the two officers, and myself: and of these McLeod was most in her company. Davenant was polite but formal, and Marley was too roughly hewn to take a young girl's fancy. In an ordinary way, shipboard intimacy is easily established, and, given that ingenuous and open nature of the girl, it was not difficult to account for the friendly relations which she maintained with McLeod. The man himself was improved by this association, as one had grudgingly to admit. It removed him a good deal from the society of Byrne and Clifford, and brought out better points in a wild nature. Yet he was still listed as dangerous in my private books, and not without justice.

In the dusk of one evening, when we had fairly run into the West Indian waters, I was upon the lower deck on some errand, and at the back of some kegs I came upon a seaman stooped over something.

"What is it, Carter?" I inquired.

He raised his head as a turtle raises his, and straightened himself, laughing awkwardly.

"It's Joyce," he said, and added: "I reckon he ought to have the hose, sir."

I saw now what it was. The drunken man lay helpless, breathing stertorously. I eyed Carter, a slow-moving, bulky, dull-witted fellow, with huge, capable hands.

"I oughtn't to say it," I said. "But it would be wiser for him to be out of this. If I were you, Carter, I'd get him below."

"That's what I was going to do, sir," said Carter, in a confidential manner.

"Very well," said I. "I haven't seen anything. But when you've disposed of him, I wouldn't take it amiss if you came to my cabin, Carter."

"Very well, sir," he said, staring heavily, and I left him.

Now this was deliberately designed on my part. I was using a sprat, so to speak, to catch a mackerel. If I had not shown myself sympathetic over Joyce's inanimate body, I should have alienated Carter. At any rate, he would not have been likely to give me any assistance. It remained to see if he would, in any case. He knocked half an hour later, when the dark had fully descended.

"I couldn't come before, sir," he explained, "as I—well, I hadn't the chance."

He displayed some confusion, and I drew my own inference—namely, that he did not want to be seen visiting me, and hence had waited until the dusk had deepened.

"Well, Carter," I said diplomatically, "sit down, I want to have a talk. Joyce all right?"

"Yes, sir—nicely laid in bed."

Carter was ill at ease, and ponderous of manner. The machinery of his brain turned so rustily that he hardly recognized it was in motion.

"About this drinking, Carter?"

"Yes, sir."

"You know it won't do. I'm not going to say anything about Joyce, or what I've seen, but it's got to stop if we want to avoid trouble. I don't even ask where it comes from. All I want to have is an assurance that the men will go slow on it."

"I don't know, sir. Some of them's a bit hard to head off."

"True; but I suppose there's some one in authority over the supplies?"

I spoke as if it was quite a natural thing that they should have their private cellar, and my tone was rather that of one who begs a friend for assistance.

"Oh, Headon's no good," he said thoughtlessly, and then it dawned on him what he had said. I gave no sign of receiving this information with astonishment or satisfaction; but, ignoring the trouble in his eyes, continued in the same tone:

"Well, anyway, Carter, there ought to be some one able to put a stop to this excessive drinking. It's bound to lead to trouble."

"There ought, sir," he urged, looking relieved.

"Understand me," I pursued. "It's for the sake of the ship I say this. I'm not blaming the men for enjoying themselves within reason. I like a drop myself. But there are evidently some of them who can't help making hogs of themselves."

"That's true, sir," said Carter, "and I could put a name to them, too; but I don't like splitting on pals."

"I wouldn't ask you to," I replied. "Of course we know that Headon distributes the rum, but we don't know where it is."

"Oh, you knew that, sir," exclaimed Carter, staring.

"Why! do you suppose we're blind?" I asked. "I don't like Headon, and I don't trust him."

Carter glanced about cautiously before speaking. "Well, it isn't for me to say, sir, but I don't like his goings on. Of course, I wouldn't say anything to come between my shipmates and myself; but I don't like Headon, and that's flat."

"Ah, Carter," said I sadly, shaking my head and drawing a bow at a venture. "It's not so much Headon as those who are above him and ought to know better than he. I blame them."

I had to angle him, you see, but the operation repaid me. He leaned forward mysteriously.

"You're right, sir. I don't want to open my mouth about no one, but I wouldn't trust that there doctor, not for anything."

"Ah, you've observed, then?" I said, nodding. "You've a shrewd mind, Carter."

"Observed?" he said. "Why, I seen him."

"That day?" said I vaguely.

He nodded, and went on in a lower voice: "I was swabbin' the deck by the chart-house, and it was pretty dark, and I seen him go into Mr. Halliday's cabin. 'Twas him took the key, sir, sure enough."

"Carter," said I, clapping him on the back, "this is important. You're a very important witness."

He looked uncomfortable. "I wouldn't do anything that was unfriendly to my mates," he said, in a crestfallen way.

"You needn't," I said. "I think I can promise you won't be called upon to do anything. But we must maintain discipline aboard. You know that as well as I, don't you?"

"Yes, sir; of course, sir," he said, cheering up.

"And now, Carter," I went on, "as this is an exceptional occasion, I think I may ask you to join me in a glass."

"Thank ye, sir," he said, now quite at his ease.

I took the information forthwith to Wade, who heard me out, frowned, and rang a bell.

"Headon we'll deal with in due course," he said. "But McLeod is a more important matter. We'll settle that right away."

"I don't want to bring in Carter's name, if possible," I said. "I took advantage of him, and I feel rather mean about it."

"You're so thin-skinned, my son," said he. "But I think I can bluff it, all right, without him." And he broke off to give an order. "Ask Mr. Marley, Mr. Davenant, and Doctor McLeod if they will be good enough to join me here."

Marley arrived before the others, and saw by Wade's face that something was wrong.

"What's the row?" he asked.

"Court of justice," said Wade.

"McLeod," said I.

Marley whistled. "I thought the blighter would tumble into it sooner or later," he said.

There was a noise outside, and the door opened, Davenant slipping in softly, but with rather a flushed face. On his heels came McLeod—tall, wiry, and swaggering. At a glance I saw he had been with his friends.

"What's up?" he asked.

Wade eyed him steadily. "Last week," he said abruptly, "Mr. Halliday's cabin was entered, his bureau was broken into, and a key was abstracted. The thief was seen and identified by witnesses who have only just come forward. He was Doctor McLeod."

Marley called out in surprise. "The devil!"

Davenant looked from one to the other; from the accuser to the accused. McLeod did not break out, as I had expected, but a sneer spread over his face.

"Is that what you've summoned me here to tell me?" he asked, in his brusk Scotch voice.

"I charge you, sir, in the presence of these gentlemen," said Wade sternly, "and give you warning of the proceedings which will follow. You have been guilty of theft."

"Oh," said McLeod, quietly enough, but the anger swelling within him was visible through all. "Is that it? It's verra conseederate of you, Captain Mark Wade, as they call ye—verra conseederate, indeed; and I take it friendly like to——"

"There is another matter also," broke in Wade coldly. "You stole not only a key, but a chart and a document, both the private property of Mr. Halliday, who——"

"Liar!" The Scotchman's fury suddenly overflowing in passion, he lifted his fist and struck Wade over the forehead.

Davenant took hold of the savage, and Wade recovered himself. In that moment I admired his self-control, for his hands were trembling, and his face had whitened. But he remembered even then that he was on the bench, and there was a perceptible pause before any word was said. McLeod, restrained between Davenant and Marley, was unabashed, but he made no attempt to renew his outrage.

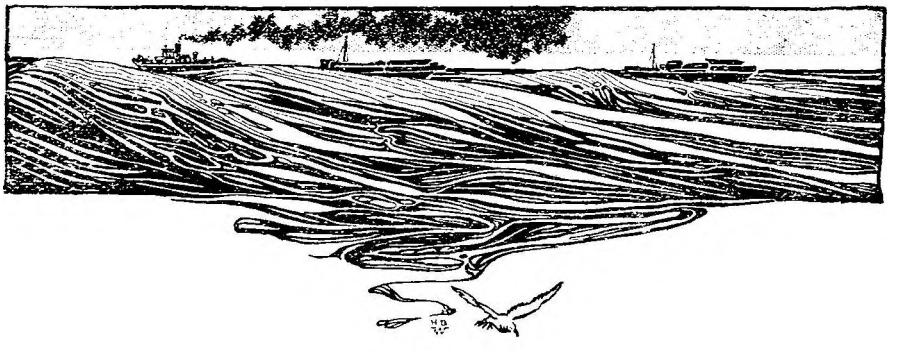
"This is a case for irons," said Wade quietly. "Mr. Herapath, will you kindly get a couple of men."

McLeod strove to throw off the hands that held him. Davenant remonstrated with him in the struggle that followed, and I caught the words:

"The man called me a thief. I'll let blood out of any man that calls me thief."

I ended the struggle by putting my arms over his from behind, so that he could make no movement, and meanwhile Wade had rung. It was not a pleasant sight, but it had to be endured, and Wade watched the operation of ironing unperturbed. McLeod, having ceased to resist, had turned sullen, and malevolence kindled in his eye as he was taken away.

TO BE CONTINUED.



A Mighty Deep Game of Graft

By Lawrence S. Mott

An intricate piece of "grafting" that involved certain insurance companies whose dealings in high finance were the subject of especial attention at the hands of the Government inspectors. You may not have any sympathy with "grafters," but you will enjoy this unusually clever story.

THE big room was dark, save for the Argand burner on the desk and a little cluster of electric lights high up in the ceiling. It was nearly midnight, and all was as quiet as a country churchyard. Robert Moss, the man behind the desk, was writing fast and furiously. The pen fairly flew over the paper. Outside the door sat Kenneth Winthrop, the private secretary. He yawned and yawned, and repeatedly looked at his watch.

Suddenly the pen stopped. The writer hurriedly glanced over what he had written, folded the half-dozen sheets of paper, placed them in an envelope, which he sealed and directed, and to which he attached a stamp. Then he pushed one of the group of electric buttons on a little stand beside him. The secretary lost no time in reaching him.

"Winthrop, I wish you would take this letter personally to the post-office, and make sure that it gets in the mail for Washington that leaves in about an hour. Tell the night watchman on your way out to come up and put the lights out. Good night."

"Good night, sir," answered Winthrop, as he started for the door.

Robert Moss, president of the big Standard Life Insurance Company, locked a few papers in the top drawer of his desk, put the key in his pocket, put on his hat, and was nearly to the door when the watchman entered. Moss nodded good night to the man, and then walked down the dimly lighted corridor of the magnificent building. At the end of the corridor he stopped in front of a small door, took a key from his pocket and unlocked the door, and entered an entirely different hall. He was now in the corridor of a large hotel, and the lights were burning quite brightly. A few steps down this hall and he again stopped and entered a splendid suite of rooms.

The hotel belonged to the insurance company. It was the finest in the city, and was under lease to one of the best hotel men in the country. It had proved a profitable investment for the company, for its prosperity was great, and the rent asked, high as it was, did not prevent a scramble for the lease.

The Standard Company kept the best suite in the house for its use. There were half a dozen bedrooms and parlors, and a private dining-room, almost the size of an ordinary banquet hall. Here private conferences were held and private dinners were given. The private passage from one building to the other made access easy and free from observation.

At the end of the suite, toward the insurance building, was a smaller suite reserved for the president. It was now early summer, and the Moss family had

gone to their handsome country residence on the shores of one of the inland lakes. Whenever the president had to remain in the city overnight he occupied these rooms. He was absolutely quiet in them, and, unless he invited a guest for business or pleasure, no one knew his whereabouts.

It was evident that Moss was not going to retire at once. He threw off his coat and rang for some refreshment. When it arrived and the door was locked, the president dropped into an easy chair by an open window, and it was evident he was going to have, to use an expression of his, "a good long think."

It might be well to look the famous man—for he was famous—over. He was about sixty years old. He was tall and strikingly handsome. His hair and mustache were iron-gray. The eyebrows were bushy, and behind them was a pair of piercing blue eyes. A keen observer might have noticed, however, that the eyes, searching as they were, had a shifty way about them. They darted a searching look, but not a steady one. They moved around, as though trying to cover all points of the compass at once. That he was inclined to sudden moods was certain. He could be very dignified, and as cold as an icicle. He could also be genial and companionable in the highest degree. As a result, while his friends understood him thoroughly, a stranger was very often puzzled at his mental attitudes.

To-night he was serious. One glance revealed that. He leaned forward in his chair and heaved a long sigh. He slowly ate a sandwich and sipped a glass of champagne. Then as suddenly he poured out another glass of wine, drank it right down, and lighted a cigar. Then he walked up and down the room a few moments. Returning to the chair, he dropped into it seemingly exhausted, and leaned part way out of the window, as though craving the fresh air. He was thinking very hard, and if he had given expression to his thoughts, they would have sounded something like this:

"I don't like that new examiner the State banking department sent. He is too particular, and he is too damn' smart. This is the first time I ever had trouble with any of those fellows. If you praised them and kept them in good condition, and insisted on giving them something extra when they finished, it was all right. But this fellow Hopkins is sharp as a brier. Then, some of the officers have no sense. They make any kind of a statement to this fellow, and, of course, they contradict themselves. There must be some way of pulling him off, but I don't know how. He can't be bought. I have found that out through Winthrop, and what that boy cannot uncover nobody can."

At about this point the president gave another long sigh. Then the thoughts came along in this fashion:

"I wish my son George was like Winthrop. I am afraid George cares too much for sport and things that attach themselves to a sporty life. Laura is so different"—and the father's face lighted up for the moment. "She is the best of daughters. I believe she loves Kenneth Winthrop. I know he loves her. I am in favor of the match, and so is mother." "Mother" was his pet name for his wife. Then back to business went the thoughts.

"I hope my letter to Senator Stratton will fix things up. It will reach him in the morning. He is a great friend of Martin, head of the banking and insurance department, and he can put the situation to him better and in better taste than I could. Stratton got Martin the appointment, and can have him reappointed when his term expires, as it does very soon. If the senator gets Martin on the long-distance phone some time during the day, that clever examiner ought to be recalled by night. In fact, we must get him out of the department altogether."

He looked out of the window at this point. It was a beautiful night. The stars were all out, and Moss thought what a fine night it must be at the lake. He was fond of his home, and begrudged these more and more frequent

absences, and the strain they were. His mind turned to Laura, and how proud he was of his daughter. The little bronze clock on the mantel indicated that it was two-thirty. It was time for bed. He needed all the sleep he could get. He took the remaining sandwich from the plate and started to eat it, and disrobe at the same time.

There was a quiet yet emphatic knock. Crossing the room, wondering what was wanted, the president opened the door, and Winthrop walked in.

"Why, Kenneth, my boy, what are you doing at this hour of the night? You look tired out. Take a glass of wine before you talk."

The secretary shook his head and began to speak in a nervous, excited manner.

"While I was waiting, sir, at the post-office to make sure your letter was correctly mailed, I overheard a couple of newspaper men talking. They stood back of one of the big marble columns, and did not see me. They were discussing a story that the *Herald* was to have this morning regarding the Standard. I could not make out exactly what it was about, but judged some kind of a discovery had been made by the banking department concerning some transaction of this company. At any rate, I understood the article would say that extra examiners would be put at work to-day in our institution. Knowing that the *Herald* went to press at two o'clock, I concluded to wait and get a copy. Here it is."

The president fairly snatched the paper from the hand of the private secretary. As he read the big display-head story on the first page, Moss gradually became the hard, cold-blooded business man again. When he had completed reading, he threw the paper on the table, and, looking at Winthrop, exclaimed:

"I know the rascal who is responsible for this, and will have him arrested in the morning."

He had forgotten his solicitude about Winthrop's fatigue and his tender thoughts of a few moments previous concerning his daughter and his private secretary. He was the man in command, with orders that must be executed at once.

"Go send a telegram to Senator Stratton," he said abruptly, "telling him to read my letter as soon as possible this morning, then to read the *Herald* and lose no time in connecting with the banking department."

Winthrop went out. While he was gone, the president's thoughts again took voluble shape.

"That man Hopkins is at the bottom of all this. He has stuffed Martin, the superintendent, with a story of some kind, and now more of those damn examiners are going to overrun the place. But how did the papers get it? Hopkins must have given some reporter an inkling. How I will make that man suffer for this! He shall go behind the bars, and go to-morrow."

A turn or two around the room, and Moss suddenly rushed into a telephone booth in the corner and rang vigorously. He asked for a certain number on Long Island. It was the call for the country house of William Henderson, counsel of the Standard. It was a long while before he got a response, and in the meantime Winthrop had returned.

"Go in one of those bedrooms," remarked Moss, pointing to the company's suite, "and go to bed. See that I am wakened at seven o'clock. Get what rest you can, for we will have a devil of a day, I expect."

The private secretary nodded, and left. Just then the phone rang, and a sleepy voice asked what was wanted. Moss let Henderson know the situation in short, snappy sentences.

"Go slow," was the counsel's reply. "It is a serious matter. Even if we can arrest Hopkins on the slight evidence we have, I doubt whether it is advisable. It is the story itself we want suppressed first. We can suppress the examiner later. We must bring every gun to bear to stop further examination along the lines Hopkins has been following. The newspapers must be promptly taken care of. I will get to the office by eight o'clock. Do nothing until I come. Good night."

Moss had the greatest confidence in Henderson, and relied implicitly on his directions. Nothing more could be done until morning. He read the *Herald* story over again, then jumped into bed.

At seven o'clock Winthrop came in to awake him. It was not necessary. The president had not slept a wink.

Promptly at eight o'clock Henderson walked into the president's apartment. Breakfast was on the table, but practically untouched. The two men left the room at once and went into one adjoining. There they proceeded to what was called a secret session.

Henderson had read the paper carefully coming up on the cars, and had his plans prepared. He put them concisely before the president, who instantly approved them. They concluded to conduct the work from the suite where they were, instead of from their offices, so as to avoid the newspaper men and others who might call and insist upon seeing them.

Orders were accordingly given, and then notices were sent out by Winthrop for a meeting of the directors, or as many as could be found, at noon. Instructions were issued to tell the reporters that there was nothing in the story, and that the officers had nothing to say.

Moss at first insisted on the arrest of Hopkins, but gave way to Henderson, who said such a step would add to the sensational value of the story and give the examiner an opportunity to employ counsel and arrange a defense which might prove unpleasant.

"Do not show any agitation," he said. "The less noise, the sooner results can be reached."

Meanwhile Hopkins and his associates had arrived for their day's work, and three extra examiners appeared. They had all read the *Herald*, and were more or less excited. They sent word to the president to know what he wanted, and Winthrop brought back reply that they were entirely welcome, and could proceed in any direction they desired. It was a cool and effective bluff, although Hopkins smiled to himself at the announcement.

The examiners held a little conference, which was interrupted about ten o'clock by a despatch, directed to Hopkins, from Superintendent Martin. It read:

> Am on my way to the city. Do nothing until I arrive this afternoon.

At about the same time President Moss was called on the long-distance phone from Washington, and Senator Stratton was at the other end. He said he had just finished talking to Martin. The latter told him he was afraid it was too late to stop the matter, but he would leave at once and go to the Standard office and talk with the president. While Moss was in the booth a telegram arrived for him from Martin, saying he would be at the office at three o'clock.

Another move was made by the clear-headed Henderson. A message was sent to the managing editor of the *Herald* saying that the paper would be held to a strict accountability for all it had published, and for anything further of a damaging character that might appear in its columns. In reply came the following letter from the editor:

> We obtained the information from an absolutely trustworthy source, and shall print what we deem best. We are prepared to stand by the story, and meet the consequences.

For the first time Henderson was disturbed. He thought the letter might be a counter bluff, but he did not like it, all the same. Moss was furious. He renewed his demand for the arrest of Hopkins. He felt sure he was the responsible party, and could be made to confess. The counsel could not move the president from his attitude, and would probably have been compelled to yield but for the timely arrival of a number of the directors. That diverted attention from the examiner for a while, so far as Moss was concerned.

The meeting was much more lively than had been expected. This was due to old Doctor Eastman. The physician had for years been the medical examiner in chief of the company, but had been retired recently on a good-sized

pension and made one of the directors on account of his distinguished services. Having plenty of time, and being fond of the ten-dollar gold piece given to each attendant at the meeting, he nearly always came. He had read the *Herald*, and was in a decidedly irritable and excitable mood.

As soon as the board was called to order, the doctor arose, and in a high voice exclaimed:

"Why wasn't I told about this? What right had the rest of you to make money through a syndicate deal and leave me out? It wasn't square, and I won't stand for it. Unless I get my share of the profits, I will see what the law can do."

President Moss was ready to explode, anyhow, and this remark capped the climax. Getting up and shaking his fist across the table at the doctor, he shouted loud enough to be heard all over the floor had the walls of the directors' room not been padded:

"Shut up, you old fool. Don't you know this story is a big lie, but one that may cause us a lot of trouble? Nobody has made anything out of a deal." (Here significant glances were exchanged by some of the directors.) "And you need not make it worse by fool talk about hiring a lawyer. We are here to see what shall be done to stop the clamor that the story will cause. Already stockholders and policyholders are telephoning and stopping in to inquire what it means."

The president's temper was cooling off, partly owing to whispers from Henderson, and he added, in much milder tones:

"You want to help, doctor, and not hinder us. Our stock will be affected, and plans we had in view to increase business will be prevented. A lie travels much faster than the truth, you know."

The doctor was pacified, although not satisfied.

"When I was on my way here," he remarked, "a friend of mine stopped me and said he noticed we had finally been caught."

"What did you say?" some one asked.

"Well, you see I was hot, because I thought I had been cheated, so I told him I was coming up here to find out where my share of the deal was, and get it."

This caused a laugh, and restored good nature somewhat, although the president continued his glum and savage appearance. A note was handed in for the doctor, and, after reading it, he left the room. It was a good while before he returned.

Henderson had been responsible for the note.

"I found we could not talk real business while the doctor was here," he observed.

There was a grim smile all around, and the board went into secret session. A shrewd man was Henderson.

The meeting was just adjourned when Moss was informed that Martin would be glad to see him at his convenience. The president told Winthrop to take the superintendent into the private hotel room and he would join him very soon. Henderson went along with Moss. The counsel induced the president to let him do the talking, for he felt there might be trouble otherwise.

Martin was very agreeable, and, in fact, displayed considerable anxiety. He began the conversation himself.

"A mistake of some sort must have been made," he said. "It was my assistant who ordered the extra examiners. He did it on the receipt of certain information which he thought warranted it."

"That came from Hopkins, did it not?" inquired Henderson.

"Hopkins? Oh, no. It did not come from any one in the department. It came from an outsider, and, therefore, I cannot disclose his name. Had I received the information first, I should not have taken any steps until looking further into the matter. I have stopped the examiners just where they were at the close of yesterday. But the trouble now is, and which I am afraid makes it too late, that the *Herald* had the story. Of course, as I told Senator Stratton over the wire this morning, I am bound to pay some attention to a report of this sort, but I need not take any defi-

nite action on a mere newspaper statement. Stratton thought I ought to see you, however, and as I am under great obligations to the senator, I was glad to comply with his request."

Moss could not hold back any longer. "Hopkins told the *Herald* about it, I suppose?" he said.

It was the superintendent's turn to look amazed.

"Hopkins? Why Hopkins? How could he know anything about it, unless he discovered it, and he certainly would have mentioned it to me."

Martin looked rather suspiciously at the president. Moss saw his mistake, and wished he had kept faith with Henderson. In his anxiety to implicate the examiner, he overlooked the fact that his remark was apt to give the superintendent the impression that there was something wrong, and that the officers believed Hopkins was on the trail. He kicked Henderson under the table, and the latter at once continued the conversation.

"What the president means, Mr. Martin, is that Hopkins or some one here must have got an inkling of the story. But we admit that was impossible. A report like that must have gone to the paper from some one bearing a grudge of some sort against the company. Isn't that your idea?"

Martin was rendered less suspicious by Henderson's diplomatic remarks, but he was still puzzled. He said, however, that he believed the same party that gave the information to the department had given it to the *Herald*. Then, turning to the counsel, the superintendent changed his tone somewhat, and asked in a rather stern voice:

"Let us get down to business. Is there any truth in this report, and, if so, what are the exact circumstances?"

Henderson was collected and ready. "There is nothing in this story, Mr. Martin, that we did not suppose you were familiar with in your relations with other large financial institutions. You know the Standard joined with some prominent banks and trust companies in purchasing the bonds of the Tri-State Water & Electric Company, because we know of nothing better. You will remember I wrote asking you to let me know whether the department had any objection to the investment, and, not having heard, naturally supposed you were satisfied."

(Now, Henderson had not written to Martin, but he did not believe Martin would dispute it, and he didn't.)

"The part of the story that is unpleasant, of course, is the statement that the officers of the company joined in the purchase, using the company's money for the purpose, and then received a big stock bonus besides, while the institution got nothing but the bonds. Is that what you were driving at, Mr. Martin?"

"I am much obliged to you, gentlemen," remarked the superintendent, rising. "I am very sorry you have been put to so much trouble and annoyance, and trust all will come out nicely. I would like, however, to feel that after seeing my men and learning what has occurred, I can come to you again——"

"With pleasure," said Moss and Henderson together.

"It was a cool, bold bluff they gave you, Mr. Martin."

The speaker was a short, slender, wiry man, with sandy hair and mustache. He was seated in a small apartment in a modest up-town hotel. His name was Jeremiah Hopkins, and he was as smart a bank and insurance examiner as he had formerly been a detective. He was a human ferret, and everybody in the department from Martin down knew he was a marvel at his business. The moment the superintendent saw him, a few hours before, in the arcade of the Standard building, he knew there was no need of going farther for the real story of what had occurred. Hopkins had told him quietly that he would like to go with him where they could talk alone and out of reach. Martin nodded and called a cab, and half an hour later the superintendent had taken a room where they were not known, and where it was not necessary for them to register at the time.

Martin had told him of his talk with the president and counsel of the Standard, and hinted at the apparent belief of the officials that the examiner had something to do with it. It was at that point that Hopkins made the remark about the bluff that had been worked.

"My belief is," continued Hopkins, in the coolest possible tones, "that the Standard officials, or most of them, made a lot of money out of that Tri-State deal and out of others before that. They have been getting rich too fast, to begin with. Their generous salaries will not account for the manner in which they live and the investments they are making. But this present transaction is sensational in another way. It is the result of a stab, and a deadly stab, that the Cosmopolitan Insurance Company has given to its hated rival. Moss and Henderson have not apparently caught on yet. While my suspicions were aroused by a curious discovery I made in one of the books the other day, and which was due to Moss' own carelessness — and which probably makes him think I am posted—the hint which came to me, and which I handed over to your assistant, came from Jenkins, the private secretary of President Richmond of the Cosmopolitan. The *Herald* got its tip from the same source, in my judgment. I understand the paper is to be protected to the limit by the company, and that all the details have been given the editors."

"How did the Cosmopolitan learn of the matter?" inquired Martin.

"Through a man who helped engineer the deal, and claims he was turned down and only given a small slice of the profits. Besides, I surmise that the Cosmopolitan wanted to handle those Tri-State securities itself, but was outwitted. You know Richmond is awfully revengeful, and likewise very jealous of Moss and the Standard."

"What would you do, Hopkins?"

"I would stay here, Mr. Martin, but do nothing for a day or two. See what happens. I hand you here copies of the papers containing the evidence I picked up by chance. Look them over. Meanwhile, let those of us who have been examining the Standard continue as though nothing had happened, but do not put the extra men to work. Keep them in reserve. Perhaps"—and there was a quiet twinkle in the examiner's eye—"you may want to suddenly start a couple of fellows at work in the Cosmopolitan."

"Your program is all right, Hopkins. I will follow it. Only we must keep it entirely to ourselves."

The *Herald* the next morning came out with more of the story. The other papers had very little to say, for they were warned of the consequences. But the *Herald* went into details, printed the amounts the various officials of the Standard were reputed to have made, and then editorially demanded that the State insurance superintendent make an instant and thorough examination of the charges.

The paper offered to place evidence of the most damaging kind in the hands of the superintendent. It was intimated that unless Mr. Martin took the matter up promptly, he would subject himself and his department to the charge of being in collusion with the Standard. The *Herald* almost insisted that the insurance company should bring action for libel, and would be confessing its guilt if it did not. In this respect, the newspaper was accommodated. Before ten o'clock the same morning, papers had been served in a libel suit involving two million dollars' damages.

Events came thick and fast in Superintendent Martin's life that morning. He read the *Herald*, and made up his mind he must act without delay. He could not afford to overlook the demand that he investigate the charges preferred with so much particularity. Right after breakfast he went to the Standard building and stopped first to see Hopkins. The examiner was not there. Instead, there was a note from him. Martin read as follows:

> Have struck a new trail. Will see you to-night. Please be careful in the meantime.

It was an odd note, and the handwriting did not look exactly familiar. But Martin felt sure it came from his

bright examiner. He had just put the epistle in his pocket when one of the clerks came up and said President Moss had sent word that he would like to see the superintendent at eleven o'clock, if agreeable. It was nearly that hour then, but before going up-stairs, Martin hunted up the examiner who was assisting Hopkins, and inquired where his associate was.

"I have not seen him or heard from him this morning," was the reply.

The superintendent was puzzled, but said nothing. He took the elevator to the president's room. Secretary Winthrop greeted him cordially, and asked him to step into another room for a few moments, when the president would be ready for him. As he walked into the side room, the superintendent found himself face to face with Senator Stratton.

For a moment he was too astonished to speak. He quickly recovered, however, and, advancing to shake hands, said:

"This is a surprise, indeed, senator. I supposed you were in Washington."

"I came on last night purposely to see you, Martin," was the reply. "This is a bad piece of business. Under the guise of an attack upon the Standard, a political fight is on. Knowing how close this company is to the governor and our party, it is hoped by a blow in this direction to injure our chances in the coming campaign. I learned of the scheme in Washington last night, and Henderson got wise here, somehow. We are going to have a conference in a few moments. The governor is in with Moss now. You will probably be wanted by and by. I want you to do as I tell you. The governor will reappoint you if you behave right."

"Yes, but what must I do?"

"I don't know yet, but you must not go any further with an examination now. You must also watch your man Hopkins. It is suspected he is in with the enemy."

"That I don't believe," emphatically exclaimed the superintendent. "He is giving me very valuable information that may clear the whole thing up."

The senator was interested. He motioned to a chair, and then, seating himself, remarked:

"Tell me about it."

"Before I do that, senator, I want to know who is backing the other party."

"The *Herald* is the leader of the attack."

"Yes, but who is behind the *Herald*? That is the chief thing to learn. The charges made are not of a political nature, and must have come from some other source."

The senator paused. He did not like the turn of affairs. But he came out in a candid fashion.

"To be honest, Martin, I am not sure, but we take it for granted that it is the Democratic National Committee."

"You are wrong," said the superintendent in the most positive tones. "Hopkins knows more than you do."

Senator Stratton was on his feet, and his excitement was apparent.

"For Heaven's sake, who is it?"

"It is President Richmond and the Cosmopolitan Life Insurance Company that are behind the *Herald*, and it is a business assault, and not a political attack."

Miss Laura Moss was on her way from the lake to the city. She felt her duty was where her heart was. She told her mother that her father needed some one to comfort him. That was evident from his brief talks over the phone to the family. She asked him if she might come down and spend a few days in the city, and be with him. He welcomed the idea, and told her to come. That was in the morning, just before the governor arrived, while Stratton was narrating what he had heard in Washington. So now she was on the way.

There was no use concealing the truth from herself: it was really Kenneth Winthrop she wanted to see. They had pretty frequent chats over the telephone, and she knew he wanted to see her, but could not get away for a minute. He intimated that her father was half-sick and needed her presence. She

was shrewd enough to read between the lines, and was convinced that Kenneth was speaking two words for himself to one for her father. She was none the less anxious because of his anxiety.

When about half-way on the journey, a newsboy boarded the train. Miss Moss bought an early edition of the *Evening News*. At first she glanced at the columns listlessly. The second glance riveted her attention. On the last column of the first page began a story that at once absorbed her. It told of a plot to injure the Standard Company. While it was rumored the attack was part of a political scheme, those who were well posted declared it was a job put up by the big rival, the Cosmopolitan. It intimated that the charges of money made out of the Tri-State bonds were concocted by President Richmond of the Cosmopolitan, and that a controlling interest in the *Herald* had recently been purchased by Richmond and his associates. The story was quite circumstantial, although there were not many details. The impression was left that there was more to follow in the near future.

Miss Moss drove right to the office. Kenneth was in the outside room, and showed his pleasure in a very perceptible manner. He told her father, who rushed out. He had only a minute to stop, as a very important meeting was being held. He had engaged rooms for her, and told Kenneth to see she was comfortably quartered. Both were thankful for the opportunity to be alone together a while.

It was an important meeting that was in progress. Besides the officers and some of the directors, the senator and governor were there. So was Martin, who wore a grim smile of satisfaction when the story in the *News* was read. It confirmed what he had told the senator earlier in the day, and what Hopkins had suggested. Hopkins stock had gone up perceptibly. Even President Moss had changed his views regarding the examiner. The only jarring incident at the meeting was the appearance of Doctor Eastman, who again insisted that he had not been treated fair. He subsided, however, after reading the *News*.

But who gave the *News* the story? That was what mystified the Standard officials. They had not said a word. They had been too much disturbed by the second story in the *Herald* to think of having anything published on their own account. Martin was likewise very much puzzled. He wondered where Hopkins was. He had read the papers the examiner had given him the previous evening, and was impressed with the knowledge imparted. That the Standard officials were guilty seemed evident from the discoveries Hopkins had made. He ought to take steps in the matter, unpleasant as it would be. Yet the examiner had asked him to be careful until he saw him again. He felt that under the circumstances he should keep silent, and he did.

The meeting adjourned about dinner-time. The president was very anxious to see his daughter. Martin was concerned about Hopkins, and went in search of him. Worried as Mr. Moss still was, he forgot it all while dining with Laura and Kenneth. The girl's arrival had cheered him wonderfully. The same result had occurred in the private secretary's case.

Just as dinner was concluded, Winthrop was called out of the room. He returned in a moment and told the president Hopkins wanted to see him at once on important business. He was in the private room. The two were together for over an hour. When they separated each was in a very good humor. The president was like his old self the rest of the evening. As for Hopkins, he went down the hotel elevator with a smile that was very broad.

It was all solved the next day, and very rapidly, too. The *Herald* did not say a word, to begin with. At half-past nine President Richmond had made an appointment with President Moss over the telephone. They met in the private room in the hotel. Richmond had his counsel, and Henderson was with Moss. The Cosmopolitan president began the conversation.

"Gentlemen," said he, "we have all been taken in by one of the cleverest men I ever met. He came to me some days ago and showed me some papers, or copies of them, that gave a good idea of your connection with the Tri-State transaction. He told me the *Herald* was going to publish the story, and if I wanted to take advantage of the situation I could do so. The papers would cost me five thousand dollars. I paid him the money."

It was with difficulty that Moss repressed an exclamation at this time.

"I believed what he said after calling up the editor of the *Herald*, who is a personal friend of mine. You know how vigorously we started in. When the *News* came out with its story yesterday I was astonished, but I made up my mind you had caught on to a deal, similar to yours, that we were making. I went to the *Herald* office last night and found that paper had paid this man three thousand dollars for the information he had given that journal. My *Herald* friend thought we might as well trace the whole thing to the bottom, so he called up the editor of the *News*. That gentleman promptly admitted that they gave five thousand dollars, because they wanted to get even with the *Herald*."

Henderson was shaking with laughter. "It is your turn now, Moss," he said. "Own up."

"Yes, I might as well confess," replied President Moss. "This man came here last night and gave me what I never doubted to be proofs of the deal you fellows were making with the New Jersey Rapid Transit. I gave him five thousand dollars for the documents. He said he began an examination of your company purposely yesterday, and got on to the game at once."

Richmond nodded. "I wondered why he started in on us yesterday, but he said he was acting under orders. He is certainly the champion grafter. He can have the money for his brains. I guess we will all be glad to get out of this and save our reputations. The *News* and *Herald* will help us out, because they escape libel suits."

Just then Superintendent Martin rushed in, wildly excited.

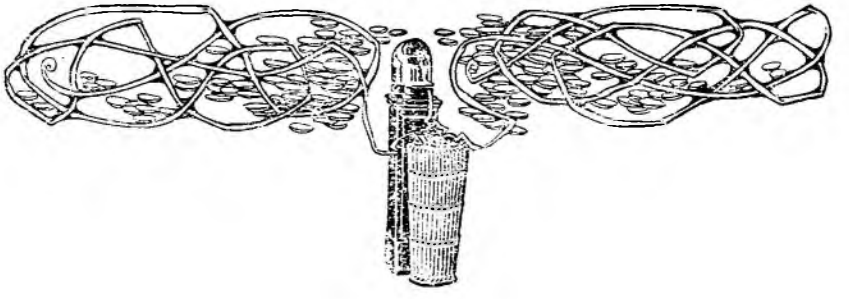
"Where is Hopkins? I think he has been the victim of foul play."

He started at the roar of laughter that followed. He was also astonished to see the rival insurance presidents side by side. More astonished yet was he when Henderson, in a droll tone, said:

"No, no, Martin. Hopkins is not the victim of foul play. We are all his victims in a mighty deep game of graft."

Three months later Hopkins was quietly seated overlooking the Mediterranean Sea from a hotel veranda at Monte Carlo. He was smoking a pipe and congratulating himself on the pleasures of a leisurely trip around the world and the chance it afforded for planning a new game. His eyes glanced over the latest New York paper that he had just purchased, and he read of the marriage of Miss Laura Moss, daughter of the president of the Standard Insurance Company, to Kenneth Winthrop, the secretary of the president.

He took a long pull at the pipe, and musingly said: "I wonder whether I didn't hurry that wedding somewhat."



Tales of the Lost Legion

By Francis Whitlock

III.—VOTARIES OF VOODOO

(*A Complete Story*)

THERE are many restaurants kept by foreigners in New York whose patrons console themselves for being obliged to eat in them by calling themselves Bohemians, and asserting that they prefer the food, which is of poor quality and badly prepared, and the vile concoctions of logwood served in the guise of claret, to the menus of cleaner, and, incidentally, dearer places. Rural visitors to the metropolis visit them as among the sights of the wicked city: gaze in awe-struck wonder at the long-haired, dirty occupants of the adjoining tables, under the delusion that they are in the company of brilliant lights of the artistic and literary world, who come there from choice, not necessity, and—if they escape death from ptomaine poisoning—carry home to the backwoods' sewing-circles weird and thrilling tales of their experiences and observations.

The cheerful little restaurant presided over by Madame Hortense is not one of that class. The prices are reasonable, but the food is of the best, and prepared by a cook who deserves the *cordon bleu;* while the wine is sound and genuine, and the coffee a thing to bear in grateful memory. It is not frequented by the unshorn and ragged riff-raff of garret studios and the scum of the newspaper offices. Seekers after the elusive atmosphere of Bohemia do not stumble upon it, and it has even escaped the hungry "special" writers for the Sunday papers. But true tales, stranger than any fiction, may be gathered from the men who gather about its small tables, for it is the New York rendezvous of a set of adventurous spirits who form the Lost Legion.

They are, one and all, true soldiers of fortune, willing to undertake any legitimate adventure, no matter how hazardous, provided they are paid their price; and their employers, men with a large stake in the world of business, have learned from experience that it is useless to haggle with them, and that they always get full value for the money expended.

Letters addressed in care of Madame Hortense have summoned members of the Lost Legion to depart hurriedly for the far corners of the world; sometimes to return after weeks or months of absence with pockets filled with money, and strange experiences to relate, and sometimes to drop quietly into their accustomed places, strangely reticent about their absence, and with little left but a hopeful disposition.

More than one of them has gone from that cozy little restaurant only to find that bourne from which no traveler returneth, and to leave his bones whitening in a far desert, or rotting in some foul, tropical jungle; but members of the Lost Legion accept the fortunes of war philosophically, and, so long as there are men of adventurous disposition, unswerving loyalty, and reckless bravery in the world, its ranks will always be full.

It was one of these businesslike epistles handed over the little bar behind which Madame Hortense was always seated, which caused the expression of Mr. Richard Redgreave, commonly

known among his associates as "Doleful Dick," to become even more lugubrious than usual when he seated himself at the table with two men who had arrived before him.

"What's wrong, Doleful? You must be rolling in money to be depressed by a chance for work!" said one of them, as Redgreave gloomily turned the missive over in his hand without opening it.

"No, I have pretty blame' near struck hard-pan; but it's just my luck to have this come on Friday. I'm sure hoodooed," he wailed dismally; and Jenkins, his table companion, laughed.

"Looks like old Cooper's fist. Gee whiz! it gives me a headache when I think of him. See what's on!"

Redgreave carefully threw a pinch of the salt which had been spilled on the cloth over his left shoulder before opening the envelope.

"Hum!—'call to morrow at nine'—er—'prepared to sail in afternoon'—er—'tropical service'—'miner's outfit'—'indefinite absence'—'usual terms.' That's the lot," he said, as he glanced through the note.

"Usual terms! The old boy pays on the nail, I'll say that for him, although he isn't giving up any bonuses," observed Jenkins. "The best you get beyond the regular price is a grumble if you succeed, and the marble face if you fail. But the money's safe; so cheer up, Doleful, you've got a cinch."

"Let's see, tropical service and sail to-morrow," interposed Halliday, the third man at the table. "Atlas boat for Jamaica and the Main, or Clyde liner for Haytian and San Dominican ports. It'll be about that, Doleful."

"Well, I reckon it won't be along the Main!" And a reminiscent smile momentarily lightened the customary gloom of Redgreave's expression. "The last time I left Central America I was clothed in my birthday suit, and dodged sharks and bullets until I got outside the three-mile limit, and they hauled me on to a Yankee gunboat and pumped the salt water out of me. Cooper knows that I'm a dead one down there until the present crop of dictators is harvested. Maybe you fellows don't believe in omens, but it was on the thirteenth of the month that I got Cooper's letter about that job, and I don't remember that I got rich out of it."

Mr. Redgreave observed many other signs and portents of impending ill-luck before he and his modest belongings were landed on the filthy and evil-smelling quay at Port-au-Prince, the capital of the Black Republic of Hayti.

The number of Mr. Cooper's office where he received his final instructions was 634, which, added together, gave the ominous total of 13; and every pin which his sharp eyes detected on the pavement as he went there lay with its pointed end menacingly toward him. The chief steward on the boat was cross-eyed, and a shark had persistently followed the ship after it reached tropical waters. But, although Mr. Redgreave suffered acute mental distress when the signs were against him, he never allowed his perturbation to interfere with his routine; so he lost no time in bribing the officious negro customs officer to pass his luggage without too close inspection, for he did not care to explain the uses of some of the implements which it contained.

"Now, Redgreave, what I want of you is this," Mr. Jabez Cooper had said to him in New York. "I've got a tip that, situated in the mountains of the interior of Hayti, there is a tremendously rich deposit of gold, which has been lost sight of since the original inhabitants were exterminated by the Spaniards whom Columbus colonized there. You have had large experience in prospecting, and I want you to get to it, look the ground over carefully, and bring back a full report on the proposition, and as many samples of ore as you can carry out. Here is a rough map of the locality, which locates the mine within an area of fifty miles square. You'll have to hunt around until you find it, but if you can get hold of a nigger named Raoul Dessailines down there, you might persuade him to lead you right to the spot. He knows all about it, but his price for giving up his in-

formation is too high until I have had a reliable report on it."

"I suppose that you know there are —er—difficulties about that sort of exploration in Hayti," suggested Redgreave.

"Of course I do," answered Cooper impatiently. "If there were not, I should go down and look it over myself; but, under the circumstances, I prefer to trust to the report which one of you chaps will make." He smiled a little grimly as he observed Redgreave's disconsolate expression. "I might tell you that you will be the third man who has undertaken this job," he continued. "The other two have not reported; in fact, I believe that they have never been heard of since they disappeared into the mountains. If you run across them, you can tell them that I am not paying for failures. Good-by, Redgreave, and a pleasant journey to you; you can draw the customary advance in the other office, and you have just about time to catch the Clyde liner."

Port-au-Prince is a picturesque place —from a distance. Close inspection of this glaring evidence of negro misrule is not advisable if one wishes to retain illusions; and, as the varied stenches of its filthy streets, stagnant gutters, and odoriferous inhabitants greeted his nostrils, Mr. Redgreave looked longingly toward the beautiful mountains which held so much mystery in their depths. In them he might find privations and dangers, but those were simply incidents of the day's work, and, at any rate, they promised a respite from the heat and stench of the capital, and relief from the swarms of mosquitoes and flies which pestered him.

"So the old man has used up two prospectors already on this job, eh?" he thought, as he loaded his traps into a rickety fiacre. To another man this might have caused apprehension of a like fate, but it actually brought a gleam of comfort to Redgreave, for he realized that he was number three, and that luck usually went with that number. "That's the first favorable omen that I've struck in this blame business," he said to himself; and, as he ordered the driver to take him to the Hôtel de Paris, his expression was almost cheerful.

Monsieur Raoul Dessailines was not a difficult person to locate. He claimed direct descent from that Dessailines who succeeded Toussaint L'Ouverture in the command of the army of insurgent slaves which drove the French from Hayti, and who followed the example of Napoleon, whose troops he had defeated and driven into the sea, and proclaimed himself emperor.

With imperial blood flowing in his veins, his descendant scorned anything so vulgar as work, and spent his days between the cafés surrounding the Place d'Armes, where he leisurely absorbed incredible quantities of absinth, and dozed in a hammock on the front porch of his house.

In complexion he would have made a lump of anthracite appear pale by comparison, and his features were built upon a generous, if not an artistic, plan. A great chasm of a mouth, with thick, flabby lips; a nose which made up in width and supply of nostril what it lacked in length and shapeliness; and small, bloodshot eyes, which seemed almost like points of flame under the low, receding forehead, proclaimed that he had inherited the ferocity and cruelty which had made his ancestor infamous, without giving evidence that the intelligence which had made him great was perpetuated.

It was over a glass—or, rather, many glasses—of absinth at a table in a quiet corner of the Café de la Paix that he told his story to Redgreave, who had a working knowledge of most modern languages.

"To understand the situation, monsieur, you must figure to yourself the earthly paradise which Cristoforo Colombo discovered when he landed on this so beautiful island. It was by far the most beautiful of the Indies, and as it was finer than the others, so were its original inhabitants superior to the fierce Caribs who peopled the rest of the archipelago. They were fair of skin, beautiful of form, and of high intelligence, and they trustfully welcomed

the great explorer, who told them wondrous tales of the power and grandeur of his country beyond the seas. Among the ornaments which they wore were many figures modeled from virgin gold, by which they set little store, but which the covetous Spaniards looked upon with greedy eyes."

"I see the finish of the gentle aborigines right there," remarked Redgreave, grinning; and the negro—who had been educated in France—shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps," he said, his small eyes getting redder as he sipped the light-green fluid in his glass; "but in a country of this character, complete extermination is difficult, monsieur. Colombo had pressing need to return to Spain, and he sailed away, leaving two hundred of his men to hold the place until he returned. He left them with a kindly disposed people, anxious to be friendly with their new neighbors, and so lacking in suspicion that they even assisted in building the fortress which was destined later to oppress them. Two years after Colombo returned, expecting to find a prosperous colony, with a Spanish governor ruling a contented people; but of his two hundred men not a soul remained to tell the history of those two years, and the friendly natives had disappeared into the mountains, and fled at the white man's approach. Who knows the history of those two years, monsieur? You will not find it in the books."

"I reckon I could make a pretty shrewd guess at it," answered Redgreave grimly. His work had led him to many savage places, he had seen the modern methods employed to civilize the natives, and he knew that those methods had not changed materially in the past four hundred years.

"Ah, yes, a guess, and perhaps a close one; but I, who speak to you, know!" exclaimed the negro, with true Gallic *empressement*. "Colombo, who was a just man, had left strict orders for the maintenance of friendly relations, the building of a town, and, above all, the accumulation of gold; but no sooner were his sails lost to sight than the last injunction was the only one remembered. Discipline was lost sight of, and neither the persons nor property of the natives were respected. The great body of the Indians, after being robbed and maltreated, fled to the mountains; but a few who were held prisoners by the Spaniards were put to the torture to make them reveal the hiding-places of their tribe and the source of supply of the one thing the Spaniards coveted—gold! All thought of completing the fortifications, to which they might retreat if defeated, was abandoned, and the Spaniards, under the guidance of their prisoners, set off for the Cabao Mountains. There were nearly two hundred of them, monsieur, clad in armor, which was impervious to the arrows of the Indians, and armed with weapons against which their half-naked enemies were defenseless. Their guides led them faithfully; for many days they marched into the interior unmolested, until they reached a small valley, more beautiful than any they had ever seen, and their greedy eyes feasted on a golden treasure which made the loot of Pizzaro and Cortez in Peru and Mexico seem but a pittance. But not one of that band of two hundred ever returned to tell the story, monsieur; and of those who have followed in their footsteps, but one man has seen the treasure which their eyes beheld and returned to tell of it. That man is I, Raoul Dessailines."

Redgreave had met picturesque and circumstantial liars all over the world, and had listened to tales of fabulous hoards of wealth, from the buried treasures of Captain Kidd to the lost accumulations of the Incas of Peru. He knew intimately that plausible prevaricator who has lived luxuriously for many years on the contributions of the credulous, because he claims to be the possessor of the sole authentic map showing the burial-place of the Cocos Island treasure, and his gloomy face gave no evidence of surprise at his companion's dramatic avowal. Dessailines looked at him with chagrin written on his repulsive face, and refreshed himself with another drink.

"Well, if that's the pipe-dream that I'm down here to investigate, I reckon we'd better be hiking for the mountains," remarked Redgreave. "The boss told me that you could put me next to it, and I'm ready whenever you are."

"Ah, monsieur, there are first certain —er—arrangements to be made," said the negro, looking at him cunningly. "A *douceur*—what you call a retainer, I believe. And I am at the service of monsieur to guide him to riches beyond the dreams of avarice."

"And the size of that *douceur?*" said Redgreave interrogatively.

"A bagatelle!" exclaimed the negro, shrugging his shoulders. "For the future, one-half of the treasure: for the present, merely one hundred thousand dollars before we set out."

"Merely!" exploded Redgreave. "See here, Monsieur Dessailines, your nerve pretty nearly makes me laugh, and that's something I've forgotten how to do since I was a merry-hearted boy who didn't realize that the life of man is a continual hard-luck story. The boss wouldn't give up a hundred thousand if you showed him photographs; and just on your picturesque say-so he'd make the buzzard on a trade-dollar holler before he let go of it."

"*Eh bien!* that is for you to decide," answered Dessailines indifferently. "Without me your mission will fail, and you will never handle that gold. Your eyes may behold it—that has been granted to many men—but you will never return to tell Monsieur Cooper what you have seen. You are not the first, Monsieur Redgreave, who has gone into the Cabao Mountains to seek that treasure; many have even found it, but, tell me!—who has returned to tell what he has seen?"

"I believe there are two men on the job now, and liable to report at any minute and scoop us, if we don't get busy," replied Redgreave; and the negro laughed contemptuously.

"Pouf! A pig of a German and a beardless boy," he said. "Let me tell you, monsieur, they have found the treasure, they have seen and estimated it; but to return and tell of it—ah, that is a different matter."

"Old Cooper was trying to use scab labor at cut-rates, I reckon," reflected Redgreave, for the description did not fit any of his fellow adventurers; but he carefully noted the negro's admission that they had found the object of their search. "That's where skill comes in; if I set eyes on it I'll get a few samples, and I'll get 'em back to little old New York—always providing I have no bad luck," he added hastily; and Dessailines watched him in amazement as Redgreave muttered something under his breath, and went to the door, where he rapped on the casing, the nearest available wood, with his knuckles.

"I never did like these blame' marble-topped tables," he remarked, as he resumed his seat. "Now, see here, monsieur, your terms are out of the question, and the deal's off, so far as any partnership goes. I reckon I'll have to go it alone, as that's what I'm down here for; but I'm not refusing any tips you want to give me out of the kindness of your heart."

"Then I will give you just one, monsieur," replied the negro, grinning at him maliciously. "If you will not accept my terms, forget all that you have heard, and take the next steamer which will carry you away from temptation."

"No, I reckon that I'll have to go ahead on my lonely," said Redgreave gloomily. "So far, the omens seem to be mostly against me, but Madame Hortense isn't serving meals for her health or a smile, and you've sort of aroused my curiosity."

"*Eh bien!* if you will not be warned, you must even be indulged, even though it but lead to your own destruction," answered the negro. "My nation, as you probably know, does not encourage prospecting, for it looks upon the discovery of gold as the greatest misfortune which could happen to it. For that reason the government refuses all permission for white men to proceed to the interior, unless their business is well understood. Should monsieur the president learn of your intentions, you would, if he were merci-

fully inclined at the moment, be kept a prisoner until the next steamer. If his dinner had not pleased him, or the revolutionists had bothered him unduly that day—well, his soldiers have had much practise against the wall, monsieur."

"Yes, I didn't expect to ask permission to go inland," said Redgreave dryly. "That's one of the little details I usually omit."

"You have right, monsieur; it is a matter which can be arranged without the publicity, and I who speak will provide a guide and horses—at a price, be it understood. You have, I presume, the map which I furnished to Monsieur Cooper." Redgreave produced it, and Dessailines spread it out on the table. "Ah, it is a copy, such as the others had; not the original," he said, smiling. "How many men will the foolish Monsieur Cooper expend before he listens to my terms! Here, monsieur, is your route."

He traced over the map with a pencil, and inside of the fifty miles square area marked a place with a small cross.

"There is the treasure, and I shall mark your route to it. Quite simple. You seek to arrive there; but I assure you, monsieur, that I, Raoul Dessailines, alone can issue a return ticket."

"I am not bothering about that part of the journey—yet," answered Redgreave significantly. "I've walked back before this. If this map's on the level, I can lay my course for the place, all right; but how about those horses?"

The bargaining was soon completed, and at eight o'clock that night Mr. Redgreave, who was very much depressed because he had inadvertently caught sight of the new moon over his right shoulder, departed from the suburb of Marquisant mounted on a small Haytian pony, his belongings carefully packed on two mules, and a negro guide upon another.

Dessailines waved an ironical farewell, and wished him bon voyage. "It would be superfluous to add 'au revoir,' monsieur," he said significantly. "You go where you will remain. Perhaps, if you fall into great difficulty, and you are allowed time to communicate with me, you may wish to reconsider that little matter of the copartnership and the *douceur* of one hundred thousand dollars. Your messenger can always reach me at the Café de la Paix."

"I'll remember the address," remarked Redgreave dryly, "but I'll give you a tip—don't you lose your beauty-sleep by keeping awake to receive Marconigrams from yours truly."

Redgreave cogitated over the many signs of ill-luck which he had encountered in the past few days, but, in spite of his firm belief in their significance, he did not allow any lack of precaution to aid their fulfilment, so he took the first opportunity afforded by a widening of the bridle-path to ride alongside his guide, who looked at him curiously when he received a sharp command to halt.

"Now, my colored friend and brother, I want you to understand things before we go any farther," Redgreave said quietly; but there was something in his tone which made the negro listen very attentively. "I know that our mutual friend we have just left does not intend that I shall get out of the woods, but I want you to appreciate that you are working for me now, and that a strict attention to business will be appreciated. I know just what I am up against, and that if I happen to fall into the hands of the government, it will be a wall with a firing-squad of soldiers in front of it. I have figured that that won't be far off if Dessailines plays false, but I want you to understand that you'll go to kingdom come first; so, if you've got any orders to 'throw' me, you'd better forget 'em."

He tapped the handle of a revolver in his belt, and the guide started a voluble protest of fidelity.

"That's all right; I reckon you understand the situation, but remember that I don't miss when I shoot, and, at the first sign of ambush or trouble, you're *it*," interrupted Redgreave. "As an evidence of good faith, I want thirty miles to lie between us and the capital before sunrise; so mosey along."

He had made a close approximation to the distance to be traveled by a study

of the map, which was drawn to a fairly accurate scale, and found that it was about two hundred miles from the capital to the cross which Dessailines claimed indicated the location of the mine.

This, in a civilized country, would have been a simple matter of a few days in the saddle; but in Hayti, a land which has practically relapsed into barbarism in a century of misrule by negroes, it was a different proposition. There is nothing which can be dignified by the name of a road; narrow bridle-paths, on which it is rarely possible to ride except in single file, lead to the plantations and connect the scattered negro villages; and the mountain ranges which traverse the island make even these pathways a constant, tedious climb, or a precarious descent.

The ill-fed beasts on which they traveled were not accustomed to long nor rapid journeys, but, under the strong hand of Redgreave, Cupidon, the guide, received a liberal education in accomplishing the impossible that night. His employer knew that the man he had left behind him was thoroughly unscrupulous, and that he had only his own wits to depend upon, while Dessailines at a word could rouse all the jealous race hatred of the blacks against him.

For a century they have ruled this, the most beautiful of the West Indies, and, since the days that Dessailines, the ancestor of the man in Port-au-Prince, had decreed the massacre of every French man, woman, and child in Hayti, it has progressed steadily toward savagery. No white man is permitted to hold a foot of land in the country; and realizing that one thing—the discovery of the rich deposits of gold which undoubtedly exist in the mountains—would bring the whites in such overwhelming numbers that black barbarism could not resist them, prospecting is absolutely prohibited, and the few hardy spirits who have attempted it have never returned to tell of what they have discovered.

Redgreave knew this, and he knew that when day broke he would be far removed from even the pretense of civilization which exists on the coast and in a country as savage as the middle of darkest Africa. A few missionary priests go through it at intervals, keeping alive a debased form of religion; the tax-gatherers and rural police visit it irregularly, as a reminder of the central government. But the worship is that which exists in equatorial Africa—the fetish of Voodooism, with its attendant rites of sacrifice and cannibalism—and law is practically unknown.

Even as they pressed on through the darkness, their unshod animals making little noise on the soft bridle-path, they heard, at intervals, the boom of the sacred drums, which indicated one of the orgies of the fetish; and Redgreave always rode closer to his guide, to prevent him from bolting in the darkness.

Strange noises came from the jungle on either side; great fireflies showed their twinkling lights in the swamps, from which clouds of mosquitoes settled on them, and for a half-hour they rode through the torrential downpour of a tropical thunderstorm. But Redgreave never hesitated for a moment, and drove the guide and the floundering animals relentlessly on.

"Those blame' bad-luck signs have been coming too fast for me to take any chances," he reflected. "I know that they haven't got any long-distance phones or telegraphs in this benighted land to head me off in front, and I'll take good care that if they catch up with me from the rear they'll know they have been traveling. I'm not trusting that sweet-scented pup that sold me these cattle; not none, at all, whatsoever!"

When day broke they had covered more than thirty miles, and Redgreave consented to give the tired animals a rest in a village of thatched huts, which with its inhabitants might have been bodily transplanted from the west coast of Africa.

Jet-black piccaninnies, as guiltless of clothes as the day they were born, played in the mud with razor-backed hogs and half-starved dogs, while the clothing of the adults left much to the imagination. Two old and particularly

hideous negroes, a man and a woman, came and watched him while he prepared his own breakfast of coffee and bacon, and they gibbered and muttered at him unintelligibly. Their kinky wool had been straightened out and then tied in little knots, which covered their misshapen heads with little knobs, and their scanty clothes were covered with bits of bright cloth, bunches of feathers, and human teeth, sewed on in crude geometrical designs.

The other negroes slunk away at their approach; and Cupidon, when he returned from feeding the animals, threw himself down and groveled before them.

Redgreave looked at them curiously, and finally kicked the prostrate negro, and told him to get up.

"But it's Papaloi and Mamanloi, monsieur," he whimpered. "Do not offend them, or your bones will soften, your liver rot, and your blood turn to water!"

"I believe I'm up against the real thing in hoodoo men," muttered Redgreave dolefully. "If they've got anything more up their sleeves than has been coming my way lately, I'm a sure goner; but Dick Redgreave will keep his eyes open, his fingers crossed, and do his own cooking until he kisses his hand to the verdant shores of Hayti."

He knew the despotic power which these priests and priestesses of Voodoo held over the ignorant blacks. He knew they were heartless and unscrupulous, and expert poisoners; and the expressions of the two before him convinced him that from now until he quitted the island he would be in constant danger from them. Hatred was written on their faces—the hatred of all whites which their fathers and mothers had imbibed with the blood of their tortured victims, which they drank mixed with rum during the insurrection.

Near this very village were the bare and blackened ruins of what must have been a pretentious house, its massive walls and pillars overgrown with tropical vines, but still showing the marks of the fire which had destroyed it.

The neighboring land gave evidence that it had once been in cultivation, but the jungle had reclaimed it, except in a few scattered patches where the villagers grew the yams and plantains on which they subsisted. The place, its surroundings and inhabitants, all seemed ominous to Redgreave; and, as soon as he had packed his simple camp utensils, he ordered Cupidon to bring the animals.

"Now, see here," he interrupted sternly, when the negro protested. "Maybe that old guy and his lady friend have something which will soften your bones in the course of time, but it's a dead certainty that I'll break 'em first if you don't do what I tell you to, so don't stop to finish your devotions when I say move."

One glance at Redgreave's gloomy face as the lantern jaws clicked together convinced Cupidon that it was no time for trifling, and he brought the tired beasts around.

It was a wonderful journey through a wonderful country; they stopped only to prepare food or to procure fresh horses and mules, for Redgreave knew that death certainly followed him, and he was reckless of what he might be running into. He was confident that Dessailines would not hesitate to sacrifice a series of Cooper's agents until he forced the old man to come to his terms or give up in disgust, and Jabez Cooper was not the man to give up a project which promised large returns.

"If I can carry back a report that there's gold here in paying quantities, I see the finish of the Black Republic," he said to himself, gazing off to the mysterious mountains ahead of him; and, as he thought of the magnificent country, the ruins of one-time beautiful plantations, and the evidences of degradation and barbarism of its present debased inhabitants which he had seen, he sincerely hoped that his search might not be in vain.

Poor Cupidon had slept on his mule for the last twenty-four hours of the journey. The flesh seemed to have melted from his bones, and three times Redgreave had lifted him bodily into the saddle when he had groaned that he could go no farther.

"And they say the African can outlast the Caucasian in the tropics!" said Redgreave contemptuously, when, after three nights and two days of continuous traveling, he at last decided to rest.

Cupidon had fallen from his mule when they halted, and lay sound asleep in the mud while Redgreave unsaddled and picketed the animals. He carried the sleeping negro into a deserted and half-ruined hut beside the path, and, rolling himself in a blanket, stretched himself across the doorway.

"Eight hours and I'm right as a trivet," he muttered drowsily; but he was not so far gone that he neglected to mumble the cabalistic word, "*Unberufen*," and tap on the door-sill with his knuckles before dropping into heavy slumber.

II.

Men who are habitually employed in dangerous pursuits are apt to be light sleepers, and, although he had been sixty hours in the saddle, Redgreave awakened after eight hours of sleep, and was instantly wide awake. Cupidon still slumbered heavily, but Redgreave had the uncomfortable feeling that he was being watched.

It was just breaking day, and he lay quietly, looking through the doorway between half-closed lids. Suddenly he became conscious of a rustle of leaves in the jungle at the edge of the road, and saw a head poked cautiously from between them—a head covered with the same knotted wool which had adorned the pates of the old man and woman before whom Cupidon had groveled.

Two beady eyes, set in the most repulsive black face he had ever seen, watched him closely; so closely that they noticed the cautious movement which he made to free his revolver from the blanket, and the head was quickly withdrawn from sight.

Redgreave heard a low whistle, which was apparently a warning, for, as he sprang through the door, there were sounds from the jungle which indicated that several people were taking flight in different directions. He knew that it would be useless to attempt pursuit, but, with a disagreeable recollection of the eyes which had watched him, he hastily set about preparing breakfast that he might move his camp.

It required considerable effort to awaken Cupidon. The West Indian negro will sleep twenty-four hours at a stretch in ordinary circumstances, and this one, after sixty hours of continuous exertion, would have taken double that quantity of repose without turning over, if he had not been violently awakened. It took a good five minutes to get him to his knees, and when he dragged himself painfully out of doors, he gave a shiver of apprehension as he looked around him.

"Now, Cupidon, some of your friends have been looking at us this morning, and I want to know what it all means," said Redgreave, after he had handed him a cup of steaming black coffee. "I only caught sight of one, and he was sure the original hoodoo man."

Cupidon answered with a scream of mixed pain and fright, for Redgreave's statement had caused the cup to fall from his hand, and the hot coffee scalded his legs, which were protected only by a pair of thin duck trousers.

"My boy, I've always understood that the blacks are improvident, but that's a mighty poor use to make of coffee as good as this," said Redgreave, after he had sipped at his own cup. "Now, we'll have a heart-to-heart talk, for I want to get to the bottom of this. What does it all mean?"

Cupidon's face had turned to a ghastly gray in color, and his incoherent mumbling was absolutely unintelligible. "Come, take a brace now, or I'll show you what rapid traveling really is for the next sixty hours," said Redgreave grimly; and the negro rolled on the ground at his feet.

"Oh, monsieur, pity, pity! I am but as one dead already!" he exclaimed piteously. "I have made the plans to fail, and when one does that for him I serve, it means death!"

"Huh! I wonder if he's working for old Cooper—that has a sort of familiar sound," muttered Redgreave, looking at

him curiously; but it flashed through his mind that Cupidon's failure might be utilized to lead to his own success.

"Now, see here, Cupidon," he said sternly. "I reckon you're right; you *have* bungled somewhere, or I shouldn't be eating a comfy breakfast here this morning. If you think your usefulness to your present employers is ended, you'd better come into my service, but I don't want any mental reservations about it."

"It would alter nothing, monsieur," whined the negro hopelessly. "Monsieur has entered the land of the High Priest of Voodoo, who guards the territory of the white queen, and no white man comes out from it alive. Monsieur will die before three days, and I, Cupidon, who have always served faithfully, must also die for this one failure. Oh, monsieur, why did you so torture me with sleeplessness on the road that I was not alert to do my duty here? For monsieur it will be the same, he cannot escape; but my life would have been spared."

"I am sorry if I have inconvenienced you, but I'll try to make things right," answered Redgreave sarcastically. "Now, see here, Cupidon. Day after to-morrow, at this time, it will be just seven years since I had the misfortune to break a looking-glass. That hoodoo has stuck to me like a porous plaster for six years and three hundred and sixty-three days. It may be getting ready to give me a grand finale that will put the kibosh on me; but, if I'm alive and kicking at the end of forty-eight hours, I'll take a lot of killing after that time."

He reached out and rapped vigorously on a log, and a ray of hope came to the negro's heart as he watched this mysterious performance.

"I see that you appreciate omens," continued Redgreave seriously; "so perhaps you're not such a fool as you look, and I'll make a proposition to you. When we started out, you may remember I insinuated that in case of trouble you would be the first to get hurt, but there was no occasion to demonstrate that I meant business, or you wouldn't be sitting here now. I seem to have spoiled your plans through my method of traveling, and I gather that in consequence you're out of a job and in a heap of trouble. Or I'll make another proposition. You tell me the whole business, and I'll do my best to get you out of this hole. Perhaps I can't; but I'll guarantee that you won't be hurt until they've put me out of commission. If you don't see your way clear to accept that, the sooner you hit the back track the better, and I'll go on by myself."

Cupidon gave an exclamation of terror at the latter suggestion. "I will tell everything, monsieur," he said eagerly. "I believe that monsieur is himself a sorcerer—is it not?"

"Well, I do a little in that line," remarked Redgreave confidently, quick to seize the advantage which the negro's superstition offered. He drew a miscellaneous collection from his pocket and held them up before the admiring negro.

"This, Cupidon, is a caul, guaranteed to keep the possessor from drowning, and you can tell that it is efficacious, for I have not been drowned yet. This is the left hind-foot of a graveyard rabbit, procured in the dark of the moon by a cross-eyed, red-headed nigger on a white horse, and it will overcome any of your native jossers. This is a piece of a noose which cut short the career of a gentleman of your complexion in the South; and this lock of hair is from the head of a man who was foolish enough to commit suicide because he was broke, when there are so many ways to make easy money. With this unparalleled collection of mascots, the knowledge of the magic word '*Unberufen*,' which you may have heard me repeat, and a convenient piece of wood to rap on with one hand while I keep the fingers of the other crossed, I can side-track the workings of your whole bunch of hoodoo men; so if you want to get under the wing of a real, up-to-date magician, you'd better climb aboard."

Cupidon was so impressed that he again groveled at the white man's feet,

but Redgreave unceremoniously kicked him until he sat up.

"We'll get right down to business now," he said sharply. "You tell all about this scheme, or I'll withdraw my protection and kick you into the jungle, to let those second-rate jossers make chop-suey à la Voodoo out of you."

It was a queer and confused mixture which the negro told, a jumble of superstition, villainy, cunning, and ignorance; but when Redgreave had elucidated many obscure points by close questioning, and obtained all the information which Cupidon could give him, he rearranged it consecutively in his own mind, thus:

"First, there is the disappearance of the two hundred Spaniards. That is historical and universally accepted. To explain it, the tradition that there is still a remnant of the Indian race in these mountains, guarding the treasure which they sought, has been handed down. That is probably a myth, but strange things happen in the tropics." Redgreave was not unduly credulous, but in the course of his varied career he had run across many things which he could not explain, and nothing surprised him.

"Second, voodooism is practically universal in Hayti; even the negroes who have been educated in Europe, and who pretend to scoff at it, practise the rites in secret. Owing to the foreign population in the seaports, the horrible orgies and sacrifices are not carried on openly; but, as one gets into the interior, white goats and cocks are sacrificed, and the serpent is venerated. It is probable that in this particular territory, which no white man is known to have emerged from, the holy of holies is situated, and human sacrifice is carried on and followed by cannibalism. The impression that the place is inhabited by the Indian aborigines, ruled by a white queen, is fostered to keep away the ignorant blacks, except at the time of sacrifice.

"Third, the original Dessailines was a high priest of Voodoo, and that power is hereditary; so Raoul, in spite of his Parisian education, probably uses it to further his own ends. Cupidon confesses that he has brought several white men here at his direction, that he has drugged their food, and left them sleeping in this hut, and does not know what became of them—which latter is probably a lie. Raoul kills two birds with one stone—gets rid of his dupes, and furnishes victims for the sacrifice. His last two victims were my predecessors in the employ of Cooper; and Cupidon had orders to hocus me, in case Raoul did not change his mind and have me pinched and executed en route by the soldiers for prospecting. The gents in the jungle this morning came to carry away my sleeping form, but were disappointed to find that I was awake. Raoul gave orders that we were to travel slowly, so he is probably close after us.

"Fourth, old Cooper is paying my wages, and I'm down here to find out about that gold-mine; not to be sacrificed by Voodoo priests nor to study the superstitions of the country, so it behooves me to get a move on and explore this wilderness. Raoul didn't count on my getting beyond this point, so probably the cross is a straight tip; if the whole thing isn't a pipe-dream or a swindle, so the best thing I can do is to make for it."

Redgreave's first preparation for the journey was a careful overhauling of his personal arsenal. He added a second revolver to the one at his belt, slipped an automatic into a holster under his left arm, and a bowie-knife into his boot-leg. Cupidon watched him with interested eyes, and suggested that he be given one of the pistols, but Redgreave shook his head in emphatic negation.

"It isn't your loyalty I mistrust, my boy; for I reckon your fear will make you stick to me, but your race is liable to get excited, and yours truly will be the only man behind the gun on this excursion. I'll trouble you for that sleeping-medicine that you neglected to put in my rations last night, and then you can saddle up."

Cupidon reluctantly handed over a small vial of dark-colored, thick liquid, which Redgreave stowed away in his

pocket; and they started into the mysterious jungle.

Members of the Lost Legion are not timorous; their employers do not select men for missions which always imply difficulties to be overcome at the risk of life or liberty without being assured that danger will not deter them. Redgreave, in spite of his firm belief in omens, had never known what fear of bodily harm meant; but that day on the jungle bridle-path pretty nearly enlightened him.

Through it all he never caught sight of a living enemy; but their very invisibility was more demoralizing than any open attack could have been. He had an uncomfortable feeling that he was under constant and close observation from the impenetrable tangle on either side of the path; but not the movement of a leaf nor the snapping of a twig betrayed the watchers.

He kept the sharpest lookout, and, after riding for an hour, argued with himself that he must be mistaken, when one of the pack-mules suddenly gave a grunt, and with much clattering of camp utensils collapsed on the path, an arrow in its brain.

Then Redgreave realized that his fears were not groundless, for the death-messenger must have been shot at close range, although he had detected no sound nor movement in the jungle. He silently rearranged the pack, discarding such heavy articles as were not absolutely necessary for his prospecting, while Cupidon watched him in apathetic terror.

Another half-hour of almost steady climbing, and the second mule was struck by an arrow, causing death almost instantaneously; and again no sound from the jungle!

"The first one wasn't a chance shot, then," said Redgreave grimly, as he opened the pack. "Pack-mules seem to be hoodooed around here, and I'm not drawing any of it on myself by taking up their burdens, so here's where I charge up a choice collection of prospector's tools to Mr. Cooper."

Axes, picks, hammers, and other tools were thrown into the jungle, but he stuffed his capacious pockets with bacon and biscuits, and wrapped up a dozen sticks of dynamite with their accompanying fuse and detonating-caps in a bundle, which he slung behind Cupidon's saddle. The negro uttered not a word; he was so paralyzed with fear that even his mumbling was silenced, and his black face had turned to the color of ashes.

Redgreave remounted and pressed doggedly on, a revolver in his hand, as he peered anxiously at the walls of green ahead, but he could detect no sign of life in them. Then came only a slight twang, like the loosing of a bowstring, but, as he raised his pistol to fire in the direction from whence it sounded, his horse plunged forward, and he was pitched over its head. After he had scrambled to his feet he found that the third arrow had been planted with unerring accuracy, and had penetrated the brain through the left eye.

Redgreave had been in many tight places; he had fought his way through the narrow, filthy streets of a Chinese city, where the odds were a thousand to one against him; he had spent forty-eight hours in a coulée, holding off a hundred Apaches, who would have scalped him dead or tortured him alive; and he had many times made his way to safety when escape seemed humanly impossible without showing the white feather; but his hands trembled now as he unfastened the blanket roll from the saddle of the dead horse.

The mystery of the thing was so uncanny that it unnerved him; the arrows must have been shot from within twenty feet, but the eyes which sighted them and the hands which loosed them were invisible, and in spite of his superior weapons he was absolutely powerless to retaliate.

"I reckon I can guess about how those Spaniards melted away if they followed this trail," he said to Cupidon, as he swung the roll over his shoulder. "I don't suppose your beast will last long, unless it's got an armor-plated headpiece, but we'll use it while we can, so hump along."

Cupidon looked wistfully back over

the path they had ascended, but Redgreave, who was in no mood for argument, tapped the butt of his revolver significantly, and Cupidon dug his bare heels into the horse's sides and started forward, with the white man close behind.

The character of the country changed as they climbed higher; the jungle became less dense and the path stonier, until just before sundown they followed it into a cleft between two hills, which narrowed rapidly as they penetrated it. In a half-mile it became no more than a narrow cañon, between two walls of rock about thirty feet high.

Redgreave was just congratulating himself that it afforded no shelter for bowmen, when he was startled by a cry of terror from Cupidon, who was suddenly jerked out of the saddle, but, instead of falling to the ground, he went bumping up the smooth surface of the rock, howling and struggling, but drawn by some power which he could not resist.

He disappeared over the edge, and Redgreave instinctively flattened himself against the wall to avoid a second lariat. But he heard nothing, and there was no attempt to molest him, although a rock thrown from above would have crushed him without risk to his enemies. Revolver in hand he stood motionless, watching the edge of the cliff until darkness made it invisible, but, although he was physically inactive, his fertile brain was working to some purpose.

Catching Cupidon's horse, he removed the dynamite and stowed it carefully about himself. Then he turned the horse's head down the path, and with a shout of "All aboard for Port-au-Prince!" crept as rapidly as he could up the path, while the startled horse galloped down on the return journey.

Redgreave heard a shout of rage from the top of the cliff. An excited jabbering broke out, quickly followed by the flaring of a torch, which revealed a dozen black figures lowering themselves to the cañon, where they stood for a minute chattering to each other; then, greatly to his relief, they moved off down the path. They were blacks of the lowest type, naked except for narrow loin-cloths, armed with bows and arrows, their faces gashed with the tribal marks of Africa.

Five minutes after they had disappeared Redgreave scrambled up the rope and crept away in the darkness.

There was no sign of Cupidon, but the insistent boom of a voodoo drum and the light of a large bonfire at the foot of the slope indicated a village, and he concluded that Cupidon had been carried there.

III.

Daylight revealed a beautiful valley, with no evidences of cultivation but a well-marked path leading from the top of the cliff where he had clambered over to a cluster of thatched negro huts which surrounded a long, low building at the foot of the hill. Early in the day a party of the naked savages he had seen the night before clambered up the path bearing a couple of stout ladders, which they lowered into the cañon, and Redgreave lay very close and watched them as they lounged about the top.

They evidently expected visitors, and Redgreave was hardly surprised when Dessailines, accompanied by a dozen voodoo men and women, who treated him with the greatest deference, clambered over the edge of the cliff. The waiting negroes prostrated themselves before him, and mumbled an account of the previous day's occurrences, and Dessailines gave way to a terrible outburst of passion as he listened.

"You let him escape, you miserable pigs!" he howled, as he trampled on them and kicked them with his heavy boots. "Three cursed white men have I lured here for the great festival, and your stupidity lets one escape!" And from this Redgreave gathered that the mule had outdistanced the pursuers, who had returned with the sorry tale that horse and rider had escaped.

After Dessailines had been somewhat assuaged he started for the village, escorted by his hideous companions. All through that long day negroes arrived

in groups; peasants from the surrounding country, soldiers in uniform, and even an occasional black priest; but the most surprising arrival was a couple of dozen of the residents of the capital, negroes who Redgreave knew had been educated in France, where they had mingled in perfect social equality with the whites, and who had brought back to Hayti the accent, dress, and manner of Paris. But all the veneer of civilization had dropped from them; both men and women were half-drunk on the raw native rum, and, except for their clothing, they were indistinguishable from the commoner blacks.

They were a horrible-looking lot as they reeled down the pathway to the huts; chattering, shouting, singing, and dancing, and Redgreave congratulated himself that they had not been tempted to stray aside and stumble upon his hiding-place.

It is a law in the unwritten code of the Lost Legion that its members shall be mutually helpful. The protection of consuls is not for them, war-ships are not despatched with threats of bombardment and reprisal to their rescue, and their employers wash their hands of all responsibility as soon as they have delivered their instructions: but no one of them ever deserts another in distress.

Redgreave had heard enough to convince him that his two predecessors on the gold hunt were in the power of these blacks, and he guessed what their fate would be in this stronghold of vodooism. If he were discovered in trying to aid them, his own fate would be no better, but he hesitated not a moment in deciding to follow the negroes as soon as it should become dark.

The powder from a couple of cartridges, mixed with the sticky potion he had taken from Cupidon, made an effective paste to blacken his hands and face, and he had little fear of discovery after darkness fell, for the negroes had all been drinking heavily, and were apparently without fear of observation in this remote place. His other preparations consisted in a careful examination of his arms, and the conversion of each of the sticks of dynamite into a bomb by the insertion of detonating-caps; and when he left his hiding-place he stowed them in his pockets.

Mr. Redgreave is a modest man, and he has never given an accurate and full account of the rites of Voodoo which he witnessed as he lay on the roof of the long building that night and observed them about the out-of-doors bonfire, and later through a hole in the thatch.

Monsieur Dessailines, descendant of an emperor, educated in Paris and a Port-au-Prince dandy, was master of the revels; his wand of office a human thigh-bone, and his ceremonial robes a necklace of human teeth. The sacrifice of many snow-white roosters and goats, in whose blood the naked savages drank to Voodoo, and with which they smeared their foreheads, was the opening of the orgy which rapidly became a scene of fanaticism which is beyond description. A half-hour of this al fresco entertainment was sufficient to reduce them to a state of maniacal frenzy, and when Dessailines gave the signal they followed him, a howling mob, into the long building, which was lighted by a half-dozen large torches.

Redgreave's perch was a precarious one, but he forgot his peril in watching Dessailines when he climbed to a platform at the far end. On it stood a large, boxlike structure draped in red cloth, and when he approached it the negroes set up a chant in a language which he could not understand.

Dessailines made an impassioned address in French, and most of it was unintelligible to Redgreave because of the shouting of the negroes, but he constantly caught the expression "the white queen whom we worship," and he was quite prepared to see a descendant of the aborigines when Raoul drew back the curtain and the negroes prostrated themselves; but it had concealed only a glass-fronted box containing a huge white serpent.

Dessailines groveled before it, its beady eyes shining like flame as its vicious head swung from side to side; and when he rose to his feet the negroes became absolutely silent.

"On this night, the festival of Voodoo, our god demands the crowning sacrifice of the year," he said slowly. "Goats and cocks of the fairest have we sacrificed in her honor, but to-night, O followers of Voodoo, she demands a human sacrifice!"

A fierce shout greeted this announcement, and a group of the negroes, whose knotted hair was a badge of their membership in the priesthood of Voodoo, crept under the platform and reappeared, bearing three men, tightly bound and gagged. Two of them were white men whom he had never seen before, but the third was the luckless Cupidon, and, as Redgreave looked at Dessailines, his face distorted by passion, his small, red eyes gleaming with ferocity as he tested the edge of a great knife, he knew the fate to which they were being carried.

Beneath him were at least three hundred negroes, for the moment as savage as their ancestors of Africa, inflamed by liquor and giving unrestrained liberty to their blood-lust; but he did not hesitate.

He had carefully mapped out his plan, and, as the first of the bound men was being lifted to the platform, he threw one of his dynamite bombs into the great bonfire, and dropped to the ground on the far side of the building. The explosion was almost instantaneous, the burning embers were scattered, and darkness succeeded for a moment, until it was dispelled by the light from the blazing huts, which burned like tinder.

He threw another bomb over the building, and the groans and screams which followed the second explosion told him that it had taken effect in a mob of terrified negroes, who had rushed out after the first one.

Redgreave knew that his only hope was in their utter demoralization, and when he reached the far end, where the altar was situated, he threw a third bomb to the rear, and a good part of the flimsy building disappeared in smoke.

Dessailines lay on the platform, writhing on his belly in front of the snake's cage, and the three captives, unharmed but helpless, had been dropped on the ground.

The negroes who remained in the shattered building were clawing and fighting each other to escape through the doorway, and he was unmolested as he cut the ropes of the prisoners and shouted to them to follow him.

He paused only long enough to rouse Dessailines by a couple of savage kicks on the shins, then, dropping the rest of the dynamite on the cage, he ran Dessailines before him out of the building.

The village was on fire from one end to the other, and the negroes paid no attention to them as they made off into the surrounding darkness, Redgreave driving Dessailines before him with kicks and curses.

A final explosion, which blew the blazing ruins of the long house in all directions, announced that the fire had reached the altar, and in the shelter of the woods he called a halt.

Cupidon fell, gasping, to the ground, and his white fellow prisoners were removing the gags from their mouths when Redgreave, for the first time, got a look at them.

"I reckon you were made in Germany," he said to the older one as a volley of "Donnerwetters!" came from his unbound lips; and the younger, a good-looking young fellow, gave a shout of relief after he had rid himself of the confining gags.

"Yes, py *Gott!* un der nagurs vill schvett vor dis!" he exclaimed. "To der Cherman gonsul vill I go——"

"You're a considerable long way from the German consul, and I don't believe he'll extend the glad hand if you succeed in getting to him," interrupted Redgreave dryly. "Who sent you here—Cooper?"

"*Ja*, and he, too, vill schvett vor dis!" exclaimed the German.

Redgreave smiled as he turned to the other man. "Did that same philanthropist send you down here?"

"That's what! Promised me an interesting experience, and I've sure had it. Who are you?"

"Another one of his protégés: Redgreave by name, and an unfortunate hoodooed by nature. Let's have the story."

In ten minutes Redgreave was in full possession of the facts. Their early experiences duplicated his own—except, as he had shrewdly suspected, that Cooper had employed them at a far less wage than he would have had to pay the more experienced members of the Lost Legion. Dessailines had furnished them both with their horses, and turned them over to Cupidon; the German three months and the American six weeks previously. They had both gone to sleep in the hut, unsuspicious of danger, and remembered nothing more until they awakened close prisoners in an underground cell from which they had been brought that night. They had not been treated badly, and were provided with the choicest edibles the country could supply.

"But they didn't make any bones about what we were being fattened up for," concluded the young American. "This is the greatest Voodoo festival of the year, and we were to be sacrificed on the altar as a preliminary to appearing on the supper-table. We'd sure have been roasted before this if you hadn't happened in. Did Cooper send you to our rescue?"

"Well, not exactly," said Redgreave grimly. "I've got a message for you, but we'll talk of that later." He trussed up Dessailines securely, and bound him to a tree. "Now, my little enticer of the innocent, you're going to show me that gold-mine in the morning; and, if it exists only in your imagination, I'll take a look at that same imagination through a bullet-hole in your skull, so you'd better do a heap of thinking before daylight. I'm a little shy on sleep, so if you gents will excuse me, I'll take forty winks. I reckon we won't be disturbed to-night, and for reasons best known to myself I decided several days ago that I wouldn't run any risks until after six-thirty to-morrow morning."

Mr. Redgreave enjoyed a well-earned rest, but his companions, who had not had his training, spent most of the night in anxious scrutiny of the village. Cupidon could do little more than lie on the ground and moan, for, although he had escaped having his throat cut, he was firmly convinced that outraged Voodoo would have worse in store for him. It was only greater fear of the sleeping white man, against whose sorcery even Voodoo had been helpless, which prevented him from releasing Dessailines as an atonement.

The burning village was absolutely without sign of life, the Voodoo worshipers had fled in terror; but when Redgreave awakened he was not lulled into any sense of false security. He gave an exclamation of pleasure when he looked at his watch, and his expression was almost cheerful as he greeted his companions.

"Gents, if the necessary ingredients were handy, I'd set 'em up to celebrate the termination of seven years of hard luck," he remarked. "As a fitting celebration is out of the question for the moment, I reckon we'd better get down to business. How about the gold-mine—have either of you found it?"

"*Ja, py Gott!* dot haf I!" exclaimed the German. "Not on der ground vill I dig it, but my gonsul vill for me an indemnity get dot is better than a goltmine."

"Does Cooper get that—after you have collected it?" asked Redgreave, and the German gave a snort.

"Vas it old Cooper as for three months in a verdampt hole in der ground up gelocked vas?" he asked indignantly. "No, no; ven dot money paid ofer iss, I goes me back by Muenchen, alretty, unt lif like a baron. Gooper can to der hell go!"

Redgreave turned to the American.

"What's your program, son? Are you looking for Bob Evans to come down with the North American Squadron and dry-nurse you back to New York with an indemnity in your pocket?"

"Not yet!" answered the boy positively. "Now that I'm down here, I'm going to see if there is gold in these mountains, and I'd hate to make a failure of the first job."

Redgreave looked at him approvingly.

"Son, if we ever get back to little old New York, there's a restaurant I want to take you to," he said. "Now, Dutchy, as I understand it, you're on the job for yourself, so the sooner you start for Port-au-Prince the better I'll be satisfied. I'll give you one piece of advice, though; you'd better go by way of San Domingo and Berlin, and bring the kaiser along with you to pick up that indemnity. I put several prominent Haytian families into mourning last night, and I reckon white men will find it better not to intrude on their grief. Cupidon, quit your blubbering and untie the high priest, and we'll look over the scene of battle."

Dessailines was a very crestfallen negro when he confronted Redgreave, but the latter wasted no time in gloating over him, and the party marched down to where the village had stood, for all that was left of it was smoldering ashes. A dozen mutilated bodies told of the terrible effects of the dynamite, but all compunction died in their hearts when they found the unmistakable evidences of cannibalism.

"Now, Dessailines," said Redgreave, "I'm willing to listen to any information you wish to give."

The negro looked at him sullenly, and shook his head.

"From me you will learn nothing, monsieur," he said. "You have killed my people, destroyed my power, and hold me a prisoner, but you are accursed of Voodoo. You will die a horrible death for your sacrilege, and my murder cannot prevent it."

"Darned if you haven't struck my weak point!" said Redgreave, a little gloomily. "But I reckon a man that's been able to pull through the last seven years can take a chance against a bunch of hoodoos that dynamite can scatter. I'm not going to murder you, but I'm not looking forward to making a meal of you, so your name don't go on the ration-list for fattening until you give up what you know. Son, where did they have you cooped?"

"Come along and I'll show you," answered the boy; but the German gave a grunt of impatience.

"I go by der consul," he said. "No more I vish to see dot verdampt hole."

The German swung up the path without further remark, and Redgreave followed his companion toward the ruins of the long house, driving Dessailines before him, and with Cupidon following disconsolately after.

"There are two things I've found out from long experience, son," he remarked. "Don't laugh at bad-luck signs, and never argue with a Dutchman. If he had played fair with the boss, I'd have tied him up before allowing him to stick his head in that hornet's nest, but now he can go as far as he likes. Hello! is that where they cooped you?" He was looking into a large hole under the spot where the high altar had stood.

The boy nodded. "There is a pretty good prison at the bottom," he said. "Tunneled right out of the solid rock, and with iron bars in front."

"If it's in commission now it will do nicely for our friend to meditate in," answered Redgreave; and he kicked Dessailines into the pit and dropped in after him.

The boy followed, and peered through the bars of a heavy door.

"Hello! your dynamite seems to have played the deuce with my happy home!" he exclaimed.

Redgreave looked into the cell, and then seized Dessailines roughly by the scruff of the neck.

"Get that door open!" he commanded. "Son, this josser wasn't lying. I don't know how rich it is, but this is the entrance to an old mine. I've seen the like in Central America, and, if it hasn't been cleaned out, I reckon old Cooper wins again."

Ten minutes' work cleared away enough débris to show that the apparently natural rock at the back of the prison had been a carefully laid wall blocking the mouth of a tunnel; and Redgreave sent Cupidon for torch material to explore it.

"Dessailines, you've made me a lot of trouble about this," he said, while they

waited. "I've got to have samples of this ore, and, thanks to you, I have no tools, so you'll get 'em for me if you have to bite 'em out."

Mr. Dessailines was not accustomed to labor, but he had a skilful teacher, and when they explored the ancient workings he succeeded in getting what Redgreave required, but his hands were raw and bleeding when he finished.

"They've only skimmed the top of the cream in that vein," he said, after he had carefully examined the samples in the daylight. "There is enough left there to make it one of the richest mines in the world with modern methods, and I see where the republic of Hayti disappears into the vest pocket of Mr. Jabez Cooper."

He looked about at the gruesome evidences of savagery in the beautiful valley, and then at the young American.

"Now, son, I suppose you're thinking what a ripping good story this will make for the Sunday papers," he said, pointing to the gathering vultures, the smoking ruins of the hut, and the ghastly relics of violence and cannibalism. "'Fabulous Riches in Hayti!' 'The Secret Guarded by Votaries of Voodoo!' 'Cannibalism in the West Indies!' and all that sort of thing. But when you hear the 'Elevated' rumbling and get under the shadow of a sky-scraper you'll wake up. It don't seem reasonable that you'll be afraid to tell about this, but you will; and the first thing you know you'll be subscribing your little bit to carry the Gospel, red-flannel undershirts, and trade gin to the heathen in Central Africa; and you won't say a word about what you've seen within five days' journey of the Bowery. But just now Dessailines must—— Hello!"

Mr. Dessailines had taken advantage of Redgreave's philosophical dissertation to edge away, and was now in full flight up the path.

Redgreave took after him, but the negro had a good lead, and fled with the wings of fear. At the edge of the cliff he uttered a cry of triumph, but it terminated in a howl, his black hands were raised above his head, and he suddenly collapsed and rolled over.

Redgreave dropped to the ground and crept cautiously forward until he could see the path below.

"It's all right," he said, when he rejoined Cupidon and the boy. "He won't bother us again, and Hayti will pay no indemnity. The Dutchman's there, too. Both of 'em on their backs, and each has an arrow in his brain."

They looked at him in astonishment as he coolly made his samples into a snug bundle and slung it over his shoulder.

"Now, son, that exit is officially closed, and there's just one chance to get out. We'll strike right ahead: the boundary of Santo Domingo is about twenty miles from here, and the sooner we shake the dust of Hayti from our feet the better we'll be off. We go home by way of Monte Cristi and Samana Bay. Just take one of these guns, and keep your fingers crossed. Shoot anything black on sight, and do it quick."

Two weeks later Mr. Jabez Cooper, grudgingly wrote two checks.

"I don't like paying twice for a simple little job like this," he grumbled, nodding at the ore samples on his desk. "I suppose that Dutchman'll be showing up and wanting money next."

"I don't believe he will," answered Redgreave dryly, as he pocketed his check. "He left us to collect an indemnity for some fancied inconvenience, and I believe he compromised on a concession of land: about six feet of it."

"You didn't say a word about our adventures," said the boy wonderingly, as they walked to Madame Hortense's for luncheon.

"No," answered Redgreave, as he stooped to pick up a pin, and smiled cheerfully as he noticed that the head lay toward him. "Cooper was only paying for samples and a report. There is no money in adventures, and he's a busy man."

"I guess you're right," answered the boy, when he had dodged a trolley-car and a racing fire-engine. "Say, where can I get this check cashed? I want to make a contribution to convert the South Sea Islanders from cannibalism."

Zollenstein

By W. B. M. Ferguson

Author of "Garrison's Finish," "Strange Cases of a Medical Free-lance," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Mortimer, a young Englishman, ex-soldier and adventurer, quarrels with Colonel Gratz in a West End club and strikes him so viciously that one of Mortimer's companions, Lieutenant Von Lindowe, bending over the fallen man, pronounces him dead and urges Mortimer to fly to the Continent, offering to assist him in procuring a captaincy in the Blues, the crack light-cavalry regiment in Zollenstein. Mortimer accepts the offer and goes to Zollenstein. He has first an encounter with Captain Kienert, then with the Princess Zenia. He is about to give the princess certain information which he has heard from her uncle Boris von Hohenstauffen, when he is struck unconscious. He awakes in a room in which Boris and Kienert are holding council. Kienert leaves and Prince Hugo enters—brother of the Princess Zenia, a witless young fellow who has just returned from England. Boris proceeds to make the youngster drunk, and this accomplished, Mortimer grapples with Boris, binds and gags him, and changes clothes with the stupefied prince. Mortimer escapes, and has a delightful encounter with the princess who takes him for her brother Hugo. Later he has an interview with Chancellor von Moltke Hertz, the man who controls Zollenstein's destiny, and learns that he is to play the crown prince—or rather the king, for his majesty has just died—until the original, Johann von Bulowe, arrives. The audience with the chancellor is ended by the sensational entrance of Von Lindowe, Mortimer's debonair sponsor, his brave array now soiled and torn and stiffened with splotches of blood.

CHAPTER X.

I RIDE TO THE UNMASKING AND HEAR AN OLD NAME.

AFTER one of the busiest days in my life, and I have had my share of action, I was alone at last—alone in the royal chamber of the kings of Zollenstein. I had left Von Lindowe still unconscious, but, in my opinion, on the road to recovery, for his wounds, though numerous and painful, I did not deem fatal. The most serious was a long scalp-wound on the back of the head, evidently the result of a saber-blow imperfectly warded.

Once or twice in his delirium the boy had striven to speak coherently, but his tongue was far from being in harmony with his mind.

From Sergeant Wachs of the Blues we learned that he had found Von Lindowe in my room at the "Toison d'Or," and the landlord was about to send for medical assistance when Wachs and his detachment arrived.

From the meager account of the affair, recounted by Johann Lesser, the landlord (who was not an eye-witness), to Sergeant Wachs, it seemed that the lieutenant, hearing that I had gone for a walk, had decided to await my return. He went to my room, and subsequently Captain Kienert and two troopers rode up and demanded an interview with "the Englishman, Mr. Mortimer," registered there. The landlord explaining I was out, they had called him liar, and had pushed past him to my room.

What transpired there he could only surmise, but sounds of a fracas came to him, and finally Kienert and his men, laughing and cursing, flung down-stairs, leaped on their mounts, and dashed away. Von Lindowe was fast bleeding to death when the landlord found him and by the means of a hastily im-

This story began in the June issue. The back numbers can be obtained from any newsdealer. Price fifteen cents each.

provised tourniquet undoubtedly saved his life.

Though I ached in body and mind, and had not closed my eyes for a score of hours, I did not feel sleepy. I had passed that point. Continued action, excitement, speculation, and retrospection—which inevitably precedes or follows—kept my nerves jumping. It was after midnight, and undoubtedly I should have gone to bed. But instead I paced the floor, thinking of everything it was useless to think of.

My room was on the second floor overlooking the terraced garden. A great wide balcony ran along the entire east wing—the wing reserved as the sleeping-apartments of the royal household. A full moon was riding high in the heavens, and the trees on the terraces cast long, black shadows. It was a perfect night.

A great longing for air, to get as close to nature as possible, to absorb some of her sublime peace and contentment by contact, filled me. I opened one of the French windows, and, sitting on the balcony's rail, lit a cigarette.

Such a night brings a vast longing for cleanliness to the moral leper. And partly because the night was so pure, partly because the more I thought of the Princess Zenia and consequently despised myself, measuring my lowliness by her altitude, partly because I remembered I had left my portmanteau at the "Toison d'Or," I took a sudden resolution. I would quit Zollenstein forever before it was too late—before the fly had become completely entangled in this political web of deceit.

I am no prober of the emotions or self-analyst, but in taking a step which eventuates in a leap—a leap which may either terminate in one landing on one's head or one's feet—it is some small satisfaction to hark back and appreciate the initial cause or causes that impelled the step. If I had but gone to bed and to sleep—but perhaps in any case destiny would have arrived at the same goal using merely another path. As it was, the combination of influences recorded cemented my resolution. I would leave Zollenstein before it was too late; quit this dirty political stage to which I had been lured by false promises of protection.

Protection! Yes, I had been rightly served for my cowardice in not facing the consequences of my crime. Now I was still the criminal—a coward and jackal to boot. Under the stars, in the quiet hush of the night, the memory of the Princess Zenia hot within me, my view-point had shifted.

The chancellor's specious arguments, appeals to my love of adventure, action; his threats, intimidations—all had vanished. I saw myself as I was.

Perhaps my short intimacy with the Princess Zenia, even though won under false colors, had sown a seed of honor within me that the night did but nourish and bring to flower. I knew that there was a strange, new longing in my heart that night. I craved an honest atmosphere, where one could breathe freely before one's neighbor, not behind his back; fearing every breath would strangle; where I would no longer dread the lifting of the curtain that lay behind my personality. And perhaps some far-off day in the future, when I was clean, as I once had been in the great long ago, a girl as pure, as loyal as Zenia would kiss me; not as a supposed brother, but as one worthy of those kisses.

Between the lighting and discarding of my cigarette, I suppose, I must have reached a sublimely moral height that night under the stars. If I had known more of mankind and the making thereof, I should have known that when the tide has attained high-water mark, it must, in due time, inevitably recede. But while it ran strong and full I acted on my resolve. I would go first to the "Toison d'Or," dress myself in my own clothes, not this travesty of a riding-costume, make for some small Continental town, and thence to London, to face the charge of manslaughter or murder.

I was anxious to acquire possession of my portmanteau; and, in any case, with no higher motive as a mainspring, I would have taken French leave of the castle for an hour or so in order to get

it. There was nothing in it that a burglar would prize very highly. For necessity had taught me to keep my superfluous valuables, such as they were, in the city's many safe-deposit vaults which go by the name of the "Three Golden Spheres."

The only article I at all valued was a plain silver band, with the highly absurd legend, *"Toujours le Roi,"* engraved upon it. It possessed a sentimental value alone, for, as a child, I had worn it about my neck. It reminded me of the long ago, and furnished inexhaustible food for retrospect.

Again, the fact that it alone of all my superfluities had, somehow, escaped the wiles of the "Three Golden Spheres" imparted to it a highly encouraging value. So long as I had that old silver band, relic of childhood and its irresponsible hours, I could not be clasified as an absolute pauper.

By means of a sheet from the royal bed I swung from the balcony and landed lightly among the shadows of the terraced garden. "Good-by, John Mortimer, heir apparent," I called softly to my bedroom. Then I cut across the grass to where, among the trees, the castle's outflanking walls shot up darkly against the sky, their crest frosted with the silver which the alchemistic moon transmutes from the sun's gold.

I reached the wall without even starting the yelp of a somnambulistic dog, but, as the height I had to scale was a dozen feet, and I am but half that, I supplemented the difference with a sprightly and accommodating fir-tree.

I climbed it, expecting momentarily, as I was outlined against the sky, to receive a hail from some oppressively dutiful sentry, and already I was imagining just about where his Lee-Metford would make my acquaintance—providing he was a better shot than the average run of Continental soldiers. But nothing happened, and, hastily climbing out on a projecting bough, I jumped it up and down like a see-saw, and, as it rose for the proverbial third time, borrowed its momentum, and sprang for the wall. It was not a graceful exit, and I landed on the other side with a badly sprained ankle.

It seemed fated that Zollenstein and all connected with it should harry the life out of me. I cursed it freely. I cursed myself and Von Lindowe and the chancellor and my ankle and the wall; and then I went over the roll again, this time including Colonel Gratz, whom I had, somehow, overlooked for the moment; though, in truth, I should have remembered that he was undoubtedly damned enough by now.

Somewhat relieved, I stumped sullenly down the road—a road I knew nothing of. Physical pain is a curb to virtuous and lofty resolutions, and already I was half-regretting the exchange of a temporarily enlarged horizon for a temporarily enlarged ankle. In my crippled condition I stood in a fair way of one striving for a worthy goal only to go uncredited.

I had need to hurry, even though I could not, for I felt certain that, when my escape became known, the vulture-like chancellor would be hotfoot after me. He had compromised himself, and now he could not go back.

And then a grossly unpleasant thought came: Supposing he thought I had deserted and gone over to Boris—sold out to his opponent the hand he had shown me he held? I well knew his estimation of me. In his opinion I would play jackal cheerfully. After all, I was a criminal, and, as such, a fitting hireling for Uncle Boris. My thoughts—and I wish my legs had been as progressive—even carried me further. Supposing the chancellor thought my story of being captured by Boris a trumped-up lie in order that he might disclose his next proposed move to me? It was all very likely. If so, then I was between two fires. I could not go back. I must go forward—get away from it all.

Meanwhile I had hobbled perhaps a mile. Just as I had again reached the full flush of my laudable determination, now enforced by necessity, there came a clatter of hoofs from far down the road; and down another road that bi-

sected the one I was traversing, some half-score yards in advance, there pounded a body of horsemen.

I waited for them to turn to their left, and so precede me, but, instead, they turned to their right and swept toward me.

I tried to leap to one side unobserved; my weak ankle gave accommodatingly, and down I went under the foremost horse. I was fated to be a shuttlecock, for, before I could inelegantly roll out of harm's way, the horse's pawing hoofs clipped me smartly on the head. I saw the entire solar system—and something else. For the rider had dismounted, savagely backed the horse, and now was bending over me.

"Hugo! Hugo!" cried a throaty, tremulous voice, and a poor lace doily of a handkerchief dabbed at the insignificant scalp-wound I had earned. "Hugo, Hugo, tell me you are not hurt. Speak to me, dear."

My plans of renunciation, of lofty rectitude, had been abruptly checkmated. Again I assumed the cloak of deceit thrust upon me by the force of circumstances. Again I was Prince Hugo, of Saxonia, and my "sister," the Princess Zenia, was pillowing my head on her arms.

It was with difficulty and a whirling head that I at length scrambled awkwardly to my feet. What with the knocks I had encountered, lack of sleep, and sheer physical hunger, combined with the tension of meeting climaxes at every unexpected corner, I was momentarily unnerved. For a second a wild, hysterical impulse caught me by the throat: a desire to scream out: "I'm not a king, nor cousin, nor prince, nor brother—nothing." But Zenia was speaking.

"Hugo," she cried sharply, an unwonted misery suddenly manifesting itself in her rich voice, "you're—intoxicated."

"Pardon. I'm not," I said lamely.

"Then you're sick, Hugo. What is the matter? You're lame, bareheaded, wounded——"

"My horse ran away—threw me," I lied bravely.

"Where?" she questioned slowly, switching her riding-skirt with her crop. Her body-guard had fallen back.

"Why, here," I explained volubly. "See, I'm all over dirt." So much had my exit over the wall done for me.

"So I see," she replied, somewhat dryly, in a strange voice. "Where were you coming from, Hugo?"

"Why, the castle. I was on my way to Saxonia — Schillingsberg. You should not be out at this hour," I ran on, taking a brotherly high hand, in order to cover my confusion. "It is after midnight. Why did you come back?"

She was still switching nervously at her skirt. "For you," she replied simply. "While at Heimruh, or thereabouts, to-night," she continued coldly, "I lost a bracelet, and I sent Schlosser for it. He could not find it, but on his return he informed me that you had gone back to Heimruh—and were drunk, Hugo. From one of the servants he learned that you were sitting in the gun-room with Uncle Boris—in a disgraceful condition. I was on my way there now. You have lied to me, Hugo. You were on your way from Heimruh. When intoxicated, you were thrown by your horse. You deliberately went to Uncle Boris when my back was turned. That was why you did not wish me to stay at the castle overnight. I despise you," she whipped out, emphasizing her biting contempt with a vicious smack of the crop on her boot. "I despise you. And—and, after all, you—you being so—so nice," she whispered, the tears now in her voice. "I never thought you could stoop so low. A lie—a lie!"

Prince Hugo was unconsciously taking hearty vengeance for my assuming his identity.

"Won't you say something?" asked Zenia querulously, stamping her foot in exasperation as I remained silent.

"Nothing," I answered. "Except that I was not drunk, that I did not return to Heimruh, and that I have only now left the castle." It was not often the luxury of truthfulness was per-

mitted me, and I made quite a brave figure of injured innocence.

Zenia switched at her skirt nervously. "I believe you," she said gravely, at length. "Forgive me. Schlosser must have been misinformed. Kiss me, Hugo." And she lifted her lips to mine.

"Was that because you doubted me—wanted to *know* if I had been intoxicated?" I asked, as I kissed her.

"Don't I trust you implicitly?" she parried simply. "No, it was because I wanted to know if it would still feel so—so funny. And—and it does," she finished, with her old puzzled laugh. "And now shall we return to the castle, dear, or go on to Schillingsberg?"

"To Schillingsberg," I said. I could not go back to the castle. I would take this bull by the horns. The present had me for its own. Let it lead me where it willed. So I mounted a trooper's horse, but took care to order him to foot the twelve miles to Saxonia's capital, for I did not wish, through any gossip, that the chancellor should know of my whereabouts.

"By the way," said Zenia, as we cantered down the moonlit road side by side, "do you know I'm a little bit upset? I have heard some rumor to the effect that an Englishman, stopping at the 'Toison d'Or' inn at Zollenstein, has mysteriously disappeared."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed, my heart privately jumping. "How did you hear of that?"

"Schlosser carried it with him from Heimruh. It is common news there."

"And how should the disappearance of an Englishman affect you? In any case, no doubt it is pure fiction," I added, endeavoring to fathom the object that lay back of Boris circulating the story of my disappearance. "How could it interest you, Zenia?"

"Well," she said whimsically, fingering the reins abstractedly, "you remember my telling you of my many suitors in Paris? And how I preferred one simply for the reason that he did not pretend to be sanctimonious, like the rest? He is an Englishman, and had threatened to visit Zollenstein so as to —well, I like him a—a little bit. A tiny, tiny, tiny little bit"—measuring the amount with finger and thumb—"and—and that's all. I thought, perhaps, he and this Englishman who has disappeared might be one and the same. Englishmen do not often visit Zollenstein, and he might travel incognito."

"What is his name?" I asked bluntly.

"Viscount Greystone," said Zenia. "Why—why, do you know him, Hugo? Do you?"

"I have met him," I replied grimly, "in London."

"And you like him, Hugo?"

"Quite as much as he likes me," I said.

I was busy thinking what the Viscount Greystone would say were he to meet me, as he would be likely to do if he visited Zollenstein during my stay, when he found that his former London adventurer had been metamorphosed into royal play-actor extraordinary. And he, the greatest libertine and gourmand in all England, and perhaps the Continent, was supposedly in love with my "sister."

Of course, it was no affair of mine, but I wished it were. Gods! how I wished that it were! That in some way it might be! And so I rode with the plain intention of unmasking myself once Schillingsberg was reached and I had won safely away from the vulture-like clutch of the iron chancellor. And that night's ride I will always remember, for the Princess Zenia was very near to me, and she was winsome and sweet—and everything that I loved. And again I prayed God that I might in some way keep her safe from the Viscount Greystone.

CHAPTER XI.

THE UNMASKING.

"You are quiet, Hugo," Zenia had said for the second time before abstraction permitted my return to good breeding. "Are you sure you are not hurt? It has been a very, very busy day and night for us both. Did you ever see brother and sister get on so well together?" she asked, pressing my

arm affectionately. "Listen," she cried sharply, head on one side, finger raised for silence. "Listen."

I listened. The faint thud, thud of hoofbeats came to us up the wind from the rear. Zenia drew her horse to one side, bidding me follow. The body-guard, their sergeant receiving no summons to halt, obediently cantered on. The hoofbeats sensibly drew nearer as we listened. There is something indescribably eerie in the sound of pursuing hoofbeats on a clear moonlight night. Zenia shivered involuntarily.

"Who rides so late?" she asked slowly, as we stood in the shadow-flecked road. "I am curious."

I shrugged my shoulders for answer. Undoubtedly it was my pursuers from the castle, but I had met with so many strange experiences in so short a period that a fresh one held no terrors for me. I was quite ready for anything. Mechanically I felt in my pocket for Uncle Boris' revolver as, far down the broad vista of moonlight, a small, black speck resolved itself into three horsemen. In silence we watched them sweep toward us.

"Had you not better join your escort?" I asked.

"As if there were war or brigandage in the land," replied Zenia, with a laugh. "Am I not safe with my brother?"

"But—Boris?" I objected.

"You seem afraid of him, Hugo. Do you forget who you are, or who I am? Don't be afraid. Big sister will let no one hurt little brother. Not even bad, wicked Uncle Boris. Besides, our escort is waiting for us, no doubt, at the next turn. Schlosser is used to my whims."

I idly watched the moonlight twinkle from the accouterments of the three rapidly approaching horsemen. They were troopers. The next minute they had, with one accord, halted as they caught sight of our horses throwing their shadows across the white roadway.

"Who rides so late to Schillingsberg?" called Zenia abruptly, in her clear, commanding voice.

"An old and loyal admirer," replied a voice, after a brief silence.

It was a half-respectful, half-insolent voice—a voice that conveyed that its owner would like to be familiar if he but dared. I recognized it instantly. It was Captain Kienert. My hand tightened on the gun in my pocket.

"You are impertinent, sir," replied Zenia cuttingly. "I have but loyal subjects."

As if in answer, one of the horsemen spurred forward, swaying slightly in the saddle.

"B'Jove! sis, old girl, welcome home. Welcome home," he cried boisterously, with a highly majestic and more than erratic flourish of his arm. "Three years, sis; three years. Welcome home."

I smiled grimly. The unmasking had come, and it had not been of my making. I was confronting the still besotted princeling, Prince Hugo, of Saxonia, now dressed in the dark-green hussar uniform of Heimruh.

"What are you doing at this hour?" added the prince roughly, "and who is that scarecrow at your side? I must look into this. A chap mus' be a chap, y'know, and a princess mus' be a lady, y'know. How comes it——"

"Out of the way, sir," cried Zenia savagely. "How dare you—you insult me! Out of the way," she cried passionately, spurring her horse as the three spread across her path. "Heimruh will answer for this insult. What do you mean?"

"It—it means that I'm a chap now," cried Prince Hugo. "That—that b'Jove, you can't treat your brother like that," he added shrilly.

I saw the girl straighten rigidly in her saddle.

"That voice," she whispered, half to herself. "What is this farce?" she cried swiftly. "Are you mad, or am I? Here is Hugo"—she clenched my arm fiercely—"and yet—and yet—that voice. I do not understand."

"Ha! the play-actor," cut in Captain Kienert, with a high, nasal laugh. "Ho-ho, a rolling stone—blows nobody any good. The play-actor——"

"Damn you!" cried Prince Hugo, his voice now surcharged with maudlin passion, spurring his horse full tilt at me. "You are the blackguard who—who——" He choked impotently.

In a moment he was upon me, striking right and left. I tried not to hurt him. I swept him aside, but he seemed all arms and vituperation, and would not be denied. His horse, savage with deep roweling, charged into mine. I was flung against the princess. Subconsciously I was aware that Captain Kienert and the trooper were drawing their sabers. They swept to my rear.

I drew my gun, and as Prince Hugo blindly flung himself upon me, trying to pinion my arms, spitting like a hellcat, I threw caution to the winds, and gave him the heavy butt straight between the eyes. He rocked from the saddle, thudded on the road, heaved up once or twice, and then lay all sprawled out. The moonlight was playing full upon his distorted, ghastly face.

Then I caught a badly warded flat saber-cut from Captain Kienert. I tried my best to murder him with the gun, and only then discovered that it was not loaded. It was flung with all my strength in the captain's face. Instinct taught me to duck his back-hand return blow—and then the quiet and methodical trooper, who had been maneuvering for position, got home a pretty blow on the back of my head. I hit the road all in a lump.

As the moon began to float round and round in a most beautiful sky of deepest red, shot with brilliant yellow stars, I became distinctly aware of it shining upon the Princess Zenia while she knelt by the side of the tipsy prince. She looked into his face for a long time, then kissed him very gently, and turned her glance to where I lay. I did not at all appreciate the look her great eyes held. In fact, I have seldom seen such a completely unfriendly one. So I lapsed into unconsciousness (I was getting quite familiar with that state), with the highly satisfactory consolation that I was completely hashed-up all around, and that really I would be very glad to die and be quit of it all—this royal rôle of chief bump taker in ordinary.

The familiar motion of a horse at a steady trot by degrees shook the clogged wheels of my sensibility into action. I was somewhat apathetic and miserably tired by now, and it was with a feeling of complete indifference that I realized that I was a prisoner, "hog-tied" to a horse, with a trooper on either flank. As best I might, I ascertained in the darkness that one of my captors was Captain Kienert, and I regretted deeply that he had recovered from my blow with the Colt.

After a most gloomy and silent ride, the stern, dark towers of Heimruh loomed up before me, and, as I had suspected, I was in a fair way of ending my adventures in the breeding-ground of the whole affair. Without ceremony, my legs were unstrapped, and I was hustled through the passages I had traversed but a few short hours previously.

I found myself in the gun-room, where Uncle Boris, restored to his normal state of ceremonious insincerity, was seated at the head of the table—awaiting my arrival, it seemed.

"Journey's end in lovers' meeting," he said pleasantly, politely offering me a chair. "How did you meet with our bird of passage?" he asked my captor.

Kienert explained in his habitual debonair, cynical way.

"You can leave us," said Boris, after a moment's silence.

Kienert shrugged his shoulders. "But—supposing the little comedy is reenacted?"

"Leave," commanded his master shortly, focusing his ghostly eyes upon him.

"With all the pleasure in the world. *Ave, amigo.*" And Kienert blew a kiss with the tips of his fingers. "*Ave Cæsar.*" He bowed to Boris. "*Te salutant.*"

Humming the little French chanson, Captain Kienert gracefully effaced himself. His unsurpassed faculty for badinage, expressed more by his manner than his vocabulary, had set Boris in a smother of irritability. Surely, I

thought, this captain must have a strong hold, for no master would brook such cheerful disrespect.

As the door closed, Boris, to my surprise, arose and deftly severed my bound wrists, saying with a troubled little laugh: "I beg your pardon for subjecting you to such treatment, but owing to your incognito it was unavoidable."

He laughed again pleasantly.

"See here," he ran on, with much persuasion, while I strove to keep amazement from my eyes, "what possible good can it do you to pose as the outlawed heir of Zollenstein? Is it mere love of adventure—inherent, it seems, in you titled Englishers, with more money and time than you know what to do with. Why be mixed up in some small Continental intrigue? For I admit it *is* an intrigue, made necessary by that unscrupulous villain, Von Moltke Hertz. Don't you see," he added warningly, "that you only lay yourself open to a charge of inciting rebellion, revolution, with a very possible contingency of embroiling your country in a serious difficulty? I think I understand what motive may lead back of your mad freak, and I promise I will do my utmost to further your desires, if you but give me your word of honor to help me in this affair, not fight against me. Is it yes or no, viscount?"

My brain was whirling. Titled and moneyed Englishman! Viscount! What mighty step had I unconsciously taken in the interim. My identity had changed so much in the past twenty-four hours that I dared not call my very face my own.

"I must apologize and beg you to overlook my past conduct," continued Boris, with the utmost sincerity. "But I assure you I was unaware of your true standing, rank, and you must admit that your own actions were, to say the least, eccentric. Frankly, I thought you a hireling of the chancellor, suborned to usurp the throne, rather than the Viscount Greystone assuming the rôle for the purpose of——" He stopped with a laugh.

So I was the Viscount Greystone! What else would I be? Truly I was running the gamut of the royal dressing-room. Small wonder Boris was treating me with the utmost deference! Greystone could name cousins in the royal family itself. Then if I were Greystone, he himself must be in Zollenstein. The audience was gathering for the farce, and I, the principal harlequin, would merit their full attention.

"How did you discover my identity?" I asked, assuming the lazy insolence of the viscount. "You seem to be fairly well acquainted with my affairs. Now that you have penetrated my incognito," I added, with indifference, selecting one of Boris' excellent cigarettes, "I may as well cry *peccavi*. I have been put to a confounded lot of trouble by your actions, permit me to tell you."

Boris shrugged his shoulders. "Permit me to say, to mutilate the fable, when one assumes the ass's skin——"

"Namely, Prince Hugo's raiment?"

"Exactly. Well turned," laughed Boris. "You must remember this is not London, and we are at present engaged——"

"That's all right," I said magnanimously, for I saw he had some small fear regarding his past actions toward myself. "I was out of bounds—poaching—and I take the penalty. We will cry quits. But I am anxious to know how you discovered my identity."

"The landlord of the 'Toison d'Or,'" said Boris simply.

"Oh," said I, looking profound, and feeling empty.

"I jumped at conclusions, knowing the chancellor's unaccountable enmity for myself," continued Boris; "and, as I say, I thought you were his pawn. When you gave us the slip in the Prix road——" And he went over the affair at the inn which I had already heard from Lieutenant Von Lindowe's standpoint. "After I was released from your gags," he added, with a smile, "Prince Hugo, in company with Kienert, set out for Schillingsberg. You know the rest. The captain still thinks you a paid adventurer——"

"And why not you?" I asked boldly.

"Why, the landlord of the 'Toison d'Or,'" said my vis-à-vis. "You see, while the others were gone I sent two of my men to the inn, bidding them wait there till you showed up. Instead, they learned from the landlord that the Englishman, your very esteemed self, was no other than the Viscount Greystone traveling incognito. Luckily my men had brains, and, thinking some mistake might have occurred, wisely came back for directions. Of course I canceled their engagement."

"For which accept my esteemed thanks," I said cynically. I was putting together the cabalistic two and two with commendable skill. "It's a very queer jumble, isn't it?" I laughed. It was superlatively queer, if Boris but knew it. "It was entirely my fault. I should have taken refuge in the peerage, but—well, you were rather caustic, and I took pleasure in giving you trouble."

"The whole fault lies with me and that maundering Doctor Poltova, who came to me with a cock-and-bull story regarding the arrival of a strange Englishman, who was to play the chancellor's pawn," said Boris. He was in high spirits. "I assure you it was all a mistake."

"I quite agree with you," I returned, with perfect sincerity. "It is all a mistake. Viscount Greystone has no intention of mixing up with Zollenstein's destiny. The idea is utterly absurd."

Boris laughed his relief. "If I had only known that you and 'Mr. Mortimer' were one and the same! I'm afraid I gave the chancellor credit for more brains than he possesses. You see, he kept his late majesty's death secret—you are acquainted with conditions here, viscount?" he broke off, eying me sharply.

I nodded with great indifference. "I have neither the energy nor capability for interesting myself in them. I came here purely——"

"Ha! ha!" laughed little Uncle Boris, as I stopped through sheer sterility of imagination. "Where love leads, eh? Oh, I assure you I have heard of your regard for my niece. It is not such a long cry from here to Paris."

Uncle Boris possessed a surprising fund of knowledge—very useful knowledge. I knew he had heard of the Viscount Greystone's record—who had not?—and I wondered how he would regard him as a possible relative.

"And you regard my suit with favor?" I asked, with lazy insolence.

Boris stroked his chin. Then he eyed his nails.

"Of course," I added, "the matter rests entirely with the lady herself, and, after that, with her father."

"But I can exert influence," said Boris quietly.

"For or against?"

Boris coughed with the utmost delicacy. "Frankly, I like you," he said. "We are men of the world. I will gladly exert the influence I possess, which, I may say, is considerable. We are friends, Greystone."

Thinking me the world-seared rake circumstances had compelled me to play, Boris was quite willing to sell me his niece. And the price would be the great influence I was supposed to possess. I was to help him gain the Zollenstein throne. I wondered vaguely what the real Greystone's attitude would have been.

"Yes, let us be friends," said Boris again.

I bowed in silence. I did not care to lie, even behind the shelter of another man's name. It was enough that I was living a lie.

Boris took my silence for acquiescence. "Of course you must be my guest," he said hospitably. "I will endeavor to repair the great inconvenience I put you to. Pray consider Heimruh, and all it commands, entirely at your disposition so long as you may care to stay." He rang a bell. "Have the red chamber prepared for the Viscount Greystone," he ordered the uniformed attendant who answered. "And give Captain Kienert my compliments, and request his presence here immediately."

The red-haired captain duly arrived, debonair as ever. Boris regarded him sternly.

"Captain Kienert," he said, as a mas-

ter might warn a refractory pupil, "this is my guest, Viscount Greystone." And he bowed to me with great ceremony. "I wish every courtesy extended, and I hold you responsible for my guest's welfare and comfort."

Kienert bowed with much deference. He was a man of many parts.

"Yours to command," he said, with the utmost respect. But as his eyes momentarily met mine, I could have sworn there was a satiric gleam in their beautiful depths. "Yours to command," he repeated obsequiously.

"A willing enough dog, but sometimes difficult to hold in leash," commented Boris, as the door closed. He rang again, and a servitor appeared with a huge bowl of steaming punch.

"Your very good health and to our future acquaintance," said Boris exuberantly. The shadow behind the throne had dissolved, and he fondly imagined he had acquired a new ally.

I drained the toast. I let the current of fate whirl me where it pleased. I was safe until my charming host discovered that I was not Greystone. By that time—well, let the morrow's youth care for the morrow's ills. And so, after a most convivial half-hour with little Uncle Boris, I repaired to the sanctuary of mine enemy—the red chamber.

TO BE CONTINUED.

MUSIC AS A SCIENCE

MUSIC as an exact science is now becoming possible, for the reason that a way has been discovered of photographing the sound-waves of the voice, so that the vibrations may actually be added up, like a sum in arithmetic, and found correct or incorrect.

The first inquiry into the numerical values of music by Pythagoras of old was greatly revived years ago. When Mrs. Watts Hughes sang, the fine sand silted on a sheet of glass into squares and circles and diagrams by the modulated tones of her voice. This is an experiment any one may try. All that is necessary is to scatter sand on a sheet of glass, suspend it, and draw a violin-bow across its blunted edge. But these are things of the past. The actual translation of the human voice into pictures by means of an electric instrument has arrived.

The principle of the process is the telegraphic system of Pollak and Verag, by which an operator can send forty thousand words an hour. The system is too intricate for full description here, but it may be said briefly that it works by means of two currents, the one making horizontal and the other vertical strokes, regulated by a sheet of paper containing holes, large and small, according to the letters that are to be transmitted. The motive power that sets this complicated machine in action is the human voice. The operator talks into a double telephone, then a mirror comes into play, and reflects a shaft of light on to a rapidly moving film, writing the letters clearly. This film is automatically developed and fixed, and can then be read.

With a slight differentiation, and the substitution of a microphone for the drum of the telephone, Doctor Marage has produced an instrument which can photograph waves of the human voice very accurately.

By means of this machine every peculiarity or roughness of the voice is duly registered, and this is where its great utility comes in. By its help teachers are able to detect a tendency inaudible to the naked ear, and thus correct it before it becomes a serious flaw.

Shanghaiing the Tong

By T. Jenkins Hains

Author of "The Wreck of the Concmaugh," "The Black Barque," Etc.

In which Bahama Bill, the giant black mate of the wrecking sloop *Seahorse*, gets into trouble ashore and shanghaies a company of Orientals who have knocked out his captain. His wife, Fighting Jule, takes a hand in the game

CAPTAIN SMART sat upon the deck of the wrecking-sloop *Seahorse*, and read a letter from the agents of the cartridge company which had furnished the ammunition to the *Bulldog*, brig, wrecked some time before upon the Great Bahama Bank. It caused him some uneasiness, for he scowled and wrinkled his brow, read and reread it until the giant black mate, Bahama Bill, could keep back his curiosity no longer.

"What is it, cap? What dat guy say? No use keepin' bad news back. I kin stan' it, I reckon. Let's have his lay—ain't dat ca'tridge case no good?"

"He says," began Smart, "that the samples are good, that the cases are all right, and he will take the ten tons, about three hundred thousand rounds, at a cent and a half, the cartridges retailing at three cents, or thirty dollars per thousand. That nets us four thousand five hundred, or a little over two thousand dollars apiece for our day's work——"

"Well, dat ain't so bad—no, dat's all toe de good, hey?"

"So far, yes," said Smart, "but the railroad won't carry them under three hundred dollars, and won't give any guarantee that they'll be delivered on time; won't insure them—in fact, won't do anything but carry them at an exorbitant rate, and they say they must have the goods within one week from the eighth of this month, or upon the fifteenth. Otherwise they won't fill the order, they don't want them. It's now the tenth—that's the rub. How are we going to make good? Shall we trust to the railroad? It never does what it agrees to, and in this case we look like bad ones. That's what's worrying me. What do you say? You're half-partner—it's up to you, Bill."

The big black mate sat looking at the shore for some minutes. His ugly face was wrinkled and his rheumy eyes were puckered in thought, his huge shoulders hunching up, and giving him the air of one who has struck a problem too great to solve. Finally he spoke.

"Jule will be along on the morning boat," said he solemnly.

"Who is Jule?" asked Smart.

"Jule? Why, I thought you knew, cap—why, Jule is my wife. 'Fightin' Jule' dey calls her, an' I reckon dat's a good name. She got dat letter you wrote, and de money I sent from de diving at de gold plant. She dun heard ob dat gold plant, an' she's comin' on up. She'll be here in about an hour."

"You think she can give us good advice—is that it?" suggested Smart, eying the big mate keenly.

"Er—er—dat ain't exactly what I was thinkin'—no, sah, cap," said Bahama Bill, with a sickly grin.

"I'm not a mind-reader, Bill," said Smart.

"Well, sah, cap—seein' as it's you, well, sah—er—er—well, I don't know but what we better make de run toe Noo York ourselves. Or else back toe Key West, an' ketch de Noo York

steamer. She kin make de run in three days; dat'll do de trick, hey?"

"Has your wife brought her children with her?" asked Smart.

"Oh, no, cap, she always leaves dem with her ma when she starts off on de rampage——"

"I see; you're afraid of her," said Smart, smiling.

"Not eggzactly dat, cap; not eggzactly—I ain't afeared ob nothin'; no, sah, dat I ain't, but she suah do make me nervous; she suah do make me feel—well, I jest don't know how, but it'll be best fo' you—fo' you, cap—if we start fo' Noo York before she gits here. Yo' understand?"

Captain Smart thought a moment. He had heard of Bahama Bill's wife, the well but not favorably known "Fighting Jule," of Key West. On the whole, it was worth considering. They might make the run in five or six days. It had been done before, but not often. The *Seahorse* was an able sloop, but that was testing her too much. The great six-masters had made the run to Havana in five days, two hundred miles farther on, but they seldom did it in ten. It was a great risk; a risk which might end up in the loss of the entire consignment, for they might not be able to get another chance for a sale.

On the other hand, there was *Key West*, the New York steamer, which would be due the next morning, and she would take the freight at proper prices, and be sure to land it in town—she couldn't help it, making the run North in three days to a certainty. The Key West run seemed to be the best one, but there were certain other considerations which had to be thought of.

"How about Key West?" asked Smart. "Do you think we could run in after that fracas at Journegan's bar? Won't the police want us pretty bad if they think they can shake us down for a thousand dollars?"

"I suah think dey will dat," assented the mate, "if dey think we got anything. Dey certainly trim de folks right smart down dere. I reckon you're right, 'tain't no place fo' us wid a cargo of ca'tridges. I reckon you're wise; I reckon we'd better be gittin' farther No'th."

"There's the New York ship from Jacksonville — how's that?" asked Smart. "We can make that run in two days with a good wind——"

"Git de mainsail on her—Sam, Heldron—lay aft, yo' fellers," said Bahama Bill, springing to action. "We'll catch de Saturday ship, an' git de stuff in town in plenty o' time—dat's de lay—Jacksonville—an' dere's de smoke o' de *Key West* comin' up de Hawk's Channel—see him?" And he pointed to the southward.

"I'll go ashore and get my clothes. They're at the Chinese laundry," said Smart, jumping into the small boat.

"Yo' want toe hurry up—we ain't got no time toe lose. Git my shirts, too, cap. I dun left 'em with de Chink las' week—an' git a five-poun' ham on de way back, we'll need a bit o' grub——"

Smart was already rowing briskly toward the shore, where he landed and made his way rapidly up the street. Wah Lee, the Chinaman who ran the laundry, stood within his doorway and gazed with mild amazement at the unwonted gait of the seaman. Fast walking was not the habit of the Florida cracker, and to see a man sprint along at Smart's gait aroused the suspicion that he was either making a "getaway" from some one or something, or was bent upon most important business.

"He allee samee good mans," said Wah Lee, to one of his numerous brothers ironing a shirt. "Wachee mee skince him—allee samee bunk. Him sailor fell'! Him gotee mon, mon, mon. Me con mans, allee samee bunk. Ha! ha! You see."

Smart stepped into the shanty with a brisk step.

"Get the clothes up, John. Get 'em tied fast right away—all, Bahama Bill's and mine both—hurry, you savvy? Hurry." And the sailor handed over his slip.

"You go to sea to-day?" asked the active Lee, scurrying around behind his counter and trying to match the slip of paper with its strange characters

to one of the many bundles already tied fast with white twine, and laid carefully upon the shelves along the walls.

"Yes; sail in a minute—hurry up. Got to get to sea before the steamer gets in——"

"Ah! Allee same good—you take him. One dolla' fiftee cent."

"What! For just three shirts and two ducks? You are a robber."

"Two dolla' fiftee cent, allee right—you pay him—no shirt, no pay him," said the usurious Lee, lowering truculently at the skipper. One of his brothers sniggered.

When a Celestial sniggers at a white man it is bad. Especially if the white man happens to be a sailor—and in a hurry. Just what makes the Easterner an inferior is not quite definite, not quite clear to the socialistic mind, but that he is inferior is generally conceded—among white men. Among the Orientals there is a quite different opinion based upon their point of view, which, when discussed from its ethical standpoint, is not illogical or unreasonable. Sailors seldom are analytical, seldom go into the reason of things; they are content to accept them as they are, or as they appear to be. Therefore, Smart was much wroth at the sniggering Chink, the more so because he knew he was being cheated by Wah Lee in his wash-bill.

But Wah Lee was a hatchetman. He was a leader of the Hip Sing Tong, and a very bad Chinese to fool with. He was in Florida only for his health, not for gain; and the fact that gain came his way was incidental. He took advantage of it. His little ratlike eyes glinted strangely as he spoke his soft sing-song speech.

"Two dolla' fiftee cent—no shirt no pay—you savvy?" he drawled.

"Come, come, John, be quick about it, and don't put up any foolishness—I haven't time to play this morning," said Smart quickly. "Get the clothes or I'll wade in and take charge of some of those on the shelves."

"You pay two dolla' fiftee cent—you no' pay right off you pay tlee dolla' slixty cent," sang Mr. Wah Lee, his eyes still narrowing, and his hands feeling softly in among his sleeves, where he kept his weapons; "I no time to foolish mans."

"You're on the 'bunk,' then," said Smart; "is that it?"

"Two dolla' fiftee cent, or——"

His answer was quickly given. Smart swung for his jaw, and landed full upon the Oriental chin. Wah Lee went to the floor with a crash, bringing down an ironing-board with him; the flat-irons, clothes, and other gear rolling in a mess. He drew a huge, blue-barreled gun from his sleeve, and, while he lay supine, leveled it at the sailor. Smart missed getting the shot by a hair, and managed to land a kick upon Lee's pistol-arm before the furious Chink could fire, whereupon not less than four powerful hatchetmen, trained athletes from the Orient, sprang upon him at once.

The seaman was dumfounded at the assault. A Chink was beneath contempt, and to find oneself beset by several powerful Orientals, who were more than his match, was simply heart-breaking, pride-destroying. He swung right and left, furiously clinched, and the five of them rolled with a surging smash against the counter, breaking it down in a mass of splinters, sending clothes, boards, and other laundry paraphernalia in all directions.

One of the men let out a shrill yell, and the two not fighting sprang to the doors, and slammed them fast. It would not do to let the populace of the town see the fracas. A Chinaman never advertises the fact that he is a fighter, and is never glad to have it found out, especially among Americans. Besides, had not the foreign pig struck down their leader, the most high Wah Lee, and had not the august Lee essayed to kill the pig—was he not doomed?

Yet none of them wished to act as executioner without direct and explicit orders from the chief. This was a poor country to kill a man in, his friends always made such a fuss; and the police with clubs always made it bad, impossible to hide for a very long time. A

rope and a neighboring tree were the usual finishing touches if they failed to find the lost one.

Smart fought with a fury born of broken pride, lost self-esteem. He was degraded, lowered to the level of common Chinks, and he gave short-arm jobs with amazing lifting power begotten of many years' hard hauling upon lines.

With both hands and feet he strove wildly to free himself from the tangle of baggy sleeves, cotton trousers, and yellow arms. The mass of struggling men rolled and surged over the floor. Smart raised himself again and again to his knees, striking, punching, clinching, using elbows, feet, and knees; and the tide of struggling forms flowed across the room, demolishing everything in its path.

Wah Lee tried in vain to use his gun, and a fellow ruffian tried to strike with the deadly little hatchet used for such occasions, but ever and again the pile of struggling arms, legs, and bodies prevented. The noise of the struggle was drowned in the shrill curses of the contestants, while the sailor fought silently like a bulldog, gripping, smashing, kicking, and flinging the mass about in the hope of throwing them off enough to get in a full arm-stroke from his fists. If he could but strike a full swing once or twice he felt sure of the outcome, for a Chinaman will seldom stand to a full-arm stroke upon the jaw.

Wah Lee, seeing that to shoot was to endanger his men, dropped his gun into his cash-drawer, and fell foul of the bunch to try to do his share in overcoming the foreign pig. His remaining followers, seeing him, flung themselves into the pile, and the mass of men was increased.

Smart began to feel the extra weight of numbers. He was growing tired, and, in spite of his excellent wind, was panting hoarsely, his breathing hampered considerably by gripping fingers he was forced to tear time and again from his throat. He raised himself to his knee for the last giant effort. His heart was breaking. He smashed wildly, furiously; plunged, bucked, threw himself about, twisting, turning, striving with the last remnant of his dying strength. Then he gradually gave way, growing weaker, fighting slower, sinking gradually down, while the pile of men fastened their grips upon him for the finish. In a few moments he was lying limp, and the panting Celestials rose, one after the other, to their feet, while Wah Lee passed a line about the sailor's arms and legs, making him secure.

It had been a most excellent affair; a most magnificent affray worthy of a sailor striving for his rights; and Wah Lee gazed with narrowing eye at the form while he panted out his losses to the surrounding brothers of his Tong. The entire front of the laundry was swept bare, the ironing-boards smashed, the clothes in masses of rags; bundles and papers rolled and mixed in confusion. Flat-irons, holders, chairs, and shelves arranged themselves in piles as though an earthquake had swept through the place; and, while Lee looked sadly at the wreck, he murmured: "Two dolla' fiftee cent."

It had been a bad business for the Chinaman. He had made another mistake, but he would wreak his vengeance at will now upon the helpless Smart. Hot irons, melted lead, and quicklime were some of the items running through his furious mind, and just when and how he would use them upon his victim. He would have to wait to see if the white pig had many friends, who might make a thorough search, but sailors, as a rule, had no friends at all; they were soon forgotten—then he would go to work.

In the meantime he would place the seaman where the mosquitoes would not trouble him, after first relieving him of any unnecessary valuables he might have upon his despicable person.

Into a filthy den he carried the now insensible Smart, casting him into a foul bunk, which had been used by a smoker of the drug common to the Chinese coolie, and carefully covering him, so that no one would notice the form even should the retreat be discovered. Then

he set about with his helpers to straighten up the shop.

II.

During the period of time Smart spent in serious argument with the august Lee, Bahama Bill fretted and fumed about the deck of the wrecking-sloop, *Seahorse*. Sam and Heldron both came in for a dressing, and both narrowly escaped getting a morning bath, for the big black mate was in a passion at the delay. The steamer from Key West came to the dock, and a form — the unmistakable form of "Fightin' Jule"—stepped ashore, and moved with no uncertain stride in the direction of the *Seahorse*.

Bahama Bill grunted forth anathemas, and sprang into the small boat to gain the wharf before his spouse could intercept him. He felt there might be something doing. When he arrived at the landing he looked up, and gazed right into the eyes of his partner.

"Huccum yo' toe git heah, Jule?" asked Bahama Bill.

"I come wid de boat, suah, nigger. How yo' think I cum—swim? I come toe see just what yo' doin'; why yo' don't come home. I knows yo', Bill, yo' been runnin' wid some trashy nigger gal up heah——"

"It ain't so, Jule——"

"Don't yo' contradict me, nigger. I *knows* you. You ain't sent me all dat money fer nothin'; yo' ain't done it fo' no reason 'cept toe try toe make me think yo' keers fo' me. Don't yo' make me mad."

"But, Jule, I got ter git toe sea right away. I ain't done nothin' but gib up de dough fast as I makes it. Got a cargo ob ca'tridges now abo'd, an' got toe git dem No'th right away. I jest come heah toe see you an' git de partner I got in de deal. I sho' nuff glad toe see yo', Jule."

"Don' yo' gib me none o' yo' foolishness, Bill. I knows yo'. I tells yo' I *knows* yo', an' I'll set right heah tell yo' gits de partner an' gits ready toe go abo'd dat sloop—I wants to see de kind o' partner yo' has. Don' talk toe me. Ef I wasn't a lady, I'd knock yo' blame' haid off. Gwan!"

Bahama Bill was much disturbed, and he went up the street in no pleasant frame of mind. His wife he knew would stay right in sight of the sloop until the sloop sailed, and the indications were she'd want to go along with him. It was very disturbing to a man of the mate's temperament. He went along as a man much occupied with his thoughts, and looked neither to the right or left until he reached the main street. Here he met a sailor from a yacht lying in the harbor, and he asked him if he had seen anything of Smart.

"Yo' knows a yacht feller when yo' see him, I reckon; have yo' seen dat Cap'n Smart?" he said.

"I saw your captain going toward the laundry about an hour ago," said the sailor.

Bahama Bill went into a saloon and took a drink. Where could Smart have gone, except on a drunk, after going to the laundry? He eyed the barkeeper sourly, and asked him if he had seen his sailor partner.

"Sure," said the man of drinks, handing out a square-faced bottle and a glass. "He stopped over across the way to the Chink's—heard something of a fracas going on over in that direction—shouldn't wonder if he beat up the heathen, only that Wah Lee is a corker; a sure winner for a yaller skin."

"What yo' mean?" asked Bill.

"I means that the Chink is a scrapper—kin do 'em up; carries a Gatling gun in his sleeve. He's only here for a few months in the winter. Belongs to the Hip Sing Tong, or some secret society in New York. He's something like Fat Duck, or Bill Puck, or some sech Chink I reads of in th' papers what does up whole theaters full o' them yaller bellies."

"Gimme another drink," said Bahama Bill, meditatively gazing into his empty glass. "It ain't likely Cap'n Smart stayed wid no Chinks, but I goes over dere an' takes a peek, jest fer luck, sah. I suah ain't got nothing agin' no Chink, but I reckon I makes de yaller

boy tell what he knows." And as he finished the gin, he put the glass down carefully and strode forth.

He walked to the door of the laundry, and looked in where the men were now hard at work again ironing, their outfit temporarily repaired, and business going ahead as usual.

Bill looked at the place for a moment, and his trained eye saw marks of combat still upon the walls and shelves, which showed in spite of the new arrangements made.

"Seen a friend oh mine, a sailor man?" asked the mate, peering into the door.

"No see no ones—heap workee, velly busy," replied Wah Lee.

Bahama Bill entered and stuck forth his big, ugly head right close to the Chinaman's.

"You teil me where Cap'n Smart went after cleaning yo' place up, yo' heah?" he said menacingly.

The memory of the fracas was heavy upon Wah Lee. He backed away and drew his big, blue-barreled gun.

"You getee 'way velly quick—see?" he said fiercely.

Bahama Bill reached over like lightning and grasped a Chinaman by the slack of his pigtail, jerking him in front of himself, and seizing him with his left hand, to keep him in place. An iron lay handy, and instantly it was sailing straight for the head of the belligerent Lee.

It caught him full in the neck, propelled with the power of the giant mate's arm, and the Chinaman spun clear across the room, landing limp and insensible.

The big gun failed to explode, and went clattering upon the floor. Instantly Bill sprang for it, and seized its barrel just as a powerful heathen grabbed it by the stock. The mate wrenched it free with a quick jerk, and struck the fellow twice upon the top of his shaved head. Then the whole crowd piled upon him, swarmed up against him, grasping, clinging, gripping for his throat, while a hatchetman made a pass with his weapon, which reached the black man's skull.

Bahama Bill was tough and hard, his head was thick of bone, and, although the hatchet struck him hard enough to kill an ordinary man, the blade glanced off, and cut only a big gash in his scalp. The stars danced before his eyes, and he staggered for an instant, and in that instant the whole gang closed upon him. Then the realization of his predicament dawned upon him, and he let forth a mighty yell, tore loose from the strangling holds upon his neck, and then smashed right into the crowd with the fury of a wounded tiger, the blood from his head pouring over him.

There was a wild mixture of huge black arms, flying forms of pajamaed Chinamen going through the air, and with yell after yell he grabbed and smashed the first that came in his path, tearing up the whole place with the struggle.

He seized an ironing-board and swung it about his head, yelling hoarsely. Then he struck right and left with it, knocking Chinese, gear, and clothes indiscriminately about the room, until there was not the slightest movement to denote life anywhere but in his own mighty frame.

Upon the floor the forms lay about—smashed, stunned, insensible. Then his fury abating, he stopped for a moment to gaze through the haze of blood and dust of conflict. He grinned hideously at the sight, his wound making him grotesquely horrible. Then he was suddenly taken with an idea.

He grasped the cue of a Chink and drew it across the room to that of another, making them fast with a bend. Then he dragged the rest, the whole six, and fastened them to Wah Lee's cue. It made a pile of Chinese aggregating about a thousand pounds in dead weight; and he scanned the mass to contemplate. As he stopped, he was aware of a sound in the partition. He listened for a moment, and thought he heard his name called in a low voice—a voice which sounded far away and indistinct. He roared out a reply, and listened again. Yes, it was the voice of Captain Smart.

The captain was begging him to hur-

ry and get him out of somewhere, and the mate roared out in reply:

"Where is yo'? Where is yo'? How I get thar?" And he ran along the partition, trying to discover a door or other opening. Nothing showed, and, losing patience, he caught up an iron and began smashing the planks. In a few minutes he had broken through into a dark recess, into which he crawled without delay. Something smote him heavily upon the head, and he fell sprawling, lying helpless and half-insensible, while a shrill voice cried out in defiance.

III.

Bahama Bill lay dazed and dizzy for a long time; probably ten minutes. Then he was aware of Smart's voice cursing furiously and calling for help. The huge mate slowly gathered himself, managed to rise to his knees, and, as he did so, the light which now shone through the gap in the partition showed him a slight girl standing over him with an ax. She had evidently struck him as he came through the bulkhead, and only her youth and frailness had prevented the blow from finishing him. He now saw she was about to repeat the operation, and he quickly snatched the weapon from her, and drew her to him.

"What fo' yo' hit me?" he asked, angrily.

"You velly bads mans—go away!" screamed the child.

Bill searched the surrounding gloom with a quick, comprehensive glance, and noticed a form lying in a bunk covered with a cloth. He made his way to it, and uncovered the prostrate form of Smart, securely bound, but not securely gagged. The sailor could only use his tongue, but he did use that member to its fullest extent, while he told quickly of the way he had run up against Wah Lee. Then the sight of Bahama Bill's head caught his gaze, and he made a wry face. The giant mate was like a black fury with his marks of combat upon him.

"This child is a wife of that rascal," said Smart, explaining the little girl's presence in such a place. "She's about twelve years old, and his property—his slave, I suppose you would call it. He keeps her in here, where no one can ever see her, and she thought you were some fellow going to harm her when she struck you with the ax. I tried to tell you as you came through, but couldn't make you hear—that's better, now cut loose my feet." And the mate passed his knife through the cords, setting him free.

"I sho' feel some ashamed toe think yo' dun up by dese Chinks," said Bill, as Smart rose from the filthy bunk. "Yo' ain't much hurt?"

"Not hurt at all—not like you," said Smart impatiently.

"Dat clip was jest accident—shuah, shuah. Dey ain't hurt me none toe speak of—only a little blood. But dat kid gal cum near killin' me wid dat ax. I ain't quite through yet. Come along into the room where dey lays."

They took the child with them, and crawled through the bulkhead. One of the wounded men upon the floor had recovered his senses, and was busily at work trying to loosen his cue as Bahama Bill stepped up. A jolt with his foot stopped operations for the time, and Smart stood contemplating the victory.

"What'll we do about it?" asked the yachtsman.

"Doe? I jest reckon we'll take de whole bunch abo'd de ship. We'll need some extra hands toe make de passage quick. We got toe git a move on, fo' we got toe git dat stuff up toe catch de steamer at Jacksonville. Dere's a cyart right in dat co'ner, sah. Help me pile 'em in."

Smart, still furious from the treatment he had received, lent a willing hand, and in a few minutes they had the whole bunch of Celestials dumped in the cart and made secure.

"What'll we do wif dat little gal?" asked Bill, eying the child. "She ain't all Chink, by de looks; reckon she's a half-breed."

"We'll have to take her with us," said Smart, and so they started out of the

shop, pushing the cart with the Chinese before them; and they attracted no attention for some minutes, for the affrays had been little noticed, as there had been no gun-fire.

"Hold on, let's get the clothes," said Smart, running back into the doorway and grabbing what bundles he could reach handily, and which had still been left intact from the whirlwind passage of the giant mate. He tossed them into the cart, and they went rapidly down to the dock.

Some small boys and one or two loafers followed, wishing to see the fun, but no one molested them or inquired their purpose. They reached the water side without mishap. Fighting Jule was sitting there waiting for her lord to show up, and she was in anything but a sweet humor. The sight of the little Chinee girl made her alter her purpose to assault her huge partner, and she inquired briskly into details.

"Yo' take de kid an' keep her till we git de crew abo'd," said Bill, with the first approach at gentleness in his voice.

Jule took the child. She was motherly, matronly, and affectionate, though a fighter. Her own progeny were safe at Key West, and this little yellow girl, this Chinese, appealed to her curiosity and motherhood alike. She gathered her in her arms and looked her over in wonder, while the men lowered their victims into the small boat.

"Huccum yo' toe be wif dem Chinks—is yo' de little pickanniny ob dat Wah Lee man?" she asked.

"Me Wah Lee's wife," said the child, crying.

"Yo' stop tellin' 'me lies, lil' gal; yo' ain't nothin' but a baby."

"Me Wah Lee's wife. He bought me last moon. Velly bad mans takee Wah Lee away; veily bad mans takee me." The child spoke remarkably well for a Chinese.

A crowd of loafers had now been attracted by the unusual proceedings, and, in spite of the apathy of the Florida cracker, they managed to excite some wonder as to what the men of the *Seahorse* were about. In less time than it takes to tell it, Bahama Bill and Smart had the Mongolians aboard, where Sam and Heldron were instructed to look after them, and see that they went to work as soon as they were recovered sufficiently to do duty.

In less than five minutes the *Seahorse* was standing down the channel out to sea. Sam and Heldron lost in amazement at the turn of affairs. Some of the loafers on the dock shouted out something, but they made no reply, and in a few minutes were beyond hailing.

"De boat leaves fo' home at six—I reckon you'll hab toe cum wif me," said Jule, leading the little girl away and gazing angrily after the *Seahorse*. "If I wasn't a lady I'd suah knock dat coon in de haid," she added. "I dun paid er dollar an' a half fo' toe git heah, an' now I got toe go home—come."

IV.

"I reckon I'll change mah clothes en clean up er bit," said the mate, after they rounded the point and stood away northward.

"So will I," said Smart. "Better open up the clothes I brought and get some clean ones."

Several of the shanghaied men were now able to get about, and Sam took them in charge. Wah Lee gazed about him dizzily, but made no comment. Heldron had passed his knife through his cue, cutting it off close to his head, in order to loose him from the bunch. He looked angrily at the sailor, and felt his strange-looking pate with a rueful hand.

"You heap sabbee workee," said Sam. "Git busy, you dam' Chink." And he helped the truculent Tong leader to his feet with the toe of his sea-boot.

The fight was pretty well worked out of Wah Lee, for he obeyed as best he could, glancing with narrowing, wicked eyes at the sailor. Lines were coiled up at the direction of the two men, and in less than half an hour Sam and Heldron were lying at ease, hurling directions at the bunch of Celestials, who endeavored to obey orders.

Bahama Bill washed his wounded

head, which ached sorely. Then he sought clean clothes from the bundles brought from the laundry. By some chance Smart had gotten hold of nothing save female apparel; but one bundle happened to contain several pairs of pajamas; and, as the weather was quite warm, he donned a suit and came on deck. Bahama Bill had no recourse but to do likewise. He jammed his huge limbs into a pair of the loose trousers, which came to his knees. This appeared not so bad, for he was used to going barefooted. The loose coat covered him, the sleeves reaching to his elbows; and thus attired he, also, came on deck to take a look around.

The recalcitrant Wah Lee looked lugubriously at the black mate.

"Where you takee me?" he asked. "Where you go?"

"Toe China, toe de land ob Chinks," said Bahama Bill lugubriously, scowling at his former adversary. "Git out de shears, Sam; an' yo', Heldron, git out de line toe make de Chinks fast."

"What for you do?" asked Wah Lee.

"Me showee you, me showee you," snarled Bahama Bill. "Is yo' good barber, cap'n?"

"I reckon I can cut the hair fairly well," assented Smart.

"De razzer ob mine is in de locker, toe de right," suggested Bill.

Wah Lee was quickly tied fast and his hair cut close. Then a lather was made, and before many minutes his head was shaved as clean as a fairly good razor could shave it.

"Next!" called Bahama Bill, in the tone of a barber.

All went through the same operation, two of the pigtails being kept as souvenirs of the occasion. The débris was thrown overboard.

"Now yo' Chinks git out de soap an' de water—show 'em where dey is kept, Heldron—an' I wants toe see dis hear ship washed fo' an' aft—see? Heap sabbee? I wants toe see dis hear ship come inter Jacksonville lookin' like a yacht; lookin' like she was something toe be proud ob. Git toe work!"

The wind held fair, and for two days the *Seahorse* ran up the coast, making six or seven knots, raising the jetty off the bar the third day out. The sloop had been scrubbed alow and aloft, her decks rubbed white, her spare sails even scrubbed clean, and she looked good to a nautical eye as she rounded the sea-buoy and stood up the St. John's River for town.

The inhabitants of Mayport and Pilotown were treated to the novel sight of a heavily built sloop manned by a crew large enough for a four-master, the officers uniformed in bright-colored pajamas, which fitted not at all, and the larger part of the hands distinctly Mongolian. The customs officer stopped her and boarded her without delay.

"Where do you come from—China?" asked the official, in amazement.

"Yo' surely ain't forgot de ole *Seahorse*, Marse Hennery," said Bahama Bill, coming on deck and recognizing an old acquaintance in the boarding officer. "We got a consignment ob ca'tridges—American ammunition—here's de papers, an' de crew we shipped in a hurry, without gittin' time toe sign 'em on in regular shape; but dey is all right; dey belongs right in dis hear State."

As it is not necessary to sign on hands in small vessels coasting unless there is especial reason for it, the officer left without further remark, and the *Seahorse* proceeded on her way.

The steamer for New York was at the dock, and would not sail until after dark. There was plenty of time to make the consignment and get the bill of sale through. The unruly crew were kept at work hoisting out cases of ammunition until all was aboard the steamer. Then the ship was washed down and gear put in place, and the *Seahorse* looked almost like a pleasure craft.

"I will give you a thousand dollars for her," said a shipper who had been attracted by the strange uniforms and crew.

"Make it fifteen hundred," said Bahama Bill.

"She will never be in better condition to sell," cautioned Smart, who felt as though losing an old friend.

They finally compromised on twelve

hundred, and, as Captain Sanders showed up before dark, dead broke and very thirsty, he was more than willing to get cash for his share. The deal was made, the money paid, and the Celestial crew were at last allowed to go ashore.

Wah Lee made for the depot with his followers. He had no thought for seeking redress by the aid of the authorities, for, with the Tong men, the foreign pigs are always dealt with personally. There were plenty of Chinese who ran laundries in Jacksonville who could be levied upon to produce the railroad fare to get him and his gang back to their place of business.

With new clothes and rigged out splendidly, all hands left the dock long before darkness set in. Smart had a receipt for his share of the salvaged ammunition, and the feeling that he had several thousand dollars was not distasteful to him. His cruise on the wrecking-sloop had been successful, and it was with a somewhat mixed feeling he said good-by to the big black mate.

"Good-by, cap," said Bahama Bill. "I suah like yo', an' yo' shuah done well wif me—good-by. Mebbe we kin make a new deal some day. Dere's plenty ob money wracking, ef yo' know how toe wrack right. Mebbe Sanders an' us kin go inter de business right, and git a bigger ship. Let me heah from yo'."

"I certainly will," said Smart. "Good-by." And the giant fingers of the mate of the *Seahorse* closed upon his own with their firm, solid grip.

Late that night a sheriff came rapidly down the dock to where the steamer was just pulling out.

"Seen anything of the sloop *Seahorse*?" he asked several bystanders.

"Thar she lays—right at the dock," said the watchman of the wharf.

"Ah!" He smiled grimly.

"You want the crew?" asked the watchman.

"I certainly do that," said the sheriff. "There's a bit of a charge of kidnaping against the mate and captain. Ran off with a whole lot of Chinks from below. They are aboard, I suppose?"

"That sloop was sold out hours ago, the crew gone, and the whole thing settled before five o'clock. It ain't likely you'll come up with the men you're after in this town. No, sir, they don't belong here—good night." And the watchman grinned as the sheriff, after gazing down at the deserted vessel, sadly went his way.

At the station Bahama Bill looked up to the window where Smart sat in the train. He felt the parting with the keenness often developed in the African character, and he was loath to leave until the train pulled out.

"Good-by ag'in, cap; good-by," he called up to him as the train gathered headway slowly.

Sanders stood near, and, not knowing the friendship between the two, was a little disconcerted at the mate's warmth.

"Come on, we take the train going the other way, Bill," he said, as the mate waved his hand.

"Suah, suah. Good-by, cap—— He was all right, Sanders; dat yacht feller was all toe de good. I ain't got but one t'ing agin' him."

"What's that?" asked Captain Sanders.

"Well—er—er, well, I cayn't hab de highest regard fo' his—well, sah, I don't know jest how toe say it, but he sho' never ought toe been dun up by dem Chinks—dat's all."

He put his hand into his pocket and drew forth two handsomely braided cues.

"Yo' see dese heah? Well, I'se gwine toe make a nice dog-whip ob dem fo' mah little boy Will toe play wif." And he stroked their satin length approvingly as he boarded the cars for home.

The Fortunes of Geoff

By K. and Hesketh Prichard
Authors of "Don Q.," "Roving Hearts," Etc.

XI.—ORDERS TO KIDNAP

(*A Complete Story*)

FOR six months Geoffrey Heronhaye had been with the insurgent army, a wild, unshaven unit with a rifle slung across his shoulders, sleeping in horse-blankets, and cooking his food over a series of open camp-fires. At first these camp-fires had been built among the almost inaccessible forests of the Andes, but later, week by week, they crept down the slopes and over the country as the insurgents began to make head. Then suddenly came the turning-point of the war, and after that the tide of victory rolled across the plains until it surged against the walls of Santa Marta itself. And, as every day success became more pronounced, Geoff saw in operation one of those subtle changes which act as a natural law in certain latitudes.

Noiselessly as a mist creeps over a countryside, transforming the whole aspect of the scene, so ample clothing and good weapons grew up over the rags and rust of the insurgent forces as they pushed on their way to the capital.

"*Buenas dias,* Señor Capitan," said a sonorous voice upon the threshold of Geoff's quarters.

Geoff tightened his lips to prevent a smile. He was no more used to his new rank than to the greenish uniform and, the alas! cheap gold lace which supported it. On the strength of three years in the yeomanry of his country, and the service which he had rendered to General Fratilis, the ladder of promotion was set at an easy angle to his feet, so that he found himself at once in possession of a captain's commission in the Army of Bovador, that carried with it pay to the nominal amount of some three hundred dollars a year. Geoff stood up and saluted. Colonel Mochuelo waved a gracious hand.

"As I prophesied," he said, "the ministry of war has not been long in recognizing your merits. You have been recommended for special service, and I am to have the pleasure of accompanying you to the Gran Plaza, that you may receive your instructions from his excellency's own lips. The president has appointed nine o'clock as the hour. Come, señor, let us be going."

Geoff followed the colonel's stocky figure into the street, where the two men mounted under the glimmer of electric lamps, and were soon making their way through the crowd of people, who, Spanish fashion, were taking the air in the Plaza.

The city was one whose up-to-dateness was not to be denied. Where forty years before the wandering gaucho camped, casinos and restaurants now shone out upon the darkness, and where wild horses had roamed, electric-cars carried their loads of parti-colored humanity, and awoke the South American night with their querulous clatter.

Indeed, it was these material evi-

dences of prosperity which had caused Geoff to accept his commission in the army of the republic. In that army he found, almost for the first time, that he possessed a quality beyond his physical strength and skill which could be turned to gold. This quality was his honesty.

As the horses picked their way across the Plaza Colonel Mochuelo kept silence, but now and then he glanced searchingly at the face of the man beside him. Geoff was somewhat at a loss to account for the interview about to be accorded to him. The president of a South American republic may be very small potatoes at Washington or beneath the shadow of the historic families of Europe, but in his own land one realizes that he embodies the supreme authority in a singularly convincing manner. Oddly enough, the electric-cars as they flashed by somehow impressed Geoff with the importance of President Sagastin.

They rode through the presidential gateway, and Mochuelo sent up their names. They were admitted almost at once, and found the president seated before a large desk, while on a side-table steamed three cups of coffee. He was a well-featured, pursy little man, with some slight likeness to Napoleon, a fact which led him to model his dress, attitudes, and habits upon those of his famous prototype. And this constituted perhaps the only human weakness of which he could have been accused.

Geoff was formally introduced, and Sagastin acknowledged him by a brief salute, then he began pacing up and down the room.

"Colonel Mochuelo has probably told you, Captain Hay," said the president in English, "of the commission which I wish you to undertake in company with himself."

"No," interrupted Mochuelo obsequiously; "I left that to your excellency. The honor of receiving his orders from your lips will unquestionably make our good captain here strive the more energetically to fulfil them to your excellency's satisfaction."

Sagastin met the colonel's suavities with a frowning side glance. Then, thrusting his hand into the breast of his frock coat, he drew up in front of Geoff.

"It is possible that you have never heard of Manuel Voruba?"

"I have heard the name of General Voruba a great many times," replied Geoff, with an unconscious smile.

"General Voruba?" cried the president. "There is no longer any General Voruba! On my accession to power he lost his rank; he was formally degraded."

Geoff bowed. Sagastin turned abruptly to the side-table, and, true to the impersonation he affected, swallowed one of the cups of coffee. Then he put another question.

"Have you ever seen the man?"

"No, your excellency."

"That does away with the danger of his recognizing you. Good. Tell Señor el Capitan of Voruba."

"You must know," said Mochuelo, "that Voruba fled from Santa Marta as we entered the city."

"Only just in time—just in time!" cried Sagastin, with a sigh. "As our conquering arms marched into the Plaza the smoke of the steamer in which he escaped was yet visible. Even now he is scheming a culminating injury to the country which he and his confederates have pillaged. I look to *you* to make this impossible!" He wheeled round on Geoff.

"To me, your excellency?"

"Yes! Attend carefully to my words. At the moment of his flight, this Voruba was about to conclude a contract by which he consigned a heavy proportion of the customs duties of Bovador to a German company. Our arrival prevented the consummation of this betrayal. Before the document was signed my predecessors in the government had fortunately fallen from power." He paused, but neither of his hearers spoke. "I hardly like to suggest that any individual who held high office in Bovador could be guilty of the crime which I believe is in the mind of Voruba. In his character of vice-president he in-

tends (for value received, of course) to sign this document."

"But he no longer has the authority," objected Geoff.

A hard smile flickered over the features of Mochuelo. "It is always possible to postdate," he remarked.

"Your own acuteness," added the president, "will enable you to forecast the trend of events. Provided with this document, the German company will appeal to their fatherland to back them in enforcing its fulfilment, and the resources of Bovador will be crippled for a decade."

"But Voruba has already been gone for some days, perhaps the signature——"

The stout little potentate held up his hand. "I have taken precautions. We have succeeded by some little manipulation of police matters in hindering the departure of Herr Busch, the head of the German company. As I told you, the terms of the contract had not been quite concluded. You, Señor Capitan, have been recommended to me as an honest man and an experienced soldier. Do not deny it. If you feel that my words place you higher than your deserts, you can easily put all that right by the manner in which you carry out the affair in hand. I will not conceal from you that it will call for great qualities of acumen and resource. If you accomplish it with success, you will find that the republic under my rule knows how to be grateful to her servants."

"Where is Voruba to be found?" inquired Geoff.

"I have received information that he has reached Montevideo. I know what idea will occur to you, but we have no time to wait for an extradition warrant. Herr Busch cannot be longer delayed. As for you, you must break the law to serve it. Your instructions are simple. You must find Voruba, and bring him back with you." Sagastin drank his third cup of coffee at a gulp. "I am no friend to violent measures, yet I cannot conceal from myself that in high politics they occasionally become necessary."

A short silence ensued, then the president added, as if by an afterthought: "Colonel Mochuelo will be with you, to aid you."

Mochuelo intimated that he laid himself at the feet of Bovador and—President Sagastin.

"As you both know," said the president, "it has long been the custom of Bovador to reward her faithful servants with herself. In other words, to grant them handsome concessions. Should you return successful, señores, fifty square miles of land in La Prévosa wait for each of you to take possession. But in case of only one of you returning with Voruba, to him will be given the double share. You comprehend?"

"Perfectly, your excellency." Mochuelo's eyes glittered.

"Remember, then, señores, that document must never, for our country's sake, be signed," repeated Sagastin, as he dismissed them.

When that ardent patriot, Colonel Voruba, flew from the warm nest of power he had not much idea of direction; his one desire was to leave his ungrateful country far behind. Fratilis was coming with the insurgent forces, and Fratilis was a man whom Voruba disliked in a very marked degree. He had had experience of him, and of his methods. It was not so very long since he had undertaken, or to put it more accurately, public opinion had forced him to undertake, an expedition against Fratilis in his mountain stronghold. From that expedition Voruba had returned with a tattered credit, with his digestion temporarily ruined, and the deep graze of a bullet upon his cheek.

This last was his only asset. On the strength of it he posed as a man of indomitable courage. But when the guns of Fratilis began to be heard in Santa Marta, Colonel Voruba incontinently made preparation for flight.

For a week he slept aboard a steamer which had been chartered by the government to bear its highest officials out of the danger zone; thus, just as the victorious army was entering the western gate, the steamer threw off her

moorings from the wharf below the white convent on the cliff, and melted away into the ocean blue, arriving presently in the roads outside Montevideo, where, at the mouth of the brown La Plata River, she finally decanted her precious cargo.

Voruba and his fellow ministers dined together for the last time, after which they drank the health of their unhappy country before each departed to the Mecca of his ambitions. Three went to Paris and one to Buenos Ayres.

Voruba alone remained behind. He regretted the necessity which kept him in Montevideo, but remain he must, for the business which he had to transact with the head of a German company was of a kind that can only be transacted man to man. So Voruba stayed on in Montevideo awaiting the advent of Herr Ludwig Busch, and longing for the day which should find him at last environed by the securities of Europe.

In Montevideo, Voruba found himself by no means friendless. Although for excellent reasons he could not mix in those diplomatic circles he was fitted to adorn, he accepted the hospitality that two or three of his exiled compatriots extended to him.

It happened that at the house of one of these gentlemen, who had formerly been chargé d'affaires at more courts than one, he met with an American lady, ostensibly traveling in search of health, but whose chief aim in life was to see or to hear some new thing.

A former minister of a subtropical republic, hot with escape from the clutches of the victorious revolutionists, offered her great entertainment.

Voruba found her the type of acquaintance most suited to his taste, for she possessed not only wealth, but also all the qualities of a sympathetic and admiring audience: before her he posed to his heart's content as patriot and warrior.

Such was the position of affairs when Geoffrey Heronhaye and Mochuelo landed in Montevideo. Geoff soon found that his comrade inherited all the South American aptitude for intrigue. In a couple of hours he had gathered, from one quarter or another, as much information as was needful of Voruba's present mode of life.

It may have been merely the force of habit, or it may have been an intimate knowledge of Bovadian methods, which dictated his policy of extreme caution; in any case, the excellent colonel managed to live consistently in the very midst of his kind.

When he walked abroad he never forsook the principal streets; for the rest, he passed his time in the patio of one of the leading hotels much frequented by travelers of the better sort. He refused all invitations to houses which were situated at any distance from the city. It seemed impossible to catch him in that solitude which was essential to the plans of the emissaries from Bovador.

The precise nature of their plans were simple enough. They hired a small steamboat, and kept her waiting in readiness while they watched for a chance to kidnap Voruba.

Later, Mochuelo learned a further particular which interested them not a little. Voruba had been making inquiries as to the date of arrival of the next mail-steamer from Brazil. When Mochuelo and Geoff arrived in Montevideo she was due in three days, and most certainly among her passengers she carried Herr Busch, hurrying to his postponed interview.

The first day of the three was spent in amassing information; on the morning of the third Geoff and Colonel Mochuelo breakfasted together in an unfashionable suburb, and fully discussed the affair in all its aspects. Mochuelo hinted that his part was done, and that the initiative now lay with Geoff.

"You comprehend, señor, that Voruba knows me by sight?" he said. "Whereas, not only has he never seen you, but he will not even suspect you, owing to your nationality. Therefore, little as I like to leave to you the supreme honor of arresting him, it is a case in which I must put my country first and my own inclinations second."

"Exactly. Am I to gather that you have some scheme of action to propose?"

"I confess I have. May I inquire if you happen to have noticed a white yacht, the *Vashti,* in the roads? She came in this morning."

Geoff nodded.

"It is the yacht of Lord Galtron; and Voruba, with a couple of friends, has accepted an invitation to dine on board this evening. His reliance lies in the fact that the yacht is an English one, and he has prompted his companions to insist that Galtron's boat shall not only come ashore to fetch them, but also that, after dinner, his men shall escort them back to the very door of the hotel."

"As he has taken so many precautions, the old difficulty remains. Even if I could carry him off from the middle of these people, there would be an uproar, and that is precisely what we wish to avoid," said Geoff.

Mochuelo bowed with a flattering smile. "I imagined it to be not impossible that this English lord might be a friend of yours—no? Then an acquaintance? You also are of the aristocrats of England, is it not so?"

"Suppose I knew something of Lord Galtron; how would that help me?"

"You could, with some small trouble, make yourself of the party. In the darkness of the streets or in the boat—*anything might happen.*" Mochuelo brought out the last three words in a slow tone.

A sudden spark glowed in Geoff's green eyes. "I will not pretend to misunderstand you, Colonel Mochuelo."

"One moment, caballero, before you grow angry. I suggest simply that you should carry out the commission you undertook to perform."

"Pardon me, President Sagastin's instructions did not go so far as assassination."

Mochuelo shrugged his shoulders as he reminded himself that hypocrisy was the ineradicable weakness of the British character. "I would bring to your recollection that his excellency expressed his dislike of violent measures, but regretted that in matters of high policy they sometimes became unavoidable. Those words bear but one interpretation to the true Bovadian," he said, with an air which proclaimed that he placed himself at the service of his country even to the laudable extreme of murder.

Geoff's reply was short—he hinted that he retained a few insular prejudices. After this the relations between the two emissaries were a little strained. But Colonel Mochuelo found himself to be no match for Geoffrey Heronhaye; his cunning gave way before the other's fixed purpose, so that the earlier plan was agreed upon. Mochuelo pointed out the difficulties which developed at every stage of the kidnaping plot: he declared himself to be overwhelmed by them: he harked back with sighs to the easier scheme. But in vain, for there he came in contact with a will far stronger than his own.

"If you are unable to capture Voruba before to-morrow morning," he cried at last, driven to the wall, "you will permit a young nation to be destroyed rather than sacrifice a mere scruple."

"I will capture him," said Geoff, though he was very far from seeing his way to that end.

For the past ten minutes he had been frowning and thinking: now he stood up, and, nodding to Mochuelo, walked away and boarded a car for the city. Arrived there, he strolled up a clean, steep street toward the wide Plaza, where, in the afternoon sun, the blue-and-yellow dome of the cathedral threw a rich note of color between its twin towers against the glowing sky.

He had lounged half-round the Plaza, when a charming figure crossing in the direction of the cathedral attracted his attention. The girl was dressed in white, and a white parasol hid her face, but the graceful shoulders and gait recalled Gabrielle van Rooven. He had been thinking of her: thinking that if he could but carry through the affair he had in hand, the years of leanness would have passed forever. He well understood the value of the concession of which the president had spoken, and

once it was his own, he felt he could tell Gabrielle that he had become a man of his hands, that he had made a place for himself in the world instead of merely filling one ready prepared for him, as she had implied when he was living a life of ease back in his old home at Yattalis. He had all but carved out his own fortunes: the affair of Voruba alone stood between him and its realization.

On the hardships and disappointments of those past five years he dwelt not at all, but he thought very tenderly of the young girl he had last seen among the cold north lights of her studio. He thought of her battle with straitened means for Art's sake. He wondered if he should ever dare to tell her of those paintings of hers which he had bought during the last three years under a score of aliases, and from as many different corners of the New World.

He laughed softly as he recalled some of the shifts to which he had been put in order to raise the trifling sums to pay for those earlier pictures of hers! Such pitiful little sums! and they had made her glad, prompted the cheery letters in which she had sent him news of "another picture sold . . . it seems too good to be true!" never dreaming that Geoff was himself the very variously named purchaser of the larger number of them! His heart ached in a yearning of love and pity.

Involuntarily his steps had turned after the girl in the white gown. As he gradually overtook her, he noticed those same delicate coquetries of costume which had been adorable in Gabrielle. It was sheer delight to watch her.

She vanished in the gloomy door of the cathedral, and Geoff, deep in his vein of thought, could not resist following. The cool shadows closed about him like a veil; for a moment he saw nothing clearly. When he found his sight again, he was standing on the dark side of a pillar, and not three yards away the vision in white was gazing up at a picture of the Mother of Sorrows. He saw her profile pale against the deep reds of a window, and knew that it was Gabrielle herself. He actually trembled under the shock of his joy, it was so unexpected, so overwhelmingly good to see her again.

Gabrielle looked round uneasily, as if she felt his gaze, frowning a little as she tried to probe the shadows.

"It is really you! What luck!" He strode forward.

A flood of color swept her face from chin to brow, but she met his eager gaze coldly.

"I imagined you were probably a generalissimo by this time in Bovador," she said.

Geoffrey Heronhaye was equal to most occasions, but he failed miserably in this one. The girl's manner did not convey the laughing sarcasm of the old days in Yattalis: the button was off the foil.

"How have I offended you?" he blurted out.

"Offended me?" She lifted her brows a little and smiled. She was complete mistress of herself. "What do you mean? Did you not tell me of the war or harlequinade, or whatever your revolution should be called, in your last letter? I hear your party drove out the other."

"Quite true—in a shower of crackers. It was magnificent," he laughed with her.

"But was it war?" she asked mockingly.

Now it happened that Geoff, in the outpourings of his letters, had given her some of the nobler, more touching stories of the bitter struggle just concluded in Bovador; he had therefore some reason to be surprised, and perhaps a little disappointed.

"As understood in tropical America," he rejoined.

"How can they spare you? Have they no rôle for you?"

"I am a general utility man, that is all."

"You are, of course, returning to your republic? The make-believe atmosphere will attract you," she said.

By this time Geoff had followed her

out of the cathedral, and they were walking down the shady side of a quiet street. He was silent for a minute or two, then he spoke gravely. "Something has happened; will you tell me what it is?"

"I mean to tell you," she answered, with spirit, "or I should not be walking now with you, for after to-day I hope I may never see you again, and certainly I shall never willingly speak to you."

A horrible premonition of the cause of her anger broke suddenly upon his mind. No one could ever tell the happiness it had been to him to undergo toil, starvation, danger, so that he might by any means scrape together the money needed to keep up a regular purchase of Gabrielle's pictures. He hated the thought that any one but himself should possess them, it was true, yet his first desire had been to give her such encouragement and help in her work as he could compass in his wandering life, when poverty bore hardly upon him.

Manlike, in his eagerness to help her, he had not given a thought as to how she might regard the position.

"What have I done to deserve that?" he asked quietly, but he knew he had never felt so frightened in his life.

"Do you know a certain Adams Z. Babcock?" she said. "Or Colonel Manuel Da Costa, of Brazil? Or William Parsley Jones, of Trelew, a wealthy sheep-farmer, with a taste for art? Or T. G. Lascelles, who 'happened' on one of my pictures in Boston? Or Theophilus Bunbury, M. D., of New Orleans? Or the Portuguese person in San Paulo, who was so enamored of my work that he bought two?"

Geoff frowned in spirit. Alas! he knew them all, every one of his carefully chosen aliases, and it hurt him to hear them detailed in her clear, disdainful tones. He could have kicked himself.

"I have no excuse to offer," he said, as she paused.

"I I can imagine no more cruel deception," she went on, her blue eyes blazing; not that Geoff saw them—he could not look her in the face. "I gave you my confidence that day in New York. I had no thought that you would abuse it. How could any one conceive such a thing? I have been, in fact, living on your charity. That is the least of the wrong you have done me, for I can repay you. But the art that I loved, you have embittered that. I fancied, naturally, that I was really advancing in it: that my work—— Oh, I can't speak of it!" Her voice cut him. "Nothing will ever give me back my confidence or my happiness in my work. What pleasure could it be to you to dupe me?"

Geoff listened. What a blind ass he had been! She did well to be angry. No human being could forgive what he, in his inept folly, had done! What did it matter that he had always loved her; that he loved her more than ever now that his own brutal blundering had separated her from him forever?

"I have given up my studio, and I am traveling with my aunt, Mrs. Storey; but in any case I have not heart to work any longer."

"No wonder!" And, after a second, he said again: "No wonder!"

Nothing could have been further from Gabrielle's expectation than this. She had been prepared for excuses, but she was not at all prepared for the stern self-conviction conveyed in the two words.

"How did you find it out—if I may ask?" he inquired presently.

"I went down to my agents one day, and they had had a letter from"—she bit her lip—"from Bertram Featherstonaugh, of Panama. I knew the writing, then I saw some of the other letters." She turned to him. "I hate you!"

"No wonder!" It was all that he seemed able to say, then he raised his hat. "I beg your pardon, God knows, on my knees."

Gabrielle stood still looking after him in sheer surprise. The great square shoulders were set at a new angle, and she knew that if Geoffrey Heronhaye had wounded her, she had wounded him.

"I am glad of it!" she told herself. "I hate—hate him!"

After Geoff left Gabrielle the desire for action came upon him strongly. He was glad the evening promised some excitement. He went down to a store not far from the river front and made a few purchases—a white linen suit, which he foreboded would be uncomfortably small for him, and a yachtsman's cap.

With the parcel under his arm he hurried back to his modest quarters, and at the door ran up against Colonel Mochuelo, who entered with him.

"The Brazilian packet is in the roads. The letters are ashore already, and within the hour Herr Busch will have landed with the other passengers," said that gentleman.

"It is lucky Voruba is dining on the yacht," Geoff replied: "Galtron was to send for him at seven-thirty. But, by some mistake, the man in charge of the boat will call for Voruba a quarter of an hour too soon. You comprehend?"

Mochuelo rubbed his hands. "Excellent."

"You will kindly go on board the *Sanctissima Magdelena* and see that they have steam up to start by eight. And send the ship's boat ashore to the San Julian wharf at seven-fifteen, two men in her, please. I think that is all, colonel."

"I will see to it. *Con Dios, señor.*"

After Mochuelo's departure, Geoff got into the white suit, and, taking up the yachting-cap, set out for the hotel patronized by Colonel Voruba; but on the way he made a circuit to the general post-office, where, after a long delay, two or three letters were handed to him. There was no time left to read them, so, slipping them in his pocket, he set off at a quick pace for the hotel.

A carriage was already at the door, and Geoff, telling his alleged business to the commissionaire, entered the hall, and looked on into the lofty marble patio, to discover the whereabouts of Voruba. In a moment he caught sight of the yellow, bald head and yellow, descriptive hands of the Bovadian, who, seated with his back to the arch, was talking to two ladies under the shade of the drooping palms.

Geoff stood staring. Fate, repenting her late favors, was cuffing him hard now. The two ladies were no other than Mrs. Storey and her niece, Gabrielle van Rooven. For a moment Geoff was staggered. Was it possible to carry out his design now? Of all mischances in the world, this seemed the most unfortunate. For a moment he paused, but only for a moment. He had given an undertaking to bring Voruba back to Bovador, and in honor he must not permit any private concern of his own to interfere with its fulfilment.

He called a waiter and gave his message, which was to the effect that the boat of the *Vashti* was at the wharf, and the boatswain (in this case Geoff himself) was waiting the pleasure of Lord Galtron's guests.

Gabrielle rose at once and drew the wraps round her aunt, to whom Voruba gallantly offered his arm. Geoff was holding open the carriage-door and standing well behind it in the hope of escaping Gabrielle's attention. But her thoughts were elsewhere, and in her usual paleness Geoff thought he read the distress his own misdirected efforts had caused her.

He closed the door and mounted beside the driver, and immediately they were rolling at a rapid pace through the lighted streets.

Arrived at the quay, he found the *Magdelena's* boat; the ladies, with Voruba in zealous attendance, were helped into it, and, giving the order to shove off, Geoff took his place by the steering-gear. It was then that a light from above flashed across his face as the boat's nose swung out into the darkness and Gabrielle recognized him.

A troubled look sprang to her eyes, but they showed no surprise as she turned coldly away.

Ten minutes later they were pulling in under the dark hull of a vessel.

"This is not the *Vashti!*" exclaimed

Voruba, with a note of anxiety in his voice. "What are you doing, you fellow?"

Geoff caught the gangway with his boat-hook.

Mrs. Storey screamed: "There is the name, it is the *Sanctissima Magdelena*. I protest against this! I insist on being taken to the *Vashti!*"

Geoff smiled a little in the dark. "Do not be alarmed, madam," he said, "you will be taken to the *Vashti* quite safely, and not five minutes late for dinner. It is here, however, that General Voruba must go aboard."

The gangway-lantern showed Voruba's face gray with fury and terror.

"To whom does this vessel belong?"

"To the government of Bovador."

Voruba's hand had dived unobtrusively to his pocket, and had not Geoff been ready, he would not have lived to finish the sentence. As it was, the bullet grazed his ear. The same moment Geoff's powerful arms had closed about the Bovadian's fat body, and he was hoisted, as if he were no more than a child, up the gangway and on to the deck above. Mrs. Storey screamed continuously until Geoff stepped softly back into the boat beside her.

"I must apologize for the fright you have undergone. It was unhappily not avoidable," he said.

"Help, help!" shouted Voruba.

Gabrielle answered him. "The moment we reach the *Vashti*, general, I will give the alarm," she called out.

A hand on the back of Voruba's neck grew heavier. "Better advise your friends not to give the alarm for your own sake," whispered Mochuelo in his ear.

"What! Because you are afraid?" snarled Voruba.

"No, because the sea is deep. Tell the girl."

And Voruba did so in a high note of emotion. "I pray you do not give the alarm, señorita, for if I am followed, I—I shall—die!"

Gabrielle looked at Geoff with an expression of horror. "Where are you taking him?"

"I am taking him back to be tried for his crimes against his country."

"Do you dare to do this? Are you not guilty of crimes, also?" Then she spoke her most cruel words: "Why are you leading this life, if you were not driven to it by your own guilt?"

Geoff was stung at last. He understood her well enough. She now taunted him with the old story of cheating long ago at Yattalis, though she could not refer to it openly because of Mrs. Storey's presence.

"You must at least permit me to say that I have never pleaded innocence of any of the sins which have been charged against me," he said.

The dignity of the reply did not touch Gabrielle then, but she remembered it afterward. Now Mrs. Storey was whispering hysterically: "Thank Heaven, Gabrielle, we are leaving this horrible country to-morrow. I shall beg Lord Galtron to start for Patagonia at daybreak."

It was this speech of Mrs. Storey's which rushed back into Geoff's mind, as he read and read again a letter in big, sprawly writing, the writing so often affected by the fashionable young woman of to-day. The letter was from Sophie Heronhaye and made part of his mail that he had not found time to read earlier. The *Sanctissima Magdelena* was already throbbing under his feet.

"Colonel, I am going ashore," he said suddenly to Mochuelo.

"Then we must start without you. It is necessary," replied the other angrily.

"Yes."

"But the concessions in La Prévosa? President Sagastin gave his word that whichever of us brought Voruba back should receive both."

"I recollect that, and I congratulate you on your good fortune."

Machuelo stared. He could not conceive of any man giving up wealth with a smile and a compliment.

"And what shall I say for you to his excellency? What excuse shall I offer to him?"

"Oh!" Geoff shrugged his shoulders. "Urgent private affairs."

The Adventure in the Petticoat Maze

By J. Kenilworth Egerton,

Author of "The Red Golf-cape," "Cleopatra's Necklace," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Tommy Williams, hypnotist and detective, while in Paris, is visited by Arthur Ridgway, a young New York millionaire, whose wife, an ex-circus-rider and the descendant of the royal house of Transylvania, has mysteriously disappeared. Mrs. Ridgway was last seen at the Long Island terminal in New York, but it was learned that she had taken passage in a French liner. Ridgway, accompanied by his child, follows her to Havre, but there all trace of her is lost, and he begs the assistance of Tommy Williams in finding her. A day or two later an attempt to abduct the child is made, but is frustrated by the prompt action of Miss Griscom, a New York girl, who has been employed as nurse. Looking over the genealogy of the Balkan royal families Tommy Williams finds the card of Prince Lubetskoi, brother-in-law of Ridgway, and he suspects that the prince is at the bottom of the mystery.

(In Two Parts.—Part II.)

V.

THE ultimate result of his labors in composition convinced Tommy Williams that Ridgway was correct in his estimate of the influence exercised by the Russian embassy over the Parisian press; an influence probably largely due to the close political alliance between the two countries, and in part to the wise employment of a large secret-service fund.

After an hour's work he produced a newspaper article for which any New York paper would have willingly paid a large price, but he offered it to each of the French morning papers for nothing; giving his own personal guaranty of the accuracy of the facts.

While we were sipping our early coffee the following morning, we went diligently through the copies of every morning paper, and Tommy grinned when we found that none of them contained a word about the affair.

"It looks like labor lost, but all of the people whom we wish to touch up understand English, and I don't believe that the *Herald* and the *Daily Mail* are throwing good stuff into the waste-basket."

He tossed me the Paris edition of the London paper, reserving its American rival for himself, and we exclaimed together as we found his story under double-leaded head-lines the leading feature in each. It was a graphic description of the attempted kidnaping, omitting only the names of the Prince and Princess Lubetskoi, whom it spoke of as relatives of the child; but it was the closing paragraph upon which Tommy counted to draw possible conspirators against Ridgway into the open:

It is suspected that there may have been another motive than kidnaping for this outrage in the heart of Paris. It was known to a few people that the child habitually wore about its neck a small chain to which was attached a medallion of great value and rare historical interest; no less than one of the three miniature icons supposed to have been made during the reign of Constantine and known to have been in the possession of Peter the Great. A small locket was torn with considerable violence from the child's

The first part of this story appeared in the July issue, which can be obtained through any newsdealer. Price fifteen cents.

neck; but fortunately the valuable original had been entrusted, for purposes of verification, to Mr. Thomas Williams, the well-known American artist, who is temporarily occupying a studio on the Boulevard St. Germain, so the thief, if that was his object, met with well-merited disappointment.

"I believe that will make 'em take notice!" exclaimed Tommy triumphantly, when I finished reading it aloud. "Perhaps my old friend the director is correct in believing that the possession of the medallion brings danger; but we are better able to protect ourselves than the poor little kiddy, and I'm willing to take chances."

"Even without a trained nurse to take care of you," I suggested.

His slim white hand gave a little upward twist to the corners of his mustache, but before he could make verbal reply he was interrupted by the entrance of Clancy.

"Sure, ut's hard fer a Christian man to get on in a place where they gives youse only a cup av coffee an' a roll to start th' day's work on," he said, looking disdainfully at our meager breakfast-table. "Th' '*day journey a lar fourflush*' is all to th' good if ut'd come along about seven-thirty, but corn-beef hash an' sinkers wid two hen fruits sunny-side up, is good enough fer me fer a starter."

"You're a long way from the Bowery and the gastronomic customs, and like to be farther if you travel for me, Clancy," answered Tommy, smiling; and the detective laughed.

"Say, Mr. Williams, I'll bet I've got th' name av th' place dead to rights," he exclaimed. "Me an' me grisette was takin' our dinner at wan av thim chop-suey joints where a dago band spiels while youse eats, an' wan av th' guineas broke loose from th' bunch an' butted in. I was fer breakin' his face fer gettin' gay, but he chips in wid talkin' United States an' ut sure sounded so good that I gave him th' glad hand. Me an' him had a few small bottles, an' he told me he had been in America an' made his pile an' was on his way home to blow ut in.

"'Where's that?' says I, an' he got somethin' off his chest that sounded like th' last stages av consumption.

"'Now, where th' devil have I heard thim symptoms before?' says I to meself, an' then I remembered tryin' to practise th' name av th' town youse showed me. He blame near coughed th' head off av him tryin' to learn ut to me, but I was no ways sure till he flashes his passport, an' there ut was with all th' letters av th' tail av th' alphabet, as natural as life."

"Did you see his own name on it as well?" asked Tommy quickly.

"Sure, an' ut was mostly s's an' w's an' z's, too," answered Clancy, grinning broadly. 'Sure, that's too much fer th' likes av' me wid a Christian tongue in me mouth,' says I. 'What do they call youse whin they're in a hurry?'

"'Zeke,' says he; an' says I: 'Zeke ut is, then, an' youse can call me Sarge fer short,' an' we has another small bottle to settle ut."

"Clancy, you didn't let on that you were connected with the police, did you?" asked Tommy anxiously.

"An' me wid no handcuffs in me pocket—no fear!" answered the detective, and Tommy gave a sigh of relief.

"If you had hunted Europe over, you couldn't have found a man whom I want more to get hold of," he said. "We'll cut out the traveling, unless he goes there, but I want you to get hold of him and stick to him like a porous-plaster, and get enough of his confidence to induce him to come here when I give you the word. Find out where and with whom he lives and give me a report of every one he talks to and every place he visits. Do you know where to find him?"

"Sure; we framed it up fer his nibs to put me next to some hot stuff in th' way av dago grub to-day," answered Clancy.

"Just one thing more, then; steer clear of the French police and let me have your reports as often as possible."

"I'm fly," answered Clancy, with a knowing wink. "If I do get pinched mebbe youse'll remember that wan good turn deserves another, an' help me to get out."

Tommy's eyes gleamed with satisfaction when he turned to me after Clancy had started to shadow his new acquaintance, and when the breakfast things had been removed he glanced critically about the studio and arranged the curtains so that the light should be more subdued.

"I should not be surprised by the arrival of almost any visitor, for this fortunate discovery of Zeki is a pretty safe indication that the principal actors in our little drama are still in Paris," he said. "It wasn't at all a bad idea to hide him in the uniform of a Hungarian gipsy musician, but I don't see why he revealed himself to Clancy."

"Unless he is a decoy to keep you busy to allow the others to escape," I answered. "Clancy may think that he has not betrayed his occupation, but a shrewd gipsy is not so easily fooled."

"I have often thought that the easiest way to fool a detective would be to tell him the truth," answered Tommy thoughtfully. "If Zeki is on to him and gets an idea that his knowledge may be harmful to his mistress, I trust that Clancy hasn't omitted his revolver as well as his handcuffs. Those brutes are handy with a knife, and he'd stick him without hesitation."

"And your advertisement of the fact that you have the mysterious medallion is apt to get us blown to kingdom come, so I'm not borrowing trouble about *him*," I replied.

"I'll take jolly good care that we shall go in good company, then!" And Tommy grinned as he tapped the pocket which contained his pistol. "Unless I am guessing incorrectly, the caller who has just rung the bell will use Russian as his native tongue, and"—he interrupted himself to read the card—"as I suspected, his name is Prince Lubetskoi!"

The Russian nobleman who was ushered in was a magnificent specimen of manhood, well over six feet in height, broad of shoulder and deep of chest; but his face, in spite of regular features, clear skin, and an expression which was meant to be agreeable, was not entirely pleasing. There was an indication of cruelty in the straight lips, which were almost concealed by a heavy and carefully trimmed mustache; and the small, sharp eyes set closely together had just the trace of obliquity which recalled the saying that "If you scratch a Russian, you find a Tartar."

He bowed courteously to us, and seated himself in the chair to which Tommy motioned him; the one seat in the studio which was directly beneath the skylight.

"I have ventured to intrude upon you in consequence of an article which appeared in this morning's *Herald*," he said, in English, with only the slightest suspicion of foreign accent. "May I ask, Mr. Williams, if it was correct when it stated that a certain medallion, the property of my brother-in-law, had been given to you for verification of its authenticity?"

"Quite correct, Prince Lubetskoi, in stating that it had been given into my keeping; which was rather fortunate, in view of the determined effort which was made to steal it," answered Tommy; and the Russian inclined his head.

"I am sure that it could be in no safer hands, but if it was given to you for verification, I may be able to be of service to you," he said. "I happen to be very familiar with its counterpart, which is always worn by my imperial master, the czar, and I believe that very few men have had that privilege."

"Then you are undoubtedly aware of the almost superstitious reverence with which these three icons are regarded by the house of Romanoff," said Tommy quietly; and the Russian gave just the slightest start of surprise, which he endeavored to conceal by a forced laugh.

"Every royal house is supposed to have its superstitions, but I know of nothing unusual concerning these medallions," he answered. "They are of exquisite workmanship, as you may have noticed, and have a peculiar religious significance to a member of the Greek church, of which the czar is the head."

"And the face of the Madonna is believed to be a likeness of the consort

of the Emperor Constantine, is it not?" asked Tommy.

Prince Lubetskoi looked at him sharply, a strange gleam coming for an instant to his small, oblique eyes; but they half-closed under Tommy's answering look, and he made a deprecatory gesture with his slender, well-formed hands.

"In Russia it is not always safe to know too much, or to express in words all that one knows," he said significantly. "I will be frank with you, however, and you can judge for yourself that great store is set on these medallions when I tell you that the return of the one which had come into the ownership of the Cluny Museum was the price which France paid for the signature of my imperial master to a certain secret treaty of grave importance."

"And the one in my possession is a far more perfect specimen," insinuated Tommy.

"Ah, Mr. Williams, a private individual is hardly in the same position to exact full value as a powerful nation," answered the Russian quickly, and Tommy smiled.

"But the one I have is not in the market," he answered.

The Russian was apparently absorbed in contemplating the carefully polished finger-nails, and he kept his eyes fixed on them when he spoke.

"Every article—and man—is supposed to have a price," he said significantly.

"And there are exceptions which prove all rules," answered Tommy dryly. "We are talking to no purpose, Prince Lubetskoi. I assure you that I am perfectly familiar with the great importance which your master attaches to the medallion. I know that this particular one has been eagerly sought for by professional collectors, and that it is well understood among them that a fortune would reward the successful one. It has been completely lost to sight for some years, I believe?"

"Something over twenty," assented the Russian.

"I could almost fix the date exactly," continued Tommy. "Shall we say since Sergius of Transylvania lost his throne and life at the same time?"

Lubetskoi's thin lips parted in a smile which disclosed large, regular white teeth, and he lighted a cigarette before he replied.

"Mr. Williams, there are certain subjects which we Russians, who know that half of the island of Saghalien still remains available for purposes of exile, carefully avoid. Whispers might be carried even from Parisian studios, and then——" He smiled and blew a cloud of smoke into the air.

"As I do not expect to place myself in reach of the czar's police, I am not limited by such considerations," answered Tommy dryly. "In refusing your offer of assistance as to verification, I may say that I am absolutely convinced of the authenticity of the medallion. I know that its possession is supposed, by the descendants of Peter the Great, to confer something like a divine right to rulership, and that no matter how completely Russian soldiers may subdue a conquered kingdom, there is uneasiness in the Winter Palace when a possible claimant for the usurped throne retains it. Perhaps superstition replaces conscience in kings and emperors."

"Granting that you possess the original, and that you rate it at its true value, I suppose that you would still be willing to part with it—at a price?" said the prince interrogatively.

"Granting that I owned it, yes—at a price," answered Tommy. "Unfortunately, it belongs to a man to whom money would be no object."

"There are other methods of payment," said Prince Lubetskoi quickly. "Titles, decorations, power——"

"Or the ransom of some one dearly loved," interrupted Tommy; and the Russian looked at him sharply.

"The insinuation is unmistakable, Mr. Williams; but it is totally unjust," he answered. "Had the kidnaping been planned by those whom you suspect, it would not have failed; for failure is fatal in Russia."

"Then the death-rate must be abnormally high," said Tommy curtly. "I

was not referring to the attempted kidnaping."

"As I told you, there are some questions which we do not discuss," said the Russian indifferently. "May I be permitted to examine the trinket about which you have woven such an interesting romance?"

"Which, as you undoubtedly know, is set down at length in several volumes in the National Library," answered Tommy, and Lubetskoi was unable to repress a little start. "Certainly, you may see it—I shall fetch it immediately."

I knew that Tommy had the medallion about his neck, the small chain reenforced by a heavier one of his own to avoid all chance of loss, but he left the studio, closing the door of the bedroom behind him, and was absent for about ten minutes.

During his absence Prince Lubetskoi chatted easily with me, inquiring about people whom he had met in America, and laughing over some of his experiences there; but I was conscious that he was listening intently, and that his sharp eyes were taking in every detail of the studio arrangement.

There was an expression about Tommy's lips and eyes when he reappeared which put me on my guard and prepared me for a dramatic climax to the interview, but Prince Lubetskoi was watching so closely the small leather case which he carried that he had eyes for nothing else. Tommy stood in front of him and handed it over without speaking, and the prince eagerly opened it. As if overcome by the sight of its contents, he half-rose from his chair and gave such a shrill whistle of surprise that it must have been audible on the Boulevard, but he sank back, and the whistle was followed by a muttered oath as he found himself looking into a muzzle of a large-caliber revolver, behind which were two very determined eyes.

"Your signal will not be answered, prince," said Tommy quietly. "When I was out I took the liberty of telling your friends in the hallway that they would not be needed to-day, and saw to it that the outer door was locked after they had taken the hint and departed. Now, unless you want a very sudden end put to your mortal career, just keep your seat and don't take your eyes from the muzzle of this gun, which I might remark is provided with a hair-trigger."

The pistol, held in a hand which was as steady as a rock, approached closer and closer to the bridge of the prince's nose, the oblique eyes watching it until they were crossed; while Tommy's free hand made quick passes over his head.

Perhaps another ten minutes had passed before Tommy stepped back and replaced the pistol in his pocket after gently closing the lids over the staring eyes, leaving the Russian rigid and in a condition verging on catalepsy in his chair.

"A modification of the crystal-gazing method of inducing hypnotism, and a striking proof of my theory that it is the fatigue of eye-strain, rather than the brightness of the object, which causes the cataleptic condition!" he exclaimed triumphantly as he turned to me. "I've wanted to prove that for a long time, but this is the first favorable opportunity which I have had to demonstrate it."

"My dear Tommy, I am too bewildered to appreciate a discourse on hypnotism, but I do want to know the meaning of all this," I objected; but when expatiating upon his pet hobby he was not to be denied, and he went on didactically:

"It has always been thought that a bright object was absolutely necessary to dazzle the eyes, but I suspected that it was more a result of muscular strain, and the employment of a glittering object made it easier to maintain concentration. In this particular case there was no danger of his attention wandering, because he knew that something might come out of that barrel any minute. He was like the child at the photographer's who watches to see the little bird come out of the lens. I've killed two birds with one stone, for I've proved my theory and have this gentleman, who can probably give me some

valuable information, under my hypnotic thumb."

"And through your very arbitrary methods bid fair to get us in the deuce of a scrape, for you can't keep him there indefinitely, and when he comes out there must be a reckoning," I retorted.

"I think we could safely plead that it was a matter of self-defense," answered Tommy dryly. "I wasn't taking any chances, so I investigated the hallway when I left the room, and there were three plug-uglies standing just outside the door who would have made Monk Eastman look like a Sunday-school teacher. If I were not assured of the fidelity of Jacques, the concierge, I shouldn't feel entirely safe, even now."

A knock on the door was quickly followed by the entrance of this same Jacques, who presented a card to Tommy.

"The gentleman has the appearance and the accent of the North," he said apologetically, as he handed over the card. "Following the injunction of monsieur, I have denied him the admittance, but he makes the demand most insistent, and awaits without on the Boulevard."

"And undoubtedly employed other means than moral suasion to induce you to climb the stairs," answered Tommy, grinning. "You can show him up, Jacques, but remember that I am at home to no one else."

The concierge departed, and Tommy tossed the card to me.

"You can look at that, and then tell me whether I am a good guesser or not," he said, as he took the sleeping Russian by the arm and conducted him to a seat in a far corner, pulling a screen in front of him, which effectually concealed him.

On the card was a ducal coronet, and the name "Herzog von Rimnek," which meant nothing to me, and I looked at Tommy inquiringly.

"Perhaps you will admit that we are making progress toward the discovery of the disappearing female, when I tell you that the Duke of Rimnek is no other than Nicholas Lobenski, formerly confidential adviser to King Sergius, and probably later the mysterious 'Uncle Ladislas,' he said, smiling triumphantly, and turned to welcome a man of whom Ridgway had drawn a perfect verbal picture.

VI.

The Duke of Rimnek would have attracted attention in any gathering, for a more distinguished-looking man it has never been my lot to see. The snow-white hair, the telltale wrinkles in front of the ears, and the crow's-feet about the corners of the eyes spoke unmistakably of advanced age: but the eyes themselves, clear, black as night, and as piercing as gimlets: the clear, fresh complexion: the erect carriage: the small waist and elastic step proclaimed as strongly that he retained the physical vigor of youth. In appearance and manner he was *grand seigneur;* but when he spoke he was the man of affairs, accustomed to receiving concise answers to curt questions.

"Mr. Williams, in a morning paper I have read that you have in your possession a most remarkable medallion," he said, after briefly introducing himself. "May I ask if that statement is correct?"

"It is," replied Tommy laconically, and a gleam of satisfaction came to our visitor's dark eyes.

"Will you please show it to me?" he said, the words expressing a request, his manner almost a peremptory command: and, to my great surprise, Tommy shook his head in emphatic negative.

"I am responsible for the safety of the medallion, and it is not on public view," he said, his tone plainly indicating his resentment of the other's imperiousness. "I am not at liberty to show it without permission from its owner, Mr. Ridgway, whom you probably know."

"I have not that honor: but I think that we may take it for granted that the presentaion of my card by my sec-

retary would be all that is necessary," answered the duke impatiently.

"To be quite frank with you, I don't believe that it would," said Tommy quietly. "I believe that Mr. Ridgway would first make inquiries—for instance; he might ask if you were ever known by the title and name of 'Count Ladislas.'" The white eyebrows were elevated just a tritle, and there was a look of inquiry in the eyes beneath them.

"Most certainly I have been: it is one of my minor titles which I invariably use when I am on my Hungarian estate, from which it is derived," he answered.

"And he might further inquire if you lived on that estate until about four years ago, assuming charge of the education of a young woman who was known as the Countess Nelka," continued Tommy imperturbably; and the duke apparently found it no easy matter to maintain his self-control.

"Mr. Williams, there is no use beating about the bush," he said quickly. "I am Nicholas Lobenski, Duke of Rimnek, in Transylvania, Count Ladislas, of Panonia, in Hungary, and possessed of other titles, the naming of which would probably not interest you. In voluntarily giving you information, I do not admit your right to demand it, any more than I admit the right of ownership in the medallion by Mr. Ridgway. In reality it is one of the crown jewels of Transylvania."

"In that case, I should say that its rightful owner was at this moment the czar, who seems to own the country," answered Tommy. "If I had been entirely certain of that, I might have delivered it to his representative, Prince Lubetskoi, who anticipated your demand by an hour."

For a moment the mask dropped from our visitor's face, and what it had hidden was not pleasant to look at.

"Mr. Williams, if you are attempting to play with me, you will find it an unprofitable game," he said in a voice which trembled with passion. "There is much that you cannot understand; but you are entering troubled waters."

"Your grace, there are one or two things which you do not appreciate, also," answered Tommy coolly. "First of all, you are neither in Transylvania nor a remote village in Hungary, and you are not dealing with a peasant or a Tzigane. You are in Paris, where your power is just as much or as little as your personal influence can command, and negotiating with an American who isn't in the slightest degree awed by your rank. I don't intend to risk my life and liberty by mixing up in European politics and intrigues, but for the moment I am in a position where I can make it very unpleasant for new acquaintances of mine who are skating on very thin ice."

"Do you believe the possession of a trinket gives you such great power?" asked the duke sarcastically.

"Knowing something of its history, I don't underestimate its value," answered Tommy. "If I *were* in doubt about it, the fact that a simple notice in the paper brings you, almost treading on the heels of Prince Lubetskoi, to obtain it from me would make me suspicious that it was of importance."

"Possibly that coincidence leads you to believe that it is more valuable than the result would prove," answered the duke in a tone which he attempted to make indifferent, and Tommy looked at him sharply.

"Shall I tell you just how valuable it is?" he asked.

"If you will be so kind."

"I am repeating only what you already know—even so little a thing as an empty promise to return it was worth, shall we say, a duke's ransom?" He kept his eyes fixed on the face of the man in front of him, and it seemed to me that the duke did not find it altogether easy to maintain the half-insolent stare with which he returned that gaze when Tommy went on. "Siberia is a desolate place, and the dungeons of St. Peter and Paul even worse, my dear duke. A man would promise much to escape from either."

The duke shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "A promise extorted under duress is not always binding."

Tommy looked at him contemptuously. "I should hesitate to negotiate with any one whom I thought capable of pleading the baby-act."

The Duke of Rimnek smiled again. "My dear sir, for a cause much is permissible which would be dishonorable to gain a private end. Suppose that we admit the truth of your insinuation; do you think that I was actuated solely by my desire for liberty in making that promise?"

"Being a Yankee, I shall answer your question by asking one," said Tommy. "Does a 'cause' make it permissible to entice away the wife of another man?"

"It would make it allowable to deliver a message from a suffering and oppressed people, by the man who had devoted his life to making a woman fit to rescue them," was the duke's proud retort. "There are some things which an American cannot understand, Mr. Williams."

"And which he does not care to," added Tommy dryly. "Now I shall tell you just where we stand. You, or your agents, have enticed Mrs. Ridgway from a happy home on the plea that it is her duty to return to a people who haven't the courage to fight for themselves. The only possible chance of success is to work on the superstitious fears of a feeble-minded autocrat, and to do that the possession of this medallion—to which he attributes almost supernatural powers—is absolutely necessary. When it was entrusted to her she was impressed with the belief that it did in fact possess great power as an amulet; so that she followed her maternal instinct and tried to cast its protection over the child whom she deserted. No blow has been struck for the liberty of Transylvania, for her advisers know that it would be hopeless without the influence of the amulet on the czar. I believe that you will admit that my statement is correct."

"I admit that until we obtain the medallion the difficulties will be greater," answered the duke slowly.

"And I will tell you frankly that the only way you will ever get that medallion is to bring Mrs. Ridgway to this studio to demand it," said Tommy positively.

For a moment the duke looked at him as if he were mentally estimating the chance of success in physical attack, and then he laughed contemptuously.

"The Princess Stephanie will hardly condescend to that. It is apparent that the Americans do not honor rank."

"I was speaking of Mrs. Ridgway, who—since the wife takes the nationality of her husband—is an American woman," replied Tommy quietly, but I appreciated that the Duke of Rimnek was narrowly skirting trouble.

"A morganatic marriage is of small consequence," said the duke, as he rose from his seat. "I can assure you that you are carried away by an undue sense of your own importance, and that you are interfering in affairs which are above you. I have the honor to wish you good day."

Tommy walked to the door and placed his back against it.

"Stop, sir. You came here uninvited, but now you shall wait until you have heard me out. For your own safety I don't care a hang, but for the happiness of my friend Mr. Ridgway I care much—so much that I wish to see it restored and not shattered by the knowledge that his wife is in a living tomb in Siberia. I warn you that unless you give me the opportunity to have five minutes' talk with her, you will find me no mean opponent to your schemes, and you will never lay hands on the medallion."

"There is no necessity for melodrama." And the duke motioned for him to stand away from the door. "All of my life I have lived in the midst of danger, so I am not to be frightened by idle threats. I fear that we cannot serve each other, Mr. Williams."

Tommy hesitated for a minute, and then stood away from the door.

"You know that I am handicapped by fear of harming Mrs. Ridgway—a consideration which probably does not influence your plans—but there is an old

proverb which avers that there are more ways of killing a cat than choking it to death with cream."

The duke smiled sarcastically; but had he known Mr. Thomas Williams as well as I did, the answering grin on that gentleman's face would have given him cause for uneasiness. He bowed ceremoniously to each of us, and walked out, Tommy carefully closing the door behind him.

"Perhaps his nibs is the only real thing in the way of conspirators; but if I don't show him a new wrinkle or two in the game before I have finished with him, you can write me down a jackass," he said, as he moved the screen from in front of the sleeping Russian. "My chance shot hit the mark; Ladislas bought his freedom by promising to return the medallion; but, as I suspect that this delegate knows the full inside history of things, I shall proceed to pump it out of him."

For the next hour Prince Lubetskoi was rigorously put through the hypnotic third degree, and as I listened I was more and more impressed by the absolutely correct conclusions at which Tommy had arrived.

Lubetskoi had the history at his fingers' ends; his father had commanded the troops which subdued Transylvania, and he himself had been entrusted by the czar with the direction of the search for the missing medallion. In the hypnotic trance the affectation of loyalty dropped from him, and he cynically portrayed his imperial master as he was—a weak, bigoted man, living in perpetual dread of assassination and the easy dupe of spiritualistic mediums, fortune-tellers, and charlatans. The miniature icon meant everything to him: not only because of the Romanoff tradition, which made it a badge of supreme authority and its possessor sacred, but because a fortune-teller — probably introduced at court through the plotting of Ladislas —had predicted that it would be instrumental in restoring the kingdom of Transylvania to its rightful rulers.

The prince acknowledged the truth of Mrs. Ridgway's story. She was, in fact, the daughter of Sergius, and, if her brother was dead, the heir to his rights and honors. It was by the order of the Russian Government, which never forgets and has its spies and agents everywhere, that she had been kidnaped in Roumania, but believing her powerless so long as they retained the arch-plotter Ladislas, she was liberated.

Her departure from America after her marriage was reported, and the meeting with the gipsies at the Austrian frontier was arranged by the czar's agents, who through the old woman conveyed a mysterious warning of impending danger as coming from Ladislas. She was warned to keep all knowledge of it from her husband, unless she was willing to involve him in it, and to induce him to return immediately to America. When she eloped St. Petersburg was notified, and now the frontier was so carefully watched that any attempt to enter Transylvania would be followed by arrest.

On only one point he was not entirely clear, the fate of the son of Sergius. It was reported that he had been killed, but rumor had it that he was still alive, his identity hidden under the name of the Russian soldier into whose family he had been adopted.

Tommy smiled mischievously when he elicited this piece of information, and he made a critical examination of the Russian's face.

"The surest way to make Mrs. Ridgway valueless to Ladislas would be to resurrect the missing heir," he said. "If there is going to be a queen in the Ridgway family, I think I'll let the princess take a shot at it. Stand by, now, for I'm going to wake him up, and he may try to prove that he is a Tartar, before I convince him that he is the long-lost heir."

He allowed no time for argument, for he immediately commanded the prince to awaken, which he did with a start, and looked about him confusedly.

"It's all right, Prince Lubetskoi," said Tommy soothingly. "You are too much a man of the world not to know when things are coming your way. My

proceedings have been irregular, but they have prevented you from being made a catspaw."

"You have succeeded in making a fool of me!" exclaimed the Russian, starting to his feet, but when Tommy pointed his finger at him he collapsed.

"Your imperial master saved me that trouble," he said quietly. "It was worthy of Russian diplomacy to set Prince Alexander Gregoravitch, the rightful King of Translyvania, the task of recovering the medallion which proved his claim."

"But that duty was entrusted to me!" protested Lubetskoi feebly.

"Precisely, and you have been kept in ignorance of the fact that you are not the son of General Lubetskoi, but the son of Sergius, adopted by him at the command of the czar!"

It was curious to watch the effect of Tommy's announcement on the Russian. Incredulity gave way quickly to hope and hope in turn to certainty, and in a moment the man whom he had been prepared to kill at the command of the czar was his accepted friend and ally.

"You can prove this!" he exclaimed; and Tommy nodded confidently.

"Is it necessary to ask for further proof than the mirror affords?" he asked. "The proof is nothing; but to profit by the fact is a different matter. You know the history of your house; for by your orders a transcript of it has been made here. You know that Ladislas, who has plotted all these years to place your sister on the throne, has kept together a secret organization in Transylvania. Knowing the weakness of his force, you know that he is powerless to carry out that design without the influence which the medallion would give him over a superstitious czar."

"Yes—yes—go on!" said Lubetskoi eagerly.

"I would suggest this, your majesty," continued Tommy, smiling. "See him, tell him who you are, and offer him unlimited power after you gain the throne. If he will support you and abandon your sister, I will promise that the medallion is forthcoming to further your scheme; if not, you and I will join forces and smash him first."

"And your share?" asked Lubetskoi suspiciously.

"I've always rather wanted to make a king, so I'll be satisfied with the glory," answered Tommy dryly. "And now I suggest that your majesty should toddle along and get busy. You needn't worry about the medallion—I think that I have demonstrated my ability to look after it—and myself."

"We shall endeavor to make you forget our ill-advised and unwise attempt," answered Lubetskoi pompously, extending his hand, as if he expected Tommy to kiss it, but the latter only bowed low to hide the smile which he could not repress.

"Let me know when you can grant me an audience, your majesty," he said, and the Russian, oblivious to the sarcasm in his voice, graciously nodded assent.

"There's a forcible demonstration of how easy it is to make a man believe what he wants to believe," said Tommy, laughing and nodding after the disappearing back of the Russian. "He bears about as much resemblance to the Gregoravitches as he does to the Venus of Milo; but when he looks in the glass he'll recognize his Kalmuck face as a dead ringer for Sergius. He'll play the part, all right, and I reckon he'll keep Ladislas thinking while I have a chance to get after Mrs. Ridgway. Gee! if I had the clothes, I believe I'd set up for the King of Translvania myself."

VII.

Had Tommy's anxiety for the safety of Mrs. Ridgway not been a very real one, he would have derived a mischievous satisfaction in seducing Prince Lubetskoi from the service of an unscrupulous master, playing upon his credulity and using him to embarrass the scheming of Count Ladislas; but he was too apprehensive to lose valuable time.

"The Duke of Rimnek, Count Ladis-

las, or Nicholas Lobenski is a dangerous man under any name," he said thoughtfully as he reviewed the situation with me the following morning. "Whether his plotting is actuated by patriotism or by the hope of selfish advancement will make very little difference to Mrs. Ridgway, for he would unhesitatingly sacrifice her to either."

"And do you think it wise to irritate him by setting that fool of a Russian on him?" I asked.

A whimsical smile came to his face, and he shrugged his very expressive shoulders.

"My dear boy, yesterday we escaped serious trouble by a very narrow margin; the next time the luck might not be with us," he answered. "Prince Lubetskoi has the morals and brains of—a Russian; the ferocity and brute courage of a Tartar, which he inherited from a father whose instinctive cruelty made him the favorite instrument of the czar for carrying out reprisals. Under the circumstances, I prefer that he should keep busy at something besides trying to get this medallion. I firmly believe that Mrs. Ridgway is in hiding in Paris, and I want to look for her with a whole skin while Ladislas is kept so busy that he won't try to get her across the frontier of Transylvania. The Russian Bear wouldn't let go of her again in a hurry, and we should be absolutely helpless to assist her."

"Tommy, in view of what might happen, would it not be wiser to ask the assistance of Le Garde in locating her?" I asked.

"Not with a secret treaty existing between the republic of France and the autocracy of Russia," he answered positively. "Remember that the police is a centralized force here, and a word from the Foreign Office might lead to her being escorted quietly to the frontier to avoid offending an ally. Without this medallion, through which Ladislas might influence the czar, he does not stand the slightest chance of success in fomenting rebellion; but it might be made worth his while to betray her into the hands of the Russian police."

"Who, if her story is true, voluntarily released her when they last had her under arrest," I objected.

"Yes, they released an ignorant, friendless girl, whom it was necessary for them to supply with current funds to keep from want," he answered. "They could hardly anticipate that she would become related by marriage to half the nobility of Europe and have the Ridgway millions at her back. That makes her a possibility as a very disturbing factor, and the peace of Transylvania is apt to be disturbed at any moment so long as she is at liberty. I am in hopes that Zeki will betray her hiding-place to Clancy—and that should be his ring, so we may have news."

In answer to his cheery "Come in," the door opened, but instead of the detective, there entered a heavily veiled woman. We were instantly on our feet, cigarettes were hastily discarded, and there was a curious glint in Tommy's eyes as he bowed to our unexpected visitor.

"May I ask whom I have the honor of receiving?" he said; and a mocking laugh came from behind the veil.

"The wizard who discovers lost identities while you wait cannot penetrate the thin disguise of a piece of gauze!" she exclaimed incredulously. "Really, Mr. Williams, I am disappointed, for I fully expected that you would instinctively render homage to the future Queen of Transylvania!"

"Which one?" asked Tommy, a smile of amusement on his lips; and the lady laughed again.

"So much for your loyalty," she answered.

There was an unmistakable trace of the American accent in her pronunciation, and Tommy smiled as he courteously drew forward a chair for her.

"At present, I fear that you have to be satisfied with lesser rank, and I believe that I am addressing the Princess Lubetskoi?" he said interrogatively; and the lady raised her veil, disclosing a most attractive face and a pair of shrewd, laughing eyes.

"Exactly; a ci-devant countrywoman, who comes to find out what mischief

you are planning when you put a wild bee in her husband's bonnet," she answered, as she sat down.

"Is it buzzing?" he asked evasively, and when I looked at him I realized that he intended to take full advantage of the opportunity to study this most attractive member of the gender feminine.

"I should say rather more than that: I believe that it has stung," she answered half-seriously. "Now, Mr. Williams, you know—and you know that I know that you know—that this story is all nonsense. What I want to know further is why you have told it to him."

"Am I to understand that you do not care to be a queen?" he asked banteringly.

"I most assuredly do not care to be a grass-widow through my husband's banishment to Siberia," she answered impatiently. "I suppose that you are skeptical about there being any real affection in these international marriages which involve money on one side and a title on the other, and I haven't come here to argue that point with you. Say that we accept your view; I do not intend to have my property taken from me."

"Rather let us say that yours was purely a love-match; which I can quite believe," answered Tommy gallantly. "You prefer a prince at liberty to a king in confinement."

"Most assuredly," she said, smiling. "You probably know that a prince in Russia is rather less important than a policeman in New York; but I have no reason to be dissatisfied with my husband's position. He is highly placed at court, has the czar's confidence and affection, and, what is far more important to me, I love him!"

"But you are not ambitious for him?" asked Tommy.

The princess rose to her feet, her eyes flashing.

"Ambitions! Yes, I would have him the greatest man in Russia! There is a chance for that ambition, which is legitimate, to be realized. Don't misunderstand me—if I believed this cock-and-bull story which you have told him for some purpose of your own, there is no risk I would not run, no sacrifice I should hesitate to make to restore him to his own. But you know that you have deceived him, Mr. Williams; tempted him to dishonor, to disloyalty to the hand which has showered favors upon him."

"Do you happen to know just what that loyalty tempted him to do to me?" asked Tommy quietly.

"To teach you to keep out of affairs which do not concern you," she answered angrily.

His expression grew suddenly stern. "But which do most vitally concern the happiness of your brother, on whose behalf I am acting," he added; and the princess looked at him in surprise.

"Do you mean to tell me that my brother's happiness is bound up in that trumpery medallion?"

"If you will tell me just how much you know about that medallion, perhaps I can explain. First, let me assure you that I have your brother's entire confidence, and that I shall betray nothing which you choose to tell me."

"If you had been five years in Russia, you would be chary of confidences; but I believe that I can trust you." She looked at him intently. "I know only that the man who brings it to the czar can name his own reward. It is not because of its intrinsic value; but there is some mysterious association connected with it."

"Do you know how it came into your brother's possession?"

Her face flushed. "Through his Tzigane wife, I believe," she answered contemptuously. "With her past, perhaps it would be as well not to inquire too closely."

Tommy looked at her sharply, and his entire manner changed.

"Sit down!" he said imperatively, and the woman who had come to question him, but who had spent her time in answering, meekly obeyed. "Princess Lubetskoi, you are an American by birth, but your later education seems to have taught you to value rank and

title. You tell me that you would encourage your husband to fight for what was rightfully his. Believing that he is the true heir to the throne of Sergius, do you blame him for placing the establishment of that claim above all else?"

"Is this a threat?"

"No, I never threaten. You have spoken slightingly of a woman whose name you should be the first to protect; but I make allowances for the point of view which you have acquired in your new surroundings. Perhaps it will be a solace to your injured pride when I tell you that the woman whom you despise as a Hungarian gipsy is, in fact, a princess by birth; the daughter of Sergius Gregoravitch!"

The smile of derision which the statement brought to her lips quickly faded, and her rosy color paled as she stared at him.

"Arty's wife—the Tzigane—Stephanie!" she faltered in bewilderment, and it was apparent that conviction was being borne in upon her by circumstances which she already knew of. "Let me think—can this be true—the explanation of——"

"Yes, it is undoubtedly true, unfortunately for Arthur Ridgway," interrupted Tommy seriously. "He loves her, Princess Lubetskoi, for herself; for he was ignorant of her rank when he married her."

For a moment the woman seemed stunned past seeing or hearing, but suddenly she sprang to her feet and grasped Tommy's arm so fiercely that he winced.

"Oh, make him take her away!" she cried. "There is no safety for her here! You don't know—you can't understand! It is not fire you are playing with—it is dynamite!"

"And an American girl can play with it safely?" asked Tommy, who was alertly watching for an opportunity.

"I am no longer American—I am a Russian!" she answered, fighting to regain her self-control. "But it is not a Russian who is warning you—it is Arthur's sister. Oh, Mr. Williams, make him take her to America. The knout, the dungeon, the salt mines—oh, I can't tell you the horror of it!" she exclaimed, and throwing herself in the chair she gave way to an attack of sobbing.

"And I can tell Arthur Ridgway's sister what I should hesitate to tell the Princess Lubetskoi," said Tommy after watching her for a moment. "A thing which concerns his happiness and——"

"Tell me nothing!" she interrupted passionately. "I have said now enough to send those I love to a fate worse than death if it becomes known."

"Nothing shall be known," he continued reassuringly. "I shall tell you much more, that you may help me."

"Mr. Williams, I beg of you to let me go," she implored. "Knowledge is dangerous, and you do not know what we Russians do. The knout or the rack may make us tell what we wish to conceal."

"All that I can tell you, and far more, is already known to the secret police. Mrs. Ridgway has deserted her husband to return to her own country."

"Then she is lost!" exclaimed the princess hopelessly. "Now I understand why I have been so spied upon and the meaning of the continual questionings about my sister-in-law whom I have never seen. Only last week the ambassador gave me a hint, which was almost equivalent to a royal command, to call upon her and invite her to St. Petersburg. Can't you see the danger, Mr. Williams, and that you have made it impossible for me to help you by implanting this wild idea in my husband's brain?"

"Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and your husband's plotting for his own advancement may mean your sister-in-law's safety, princess. Yesterday he was prepared to connive at my murder; to-day he looks upon me as invaluable to his cause. I am perhaps unduly solicitous about my own safety; for on it depends very much at the moment. If Mrs. Ridgway is restored to her husband, no harm will come to Prince Lubetskoi. More than that, if you can assist me to bring that about, I can safely promise that he will be in a

position to claim the reward for the recovery of the medallion."

"And are you now appealing to an American or a Russian?" she asked.

"First of all, to a woman. I can't believe that you would allow your brother's happiness to be irretrievably sacrificed."

"Do you know where Mrs. Ridgway is?"

"In Paris, I believe; I am not sure."

"Mr. Williams, may I ask if all this counterplotting on your part—the publication of the attempted kidnaping, the advertisement of the fact that you have the medallion which is more dangerous than a rattlesnake about your neck, and the playing upon my husband's credulity to make him a traitor and a catspaw—is solely for the purpose of inducing Mrs. Ridgway to return to her husband?"

"I have absolutely no other purpose." And there was a trace of pity in the smile which his serious answer brought to her lips.

"Then I should say that while your motive may be altruistic and praiseworthy, your methods are masculinely clumsy," she answered. "A shrewd man and a student of human nature you may be, but your knowledge of women is small."

"A fact which I regretfully acknowledge and from which I have suffered much," admitted Tommy ruefully. "I am willing to be instructed in so fascinating a subject, Princess Lubetskoi."

"Then perhaps you could have no better teacher than I," she answered. "I know my own countrywomen and I know the women of the courts; for I have not been lady of honor for five years to the czarina for nothing. Let me tell you this: ambition may lead a woman to do many things which seem incredible, a sense of duty may enable her to endure martyrdom cheerfully, but whether she be born in the royal purple or under a gipsy tent there is one passion which is stronger than all."

"And that is?"

"When you have learned that, you may be able to do without my assistance," she answered mockingly. "Does my expert knowledge entitle me to *your* assistance?"

"In keeping Prince Lubetskoi out of trouble?"

"In not leading him into temptation."

"Yes, if you will lend me your valuable assistance in my quest," he answered promptly; and she extended a dainty hand to bind the bargain.

"Then one thing you must tell me frankly," she said quietly, all trace of banter leaving her voice and manner. "How deeply is my husband concerned in the plot against her?"

"Prince Lubetskoi, until he became convinced that he himself was entitled to the throne of Transylvania, was mainly concerned in recovering the medallion, without which no pretender could hope for success," answered Tommy. "He was aware of her claims; but whether his devotion to the czar would have led him to betray her into his hands, you must judge for yourself."

Her eyes dropped under his earnest gaze, and her hands played nervously with her handkerchief.

"Let us hope that he may be spared the necessity for making such a decision," she said, with a little shudder. "May I write a letter here, Mr. Williams?"

Tommy cleared off his desk, and she seated herself at it and wrote rapidly, carefully placing the sheets in her muff when she had finished.

"And now remember that we are allies, not enemies," she said earnestly. "Now I am a woman and Arthur Ridgway's sister; when success perches on our banners, I shall remind you that I am an ambitious Russian."

"And you shall have the medallion," answered Tommy, bending over the hand which she extended to him.

The soft rustle of her skirts had hardly died away when it was replaced by the heavy tread of police boots in the hallway, and Clancy, visibly swollen with self-importance and his eyes dancing with excitement, rushed into the studio.

"Sure, Mr. Williams, ut's no cheap skates I'm in wid now!" he exclaimed. "Ut's only a small matter av murder,

arson, kidnapin', an' general diviltry as stands bechune me an' bein' made a juke an' th' chief av the polis av Thransylvania, no less!"

VIII.

Clancy's excitement, so far as I was concerned, was contagious; but Tommy was apparently prepared for anything, and after bringing the detective back to earth with a sharp injunction to attend to business and cut out the frills, he listened calmly.

"Sure, I never suspicioned that a dago fiddler—an' a blame poor wan at that—w'u'd be hand in glove wid princes an' th' likes av them; but politics makes quare bedfellows, as they say at Tammany Hall, an' ut's meself as has the chanst to get into th' *crame de lar crame*, as me grisette friend calls ut," remarked Clancy. "Ut's all along av me gettin' next to me friend Zeke; an' travelin' wid him is ruinous to th' constitootion av a man that can't put away three small bottles an hour; for he's sure a swift wan. I've been layin' to find out his game, for from the wad he carries ut's got a polis job faded, an' last night he loosens up.

"'You lik da mon?' he says, after we'd had a few.

"'No wan better,' says I; an' he laughs.

"'Sarge, you're a gooda man,' says he. 'You helpa me an' you have plenta mon, grand name, an' fine job. You lika be a juke?'

"'Clancys was kings in Ireland, so I guess I c'u'd hold th' job an' give satisfaction,' says I; an' he pats me on th' back.

"'Now, Sarge,' says he, 'you're alla righta.'

"An' then he mentions th' few trifles av felonies I'm to commit to get th' job, as cool as if he was givin' me an invite to a pink tea. It seems that them other johnnies in th' red coats at th' chop-suey joint where I met him are all jukes an' counts an' barons in disguise. They lost their regular jobs when a king got put out av business down Thransylvania way, an' when they're not spoilin' th' guests' appetites by murderin' music, they're a band av beetle-browed conspirators, plottin' to get their jobs back by raisin' a ruction. The head Fenian av th' bunch is a guy named Ladislas, an' ut was to him that he takes me this mornin'!"

"Does he lead the band?" asked Tommy.

Clancy shook his head, and his face grew serious. "Say, Mr. Williams, he's th' real thing, all right, all right. Mebbe them four-flushers in th' band is, too, but they don't look ut, an' he sure does. Say, there ain't no dago about his talk, an' he speaks United States as good as me. Zeke he downs on his knees an' kisses his hand when we goes in, an' blamed if I don't believe I'd have followed suit at a word; but he never gives ut.

"'Now, me man,' says he—an' his voice reminds me av th' commissioner when he's got a patrolman on th' carpet—'Zeke says you're all to th' good, an' ut's him that'll get ut in th' neck if you throw me down'—or words to that effect. I was feelin' sorry for Zeke about then, for I knew he meant what he said; but business is business, an' I chips along.

"'An' he's put me wise that there's somethin' in ut for me,' I says. 'Does that go?'

"'Ut does,' he says, 'if youse makes good.' An' then he repeats th' string av felonies that'd give me a lifer if I missed th' chair.

"'There's an American named Ridgway, he dies and you turns th' trick,' says he. 'To-night his house will burn an' in th' excitement th' baby is swiped,' says he. 'That part for youse, after polishin' off th' old man, an' there must be no mistake.'

"'Do I burn th' house, too?' says I, as if I couldn't get enough crime to satisfy me, but he allows that his friends th' disguised counts will attend to that.

"Then he gives me th' office, an' th' plan's a peach, all right; but Le Garde must be asleep if they get away with ut; to say nothin' av th' other guy that's tryin' to butt in."

Tommy had listened attentively, and with a few curt questions he elicited so much of the details as had been confided to Clancy.

At nine o'clock Ridgway's house was to be set on fire in several places. Clancy was previously to have gained admittance and a private interview on the plea that he had important news from New York, and on the first alarm was to kill Ridgway with a black-jack. Then, under pretense of saving it, he was to seize the baby and run with it to the garden. Ladislas himself would meet him there and guide him to a waiting automobile. Clancy was to carry the baby to a woman whom he was to persuade that he came from its father and was deputed by him to carry them both to Hungary, where he was waiting for them and would be in grave danger unless she came. At Ladislas' castle they would be joined by the other conspirators and proceed at once to Transylvania, where everything was prepared for revolt.

The conspirators were to be rewarded; Clancy ennobled, granted estates, and made chief of police. He had been supplied with an exact plan of Ridgway's house and garden, the places where the fires were to be started and the route he was to follow plainly marked on it.

Tommy studied it closely for a few minutes and then looked up at him.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" he asked; and Clancy smiled.

"Sure, ut's a murderer I must be lookin' like in me glad rags," he said. "No sooner do I take on this contract from Ladislas an' leave th' house, than another guy gives me a jolly an' tries to t'row a scarce into me. He had a bad attack av whiskers, an' I piped him for a Roosian. 'Twas a new drink he tries on me; vodka he calls ut, an' we'll let it go at that. He's been shadowin' me an' Zeke, he says, an' I'm sure up against real trouble unless I gives up me present job an' works for his boss, who's th' real thing in things av Transylvania."

"Another murder job?" asked Tommy quickly.

"Sure, an' youse is it, this time!" exclaimed Clancy.

"For a small matter of a locket?"

"No less," answered the detective. "Dead or alive, youse is to give ut up; but he didn't say nothin' about me jukedom, so I'll tend to th' other wan first."

"Clancy, you're a jewel!" exclaimed Tommy approvingly. "You'll keep that appointment to-night, and you'll find me there ahead of you. In all of this talk, have you discovered the address of the woman whom you are to escort to Transylvania?"

"Th' divil a wan av me knows," answered Clancy. "Weemen a plenty is in ut, for Zeke is lallygaggin' wid th' dago nurse, an' he's next to everything that goes on in th' house. He's told me all about her, but that Juke Ladislas he's close about th' other wan, an' all he tells me is that I must give her a convincin' pipe-story when I brings th' kid to her."

"Clancy, I'm afraid that you're not enough of a villain to earn the dukedom, but if Arthur Ridgway has the pull I credit him with, you'll get the first vacant inspectorship in New York," said Tommy; and a smile of unusual proportions illuminated the Hibernian face.

"Wid th' perquisites, that's good enough for Mike Clancy!" he exclaimed. "I'll cable for me stripes this night."

"You can send this telegram first," said Tommy, as he filled out a blank. "Now, cut out the small bottles and be on hand sharp at nine."

Clancy departed, whistling joyously, but Tommy turned to me with serious face.

"If recent Balkan history did not include a royal murder, intrigue, and treachery, which seems incredible, I should say that we had been transported to the land of the dime novel," he said, shaking his head. "That the theater is set in Paris and some of the actors commonplace Americans is merely an incident, for we are living in an atmosphere which makes Benvenuto Cellini's memoirs dull reading by comparison. I have to pinch myself every few minutes

to make sure that I am awake, but unless I am very much mistaken there will be doings at the Avenue d'Iena to-night."

"In which I trust we shall take part," I said; and he gave quick assent.

"I suppose that I should report progress to our new ally, but I don't see how I can," he continued. "That fool of a husband is not playing the game according to Hoyle, and he stands a chance of getting hurt, but I am not responsible for that. I have telegraphed to Ridgway to admit us through the stables at eight-thirty to-night, and I shall notify Le Garde just before we go there that there is something wrong. He ought to get the incendiaries, and I reckon that we can take care of things inside the house. My idea is to bag Ladislas in the garden, give him a chance to get away, if he will take us to where Mrs. Ridgway is hidden, and then get them packed off to Ridgway's yacht which is lying at Havre. If Ladislas refuses, I shall hand him over to the police, for he is desperate, and we can't take any more chances."

"Tommy, doesn't the fact that he is adopting this desperate plan in the heart of Paris indicate that the lady has turned obstinate?" I asked; and he winked aggravatingly.

"My boy, you are improving," he answered. "Of course she has; the kidnaping of the baby is a last resort. Ladislas has failed once with the tools at hand, and that is why he tries to enlist Clancy in his service. The little addition of the murder of Ridgway may be along the line of burning the bridges behind her. I'm not going to puzzle my brain by problems to which we can find no answer, but if that delegate doesn't give us satisfaction to-night there will be a vacant Dukedom of Rimnek, unless he has an heir."

A thousand questions occurred to me before the time for our departure for Ridgway's house, but Tommy growled when I ventured to ask the first one, and I knew that he would give me no satisfaction. A dozen times he examined the miniature icon, and almost as often he inspected his revolver to satisfy himself that the cartridges were perfect; but not a word would he say until the hands of the clock pointed to eight.

"Now for it!" he exclaimed, jumping from his chair. "Just time to make the rendezvous comfortably." And I meekly followed.

Ridgway, consumed with impatience and anxiety, was awaiting us in the carriage-house, a litter of the evening papers strewn about the floor.

"This is disgraceful!" he fumed. "I trust that you are not responsible for this, Mr. Williams."

"For what?" asked Tommy in amazement.

Ridgway pointed to the papers. "For the scurrilous article which is in every evening journal of Paris," he answered angrily. "My misfortunes are ridiculed, and I am made a fool, or a villain!"

"There will be time enough to discuss that if you are alive an hour from now, but we have other work on hand," said Tommy quietly. "Ridgway, if you value your own life and that of your child, get back to the house."

Ridgway looked at him in quick apprehension and realized that he was in deadly earnest, and without speaking led us through the covered passage to the house.

"Who is with the baby?" asked Tommy quickly.

"Miss Griscom and Julie," answered Ridgway. "Is there unusual danger?"

The question was not answered, for the door of the study to which he had conducted us was opened, and Ridgway started forward with such a cry as I have never heard from the throat of man. Standing in the doorway was a beautiful woman, her eyes flashing, her lips compressed, and her face the color of chalk; but in spite of the changed expression we recognized the face which had smiled at us from the Kussner miniature!

"Nelka!" exclaimed Ridgway, advancing with open arms; but she raised her hand almost threateningly and pointed at him.

"No, not Nelka!" she said passion-

ately. "You have killed her; but Stephanie, the mother, has come to demand her child from an unworthy father."

Ridgway looked at her helplessly, unable to realize that he had heard correctly, and Tommy glanced significantly at a crumpled paper which she held in her hand.

Mrs. Ridgway, for she it undoubtedly was, slowly opened it and pointed to a heavily marked paragraph.

"Is this the reward for my love of you: a love which has made me refuse to accept a throne that you could not share with me?" she said contemptuously. "Is this the fidelity of man which cannot endure a month's separation? Give me my child and I shall leave you to your new-found love and go to fulfil my destiny!"

"Nelka! You believe that lying article?" cried Ridgway, taking it from her and throwing it aside. "It is false from beginning to end. Miss Griscom has been a faithful servant, and I a faithful lover to the woman who deserted me."

His wife looked at him unbelievingly, jealous anger written on her face; and Tommy smiled covertly as he stooped and picked up the paper.

"Will Mrs. Ridgway allow me to intrude——" He paused, listening attentively for a moment, and the chiming of nine from a clock on the mantel rang through the room. "If you will permit me to go to the garden for a moment, I can find some one who will give you the explanation of this mystery," he went on quickly. "Quick, old chap! Make for the garden, for Clancy has failed us!"

Before I could move, Mrs. Ridgway was thrust violently aside, and a waving mass of arms and legs seemed to fill the room. It quickly resolved itself into a very red-faced Irish-American who was using the heads of two men, whom he held by the necks, as castanets, bumping them together until they fairly cracked.

"Th' divil a bit have I failed youse—be good, ye divils, or I'll crack youse in earnest—but these two was in me way, settlin' a small difficulty av their own, an' I had to bring 'em in, for wan av them is me friend Zeke."

His prisoners, in the practised hands of a well-trained officer, had stopped their useless efforts to get at each other, but hatred shone from their eyes.

"Skelton! Zeki! What is the meaning of this?" said Ridgway in amazement.

Tommy motioned to Clancy to release them.

"Mr. Ridgway, let no one leave this room," he said sharply. "Now, Clancy, follow me to the garden and get our friend."

A moment later we were in the old garden, where we would have been hopelessly lost in the winding paths had not a man stepped quietly from concealment and addressed us in a low voice.

"This way, messieurs," he said, showing a small electric pocket lamp. "Our friend the conspirator has entered the house."

For a moment the light flashed on his face, and we recognized Le Garde, the chief of the French secret police.

"I have the others, and he knows that something is wrong, and has gone to investigate," he said quietly. "He entered by that window, but he cannot escape, for the house is surrounded."

Tommy gave an exclamation of fear as the Frenchman pointed to an open window, for it opened into the room adjoining the nursery. We ran toward it, but before we reached it the light was switched on, there was a sharp report, and a man reeled to the window, and fell to the ground at our feet.

Le Garde cleared his prostrate body, and would have entered, but Tommy grasped him and pulled him back.

"If I am not mistaken, there is the one kind of a woman whom you would not understand on the other side of that wall, and I happen to know that the pistol she carries has five more charges, for I loaded it myself," he said grimly. "Oh, Miss Griscom! Be careful, we are friends."

"Step into the light, one at a time, then, and don't come too close," answered a calm voice from inside; and

Tommy, thrusting Le Garde unceremoniously aside, stepped forward.

The nurse, covering him with a pistol from which a wisp of smoke was still curling, came to the window, and when she saw his face, the weapon, which had been as steady as a rock, wavered, and, throwing it aside, she covered her face with her hands and burst into tears.

"Well, I'll be——"

"Pardon me," Le Garde interrupted, as Tommy stared at her in blank amazement. "My friend the amateur seems also not to understand completely. The lady has spared me much trouble, for, if I am not mistaken, she has quieted forever one of the busiest plotters in Europe."

He turned the light of his lamp on the face of the prostrate man, and a small hole directly in the middle of the forehead testified how true had been Miss Griscom's aim. Nicholas Lobenski, Duke of Rimnek, had woven his last web, and had himself met death in its meshes, but as we looked at the peaceful, high-bred face we instinctively bared our heads.

"He was not good, he was thoroughly jesuitical—but he was a man!" said Le Garde, as he rose from softly closing the eyelids and composing the limbs; and better men have gone to their tombs with a less sincere tribute.

A glance into the nursery told the story. In desperation at the failure of his subordinates, he had attempted to take the child, which was sleeping quietly, and Miss Griscom had followed out her orders, and shot him.

Le Garde assured us that there would be no unpleasant results for the girl, as she had acted in defense of her charge, but she was not to be comforted. It seemed to me that Tommy put an entirely unnecessary amount of feeling into his efforts to console her, and I was relieved when they were interrupted by the entrance of the Princess Lubetskoi.

"I have come to claim my reward, Mr. Williams," she said triumphantly. "Mrs. Ridgway is here, and I think that I may claim the credit for it."

"Was not a reconciliation part of the agreement?" he asked; but I saw that his hand was stealing toward the hidden medallion.

"You would have little cause to doubt that, if you had seen them as I left them a moment ago," she answered, smiling. "Peace and good-will are overflowing in the study, and Skelton is guarding the door against interruption, and sitting on a swearing gipsy at the same time. Stephanie has wisely decided that a sure kingdom in a man's heart is preferable to a doubtful one in the Balkans, but it took a woman's wit to teach her."

"Or a woman's pen," said Tommy, looking at her sharply; and her face flushed.

"Probably a man would have let everything go to smash rather than employ a woman's weapons," she answered, glancing apologetically toward Miss Griscom. "But remember one thing, if you are inclined to blame me: I was fighting not only for reward, but to save the man I love."

"I shall forgive you everything if you will answer one question," said Tommy earnestly, as he drew the medallion above his collar and unclasped the chain. "Is jealousy really the strongest emotion which controls a woman?"

The Princess Lubetskoi was silent for a moment as she carefully adjusted the chain about her own neck: but there was a twinkle of mischief in her eyes as she glanced from him to the pretty face of the girl whom he had been trying to comfort.

"That is one of the questions which, perhaps, an unmarried woman could answer more satisfactorily," she said; and when Tommy's slim fingers twirled the ends of his mustache, I realized that he was as well satisfied to have the question left open for further investigation.

THE END.

Red Rock's Free Library

By George Foxhall

In which a wideawake little town in the West is face to face with the magnificent proposition of owning a municipal library. Mr. Foxhall tells of the amusingly strenuous efforts of the citizens to educate themselves up to the possibilities of the situation

FOR sale? No, sir, I just reckon that mare ain't for sale. Not by a long way, she ain't. That there mare, sir! I guess she's the most intelligentest crittur goin' on four legs and upward between this and 'Frisco. She once saved me from the direst calamity as ever happened, or nearly happened, in my administration as mayor of Red Rock Camp.

Wouldn't 'a' thought I'd been a mayor—eh? You bet I was; elected by the pop'lar vote of able-bodied, gun-carryin' citizens, and you can figger your last dollar that there was no recounts in that there city. Method of election? Well, stranger, I just cal'lated that I was the most able citizen to look after the affairs of that town.

'Cos why? Why, Cork Screw Ike used to think he was all creation round that camp, an' acted accordin', until one day I demonstrated to the pop'lar satisfaction an' beyond dispute, that when it came to bein' quick and straight Ike was too slow to catch a cold compared with yours truly.

He was a crook, Ike was, an' on the strength of his handiness had killed more men than justice called for. So after the funeral I says:

"Boys, in the interests of law an' order I guess I'll be mayor of this town, an' if any brother objects let him walk right up an' git measured."

Yuh bet nobody objected, so says I: "All those in favor come inside an' celebrate." And if there was a whisker-bearin' animal in that camp as didn't accept the invitation, I didn't know him an' he wouldn't have cared to know me.

Well, sir, I begun at once kinder fulfillin' the duties of my office. I instilled into the reluctant mind of Slick Sam that there only ever was or could be but one ace to each suit in a pack, an' that if he tried to make a new rule ag'in he'd better have a seat booked somewhere for his immortal soul. Further, I persuaded Pete Schucks that brass filin's really had no honest connection with gold-dust, an' made Job Joseph understand that somebody else's pocket was not the correct place to warm his hands in. I tell you square, there was a moral reform wave swept over that city, sir. You bet a man remembers his Sunday-school lessons when he knows that forgettin' 'em might show him the business end of a gun just long enough for him to know about it.

An' so it was at a very unhealthy time for him that a feller came around tryin' to fake the pop'lation.

We was havin' a friendly game in "The Blue Boar," the principal an' only hotel in Red Rock Camp, when in walks a cove as said he had just got off old Si's coach, which coach passes by Red Rock without enterin'. He said he was from Washington City an' had come to see somethin' of life out West.

The biggest curiosity he had was a lot of new money, which he said was straight from the Treasury, and had never been used. As a kind of introduction, the stranger asked every mother's son to drink at his expense, an' we

had quite a jolly kind of a time. Bymbye the time comes for him to pay up, an' the tenderfoot planks out a brand-new twenty-dollar bill.

As I said before, new bills was a curiosity out there, so Tom, the bartender, passed it round for the boys to have a look at. Soon it came to me, an' I examined it mighty close.

Then I lifts my eyes to the tenderfoot an' says, kinder innerestlike: "Do they always make twenty-dollar bills by pastin' two sheets together now?"

He was prompt, sir, but before his hand was half-way there he was lookin' into the chief executive gun, an', for a tenderfoot, his hands was up pretty slick. The bits of silk was in the note, all right, but they were not on the surface in the reg-lation manner, an' a tiny corner of the two sheets which formed the back an' front of the note had just lifted the least kind of a shadder, an' give the game away.

We found about fifteen hundred dollars' worth of the stuff on him. The boys was for hangin' him, but I never cared for takin' life promiscuous, so I said we'd hand him over to the sheriff, who honored with his residence the excrescence called Slow Creek Town, ten miles up the road.

As luck would have it, who should walk in but the sheriff himself, after the man we'd got, havin' had a full description of him from old Si, the coach-driver! But the man wasn't all the sheriff wanted: he also wanted the fake dollars, an' that was what I was not goin' to let him have.

Says I: "That collection, sheriff, is reserved for the Municipal Museum of Red Rock Camp, an' will repose in the municipal safe in the mayor's office on the first floor of this hotel, at which office the mayor resides an' will receive inquiries at any time. However, for purposes of prosecution we'll let you have five hundred dollars of it."

The sheriff opined that all counterfeit money was the property of the government, and cal'lated he'd have to git a warrant out for my arrest. I told him the government had better come an' git it, then, an' as for arrestin' the mayor of this town, I figgered up he'd have to bring a pretty big Slow Creek squad to do it. To which the citizens guy their united assent.

So the sheriff thought the best thing he could do was to levant with his prisoner, becos the boys was gittin' kinder restless: an' off he git.

Well! p'r'aps a matter of two weeks passed uneventfully, when another stranger lit into our town an' asked for an interview with the mayor.

He was the queerest cuss you ever put eyes on. Your first impulse was to look for his number an' description, an' your second was to hold him until the keeper came. He was small an' slender, an' had a short nose, gold-rimmed spectacles, an' a snuff-colored voice; but he had a way of lookin' at you that made you feel that what the cove missed wasn't worth a tinker's cuss.

To introduce himself he handed me his ticket, an' I saw that he was labeled: "Leonard Cuttall, Secretary to Mr. Adolph Custis."

He said that Mr. Adolph Custis was the guy who was donatin' free libraries all along the line to deservin' townships, an' that he had heard of the splendid administration of Red Rock Camp, an' wanted to help on the cause of law by the aid of edyucation an' refinement.

So he'd sent Mr. Cuttall to say as he'd put up five thousand dollars for a buildin' if the boys would put up another thousand for the books. Well! I 'lowed that the boys needed edyucation an' refinin' some, an' I was dead in for reform, an' wanted to leave a lastin' testimony of my administration, so I guessed we'd have a library, an' on behalf of the township I accepted the offer.

Then I called a meetin' of the boys to consider the proposition. The upshot of the matter was that the boys to the number of one hundred agreed to pay over to me two dollars a week each until the amount was gathered, an' then I was to pay it over to his secretaryship.

In the meantime, to stimulate their enthusiasm an' git them into literary tastes, he thought it would be a fine idee to start a magazine an' run it on

our own. He said we could put in the general happenin's of the town, an' some of the boys could contribute somethin' in the way of fiction an' poetry, while I could edit the magazine, an' he would do the printin'.

I cal'lated that judgin' by most of the journals that struck our city I could manage the editin' all right; so we rooted out Old Bartholomew's printin' outfit that hadn't seen light since he died five years before, an' opened shop. The stranger he distributed some circulars called "Hints on Writin' Fiction," an' the boys sat up nights studyin' 'em an' dreamin' of future greatness.

A few days later, when the editor was sittin' in his office writin' up the general happenin's, the fiction began to come in.

First of all in walks Long Fred with a cautious look an' a yarn about a beautiful gel in South Carolina who had fell desp'rately in love with him. That was fiction, all right, pure an' unadulterated. I looked at him more in sorrer than in anger, an' he edged toward the door.

"Fred," said I, "what we want is fiction that has some foundation in probability, even if not in fact, an' any idiot knows that no beautiful gel would fall in love with a long-legged, cross-eyed——"

He thought I was feelin' for some weapon, an' didn't seem to have no kind of interest in the remainder of my advice. After that the fiction came in pretty smart, an' I had to lock my gun up in the safe or I would have depop'lated the entire town. My only relief was in language an' portable furniture.

The private secretary was in his own room, next to mine, with the printin'-outfit, waitin' fer matter. The briskest trade he did was printin' slips which began somethin' about "The editor regrets." An' you bet the editor did regret.

We closed office about three o'clock an' held a conference, at which we decided we'd wait the magazine proposition until the multitude had got some edyucation an' refinement.

So Mr. Leonard Cuttall just nosed round an' got acquainted, an', incidentally, I got acquainted with him.

At last the time arrived, an' when we had paid the thousand dollars over to his secretaryship an' he was ready to start he offered to buy my mare for a hundred dollars. I accepted, and off Mr. Cuttall started with the thousand in his pocket an' no doubt with thoughts of philanthropy in his mind.

That evenin' I called a meetin' of the boys, an' made a speech. I told 'em how I'd gone into the dude's room seekin' him one day, when I run across a letter he was writin' to some galoot East tellin' him that he expected to get away with the wealth of the camp on such a date. "So," says I, "I fixed the guy, all right. I guv him the dummy money, which'll git him arrested 'fore he knows where he is, an' sold him my mare for one hundred good dollars. The contributions of this camp repose peacefully in the mayor's safe, an' if you'll excuse me one minute I'll fetch 'em down and divide." An' off I went upstairs for the dollars.

Somethin' seemed to be wrong with the lock of that darned safe; the handle wouldn't turn nohow, so, after a lot of foolin' I gits hold of it in a temper, an' pulled. Well! When that safe door came open you could have froze water an' melted it agen on my face in three seconds; but when I looked inside it nearly required a galvanic-battery to keep my heart beatin'.

For there, lookin' exasperatin'ly clean an innercent nestled them damned spoof notes, an' a neat little note on top informed the mayor that Mr. Cuttall felt it would be unkind to rob the city of its museum, so had taken them dirty old notes instead.

I went down-stairs an' tried to look cool while I broke it gently to the boys.

You bet there was a circus. There was some of the remarkablest suggestions you ever heard, an' some of the finest flows of profanity you'd ever want to.

For the first time in my career as mayor I was talked back at by one man for more than two consecutive sentences. In fact, all the boys piled it on.

though 'twas more in sorrer than in anger toward me. They felt a kind of personal grief that the mayor of that camp should have been cooked so brown.

But for Leonard! Gee! if Leonard could have been there for two minutes, you'd have thought from the conversation that it would have paid a big dividend to work him as a lead-mine afterward.

Somebody said that as the mayor seemed too stunned to act he would suggest a posse. "Posse!" I says, sarcastic. "Much good a posse will do when the shrimp's been gone six hours already. W'y don't you send a wireless telegram askin' him to return?"

We was a mad but dejected group, an' I was the maddest an' dejectedest.

Suddenly, when I had nearly got my speech of resignation framed in my mind, an' it was so touchin' it nearly brought tears to my eyes to think of it, we hears a rattle of harness, an' a big kick on the door accompanied by a somewhat high-strung voice exclaimin': "What in thunder's the name of this place, anyhow? Are all these darned camps made by the same——" By this time the traveler had got inside, an', by Jupiter, if 'twasn't Mr. Leonard Cuttall!

We was flabbergasted, an' Leonard was the first to recover. Before you could say "Damn!" two guns was shinin' in the tenderfoot's hands. Tenderfoot, indeed! Well, his smile was a study for the poetry department of the late lamented magazine. "Hands up, gentlemen!" he says, an' the boys didn't need tellin' twice.

"Mr. Cuttall," says I, "how'd you git back here?"

"That darned mare er yours," says he, "twisted me erbout till I didn't know whether I was in Arizona er Manchuria."

"Just as I trained her to," says I, "an' as I knowed she would when I sold her to you, though I didn't know you'd gone me one better on the boodle. An' for that reason I've been playin' soft to the boys all night, an' for the same reason I doctored your ammunition before you started, so——"

He pulled, but there was only a click, an' when he started for the door—— Well, Mr. Leonard Cuttall had a final relapse beyond all hope of recovery.

He was a game little cuss, anyhow, so we sent a messenger to the sheriff givin' him all partic'lars, an' askin' him to come over for the counterfeit wealth an' bring the parson along. We guv him Christian burial, an' if some of the things the parson said didn't exactly fit in with what we knew about him—well, I guess they was 'bout as near as the average, an' there was only the difference between succeedin' an' failin', anyhow.

WHILE THE FERRY WAITED

AS the ferry entered the slip at "The Gardens," two dusty, panting, perspiring men and a small dog rushed down the hill to the back gate of the little park. A padlocked chain around the gate-post brought them to a sudden halt, and they hastily compared opinions of the idiot who had placed it there.

However, the ferry would leave in a few minutes, and there was no other for an hour. The picket fence was ten feet high, and the men were not young or slimly built, but they were game. With cracking muscles and bursting lungs they cleared the tops of the pickets, then dropped limp and exhausted to the ground inside, and rolled down the steep bank into the shrubbery. The dog, being unable to climb the fence, pushed open the gate and followed them, loudly expressing his delight at their wonderful performance. Then they noticed that the chain did not include any portion of the gate in its embrace.

But they caught the ferry just the same.

The Man Who Was Dead

By Arthur W. Marchmont

Author of "In the Cause of Freedom," "When I Was Czar," Etc.

CHAPTER XVI—(*Continued.*)

MY stupid anger passed on the instant, and I paused in some confusion. Presently Normia looked up.

"Have I, indeed, wronged you?" she said brokenly. "Heaven knows I can ill afford to alienate a friend! But when I learned this——"

"How did you learn it?" I demanded.

"The baroness told me." Her tone was so changed that it appeared as if my outburst of temper had done more to persuade her of my sincerity than all my former protestations.

"Did she tell you also that it was I who had warned her? Why, the——" I stopped abruptly as the door from the gallery was opened, and we heard Stephanie's voice, speaking in a tone of anger and suspicion:

"The foreman, you say? Where is he?"

"He is there with the princess now, excellency," answered the maid, who saw us at that moment, and pointed to me.

I kept my back to Stephanie. She had better hear my voice before seeing my face, as I did not want to have a scene before the maid.

"I will see that your highness' wishes are carried out by my men," I said to Normia, with a low bow. Then I turned to Stephanie, and bowed to her. "I am the foreman, excellency."

I rather enjoyed the anger that blazed from her eyes as she returned my look, and for a moment I thought she would break out into a tirade. But she restrained her temper.

"Oh, yes, I remember now; you were to be here this afternoon. As you have finished with the princess, come with me, and I will give you your instructions," and she went to the door again. "I'll see your highness when I have finished with this man," she added to Normia.

It was a clever move, for I was either compelled to follow her or make a scene before the servant. I chose the former, and went out with her.

"Shall we discuss it here, excellency?" I asked, with a grin, as we went through the gallery. "By the way, I'd better leave the owner his blouse." And I threw it off.

I think she was too furious to reply, and nothing more was said until we reached her own rooms. She was white with passion.

"You will explain, I suppose?"

"Of course. Am I not your slave, great empress, your bondsman, your thing, to be ordered here, driven there, and bound under penalty of the lash to explain every act and thought of my life?" And I laughed, and threw myself into a chair.

"Have I not the right to demand an explanation?"

"You are in a furious passion, Stephanie. I wish you would let yourself go for a few minutes. It would relieve you, and I don't mind."

Somewhat to my consternation she took me at my word, but not in the sense I had meant. She sat staring at me a moment, every muscle tense and

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This story began in the April issue. The back numbers can be obtained from any newsdealer. Price fifteen cents each.

set, and then, throwing up her hands, she burst into a tempest of tearless sobbing—great choking sobs, which convulsed and ultimately exhausted her, until she flung her arms wide on the table and laid her head on them, trembling and moaning. My dislike of her amounted almost to hatred, but I could not witness this unmoved.

"Come, Stephanie," I said, going to her. But she waved me away vehemently. It was some time before she regained her self-command, and when she raised her head I saw, to my amazement, that her eyes were dry. She had not shed a single tear!

"I went to Normia to warn her of the scheme to hand her over to the Servian Government," I said, as soon as I thought she could listen; "and I was in that workman's blouse in order to escape the vigilance of the servants."

She received this explanation in silence.

"Had I not better come another time?" I asked presently.

"No. I am myself now. But your sneers are hard to bear, Guy. You don't seem to know how hard. I am ashamed of my weakness. I keep that generally for the night-time. I am a fool to let you know your power." I did not reply, and she added: "You need not have warned her. I had done that already."

"You told her I was concerned in it, too," I reminded her.

"I wished to set her against you—that's why. If she had not come between us you would——" She broke off, and then, with a deep sigh, added: "Ah, Guy, you are as hard to me as if this love of mine for you were a crime."

"Let us look the facts in the face, Stephanie. I can have no love for you. You have forced this engagement as you would force the marriage. One cannot love the hand that holds the scourge."

"I will force you to love me yet."

"More probably you will find the whip struck from your hand," I retorted.

"What do you mean by that?" she cried, quickly and eagerly.

"There are but two alternatives for the slave—death or emancipation."

The words appeared to create a much deeper effect than I had anticipated. She sat thinking.

"You little guess the result of those words, or you would not have spoken them," she cried angrily. Then, reading the questioning look in my eyes, she bit her lips, as if regretting the speech, and added: "I mean that our marriage must take place to-morrow."

It struck me that this was a rapidly vamped explanation to cover a meaning she feared I might attach to her words.

"No; you fixed a week, and to that we will keep," I answered firmly.

"You think you can venture to refuse?"

"I am sure. You may do what you will."

"As you will, then. One would think it was your death instead of your marriage," she said, with a bitter laugh. She gave in so readily that my former impression was strengthened.

I rose.

"There are two things I have to say," I told her. "I have heard that the plot against Normia is to be carried out soon."

"Normia again! Always Normia!" she snapped, almost viciously. "But you need not lacerate your tender heart on her account."

"Is not her safety everything to your cause?" I asked; and added: "I don't understand you."

"There is nothing to understand, except that if such an attempt were made it would fail. Did not you see that I was taking extra precautions?"

"The other is that—I am no assassin. The prince would have me fight and kill Von Epstein. You know the truth, and that I will have no hand in it."

"You do not believe that I would dream of such a thing!" she cried indignantly. "I have already told the prince."

"For that I thank you, at any rate. The reputation for one murder is more than enough without the actual commission of another." And then I left.

I had been impressed by her manner.

What was that decision to which she declared I had driven her, and which I was to regret so bitterly? Could she have some other infernal bombshell to explode at my feet? I was always suspicious of her, and now more so than ever. And then something occurred to give shape and form to my thoughts.

I was leaving the house, when a man, whistling carelessly, ran up the steps and nearly cannoned into me. He smiled, and murmured an apology, and passed in. His face was familiar, and yet for the moment I could not place it. And I had gone some way along the street, when, in the midst of other thoughts, his name flashed into my mind.

He was the man whom my companion at the Halbermond on the night of Provost's death, young Von Gartner, had pointed out to me as Count Von Kassler, of the ministry of the interior, and high in the minister's confidence.

He had shaved his beard since that night, but the high-bridged, aquiline nose, the ruddy complexion, the deep-set, keen blue eyes, and the general carriage, made me certain of him. What could such a man be doing at the Black House?

The question was so important that it sent me hurrying back to make sure.

I examined the register of callers, but there was no such name as his.

"Has Herr Prestvo called for me within the last hour?" I asked the man in charge of the arrangements, taking a name at random.

"No, sir."

"Strange. He was to have called. Can he have been without your knowing?" And I gave a pretty accurate description of the count.

"The only caller answering that description is this gentleman." And he pointed to this entry:

Lieutenant Unterling: to see Baroness Dolgoroff. By appointment.

"That's a long way from Prestvo," I laughed.

"He came in as you went out, sir."

"Oh, that's not the man. Well, when he comes, say he had better come round to my rooms." And I went home to try and puzzle the thing out.

What was the meaning of that assumed name? He wasn't in the plot—that was certain. He had a career, and would not sacrifice it for such a scheme.

If not that, however, what? A spy? I dismissed that as equally impossible. A man as high up as he was would not act as a mere spy.

"To see Baroness Dolgoroff: by appointment." If a spy, then he must have won Stephanie's confidence as well as that of his chief. And at that my thoughts took a shape which literally chilled me with the shock of surprise.

What if he *had* the confidence of both? What if there was some secret understanding between them, and that he was the intermediary?

For such a purpose he was the very man to be chosen. He was so little known that he ran comparatively no risk of being identified by the frequenters of the Black House. Men of many nationalities went there: and, although secret investigation was always made about them, it was Stephanie who directed it. It would be the easiest thing for her to vouch "Lieutenant Unterling," and, once accredited, no questions would be asked.

Assuming, then, that he was the intermediary, what did it mean? The problem gave me hours of anxious consideration that evening.

I recalled what my old chief had said of the late baron—that of all the schemes and plots in which he had been concerned, he had invariably emerged with profit and safety, whoever else had been ruined. Stephanie had learned her ethics of diplomacy from him, and was certainly not too scrupulous to build a bridge of any sort across which she could walk in safety when this scheme ended, as it inevitably would end, in ruin.

Count Kassler's master would certainly be willing to pay a big price as well as guarantee Stephanie's safety in return for her help in keeping him accurately informed of all that was being

done. And such a betrayal was just one which would have delighted the subtle heart of the late baron.

Then other questions came up and clamored for an answer. Why had Stephanie resolved to take the risk of breaking with Von Epstein? She had told me that she set our betrothal before even the cause itself. But I knew her better than to think she would set any personal object before her own advantage. There was some other reason somewhere, if I could but guess it.

Those alterations in the gallery leading to Normia's apartments—could they have any relation to this? Apparently designed to strengthen the defenses of the place, in their present state they had weakened it by making it possible for any one to gain access to the apartments.

Alexandrov's statement that Grundelhof had found other help—was that another item of this weird mosaic of double leading? Could they have made terms with her to betray Normia? I reviewed all the incidents of the afternoon, and thought of that decision to which she said I had driven her, and should regret. Was this more of the pattern of treachery?

There was, indeed, but one consideration which would reconcile all these points—that Stephanie had planned a wholesale betrayal of all who trusted her.

If she had made terms with the Austrian minister, and had decided that the time had come for a final blow to be struck, her conduct was clear. The reason for Von Kassler's visit was plain—she could laugh at Von Epstein, for she was assured of safety and reward; the marriage with me could take place at any time; while for her to hand Normia over to the Servian Government a little in advance of the end would both bring her extra profit and appease her jealousy.

And added to this maelstrom of conflicting doubts and speculations about Stephanie were all the agitating hopes and fears about my own position, raised by the discovery of Provost's murderer, and by my interview with Catarina.

Would the next day see the fellow's arrest, and set me free to act? It was more urgent now than ever in view of these new complications. I longed for it, and all that it meant to Normia and me, more passionately than ever a newly made slave prayed for freedom.

CHAPTER XVII.

FACE TO FACE WITH PROVOST'S MURDERER.

The next day was the most trying and anxious I had experienced since the black week that followed Provost's murder. No news came from Catarina of Dromach's return; and every hour of the day I was on the rack of intolerable suspense.

I passed the time between my rooms and the Black House, and more than once during the day I took an opportunity of observing from the outside the repairs to the gallery windows. I was glad to observe that the work progressed very slowly, for I had a plan at the back of my head to get Normia to attempt an escape with my help while the repairs were in progress. And I hoped to find a chance of discussing it with her during the reception.

But it was evident, from the moment of my entrance, that Stephanie was not going to let me speak to Normia.

Stephanie herself was in the highest spirits, laughing and chatting brightly with all about her, and she kept me by her side while numbers of people came up to offer congratulations upon the betrothal.

I bowed and smirked and murmured such commonplaces as occurred to me in reply, while keeping my eyes about me. And I saw that Normia was not present.

"There will not be many dances, Guy," whispered Stephanie, as we stood alone once, "but I have fixed the cotillion for midnight. And of course you'll be my partner for that. It is *the* ceremonious announcement of the event."

"Just as you please," I agreed. It was all one to me. The thing was no

more than a farce, but I could not yet show my hand and tell her so.

"Don't you forget that. Exactly as the clock strikes twelve we are to head the procession round the rooms."

"I sha'n't forget. I'm here for the very thing. Is Normia coming?"

She frowned, and then smiled.

"Is that to make me jealous? She did not wish to come, but the prince told her she must come in at least for the cotillion. She will be here just before. She and the prince will follow immediately behind us in the procession. We take precedence for this one occasion, Guy." And she laughed.

A little later the Baron Von Epstein came up, and in a surly fashion muttered something about congratulations. I bore the man no ill-will. I wished, indeed, with all my heart that I had been congratulating him, and I tried to put some heartiness into the few words I spoke to him.

But he favored me with an ugly scowl in return, and was walking off, when, somewhat to my surprise, Stephanie called him back, slipped her hand on his arm, and went down the room, speaking earnestly and confidentially to him.

I wasn't sorry. It relieved me from standing to be stared at, and, just as I was moving off, Prince Lepova engaged me in conversation, and strolled with me through the crowded rooms to a large palm-house at one end.

He had just mentioned Normia's name, when he appeared to remember something suddenly, and excused himself, saying he would return in a few moments to resume the subject.

I was quite contented to wait. One place suited me just as well as another, and, being anxious to hear what he had to say about Normia, I sat down very contentedly until he should return.

I had been alone some three or four minutes when I had a very unpleasant surprise. I heard a smothered cry in a woman's voice, and the guttural accents of a man in passion; then the rustling of silk draperies, and Stephanie came rushing through the place, followed by Von Epstein.

She gave a start of glad surprise as I jumped to my feet, and hurried to me.

"Thank Heaven you are here, Gerard! This man has grossly insulted me!" And she fell into a seat, trembling violently and deathly pale, while Von Epstein stood by glaring defiance at me.

I understood then why the prince had steered me into the palm-house. The thing had been arranged between them to force me into this quarrel. And an exceedingly ugly quarrel it would prove, if I did not keep a very level head.

"I will speak to you later, Herr Baron," I said coolly.

"I shall await you in the card-room, monsieur. I trust you will not forget to come." And with a sneer and an elaborate bow he took himself off.

As I knew that Stephanie was only acting, I waited quietly until she chose to recover. Then, with many overacted regrets for having embroiled me in the quarrel, she gave me a rambling account of how he had tried to get her to break off the betrothal, and had then kissed her.

I said very little to her, and, having taken her back to the salon, I went off to try and come to an understanding with the infuriated baron.

Unfortunately, he was not alone in the room, and I guessed he had collected one or two friends to see him make an example of me.

"Oh! you have shown up, then?" he sneered, as I entered.

I let the sneer pass, and, crossing to him, said very quietly:

"Will you give me a few minutes in private, Herr Baron?"

"No, I won't," he replied, in as offensive a tone as he could use. "If you wish to admit your cowardice, do it openly."

This was not easy to take, but I smothered my temper and answered in the same even tone:

"I think I can convince you that there is no reason for us to quarrel." Then to the other men: "Gentlemen, will you oblige me by leaving me with the baron for a few moments?"

"He's not master of the house yet, so you need not take your orders from him," declared Von Epstein. And they shrugged their shoulders and remained.

"There is a lady's name involved in this, gentlemen, and I——"

"Oh, no, there isn't," he burst in. "It's a question of nationality—yours. I'm curious to know whether you're a Frenchman or an Englishman. Which country had the misfortune of spawning you?"

"I am an Englishman, but my nationality has nothing to do with this."

"I say it has. Do you give me the lie?"

"Do, for Heaven's sake, wait before you rush into the thing like this! Look here; if you're bent on forcing a quarrel, you shall do it. All I ask is that you take time to grow cooler, and then have ten minutes' talk with me. If I don't show you there is no need for anything of this, you shall have your way."

As I was speaking, Prince Lepova and one or two others entered, and stood round the door.

Von Epstein listened to me with a sneer, and then laughed.

"You want time to make a bolt of it, eh?" he cried truculently, glancing at the newcomers and raising his voice. "I know you English. The whole lot of you are nothing but dirty cowards and liars, from your fat king down, the cursed drunken——"

"Stop!" I cried furiously. "Gentlemen, you have heard what has fallen from this man's lips. They are the lips of a liar!" And I struck him a backhanded blow on the mouth.

Prince Lepova crossed hurriedly to me.

"What is this, Monsieur Provost?"

"Your scheme has succeeded through this hot-headed idiot's temper. You had better arrange matters on my behalf." And away I went, paying no heed to either his words or looks of protest. I regretted the incident bitterly. The fool had been duped, and being no longer of use had been turned over to me in the hope that I would kill him. And he had played right into their hands through his furious temper and unforgivable scurrility.

As I crossed the salon, Stephanie met me.

"I hope nothing has happened, Guy?"

"Can't we afford the simple luxury of truth? Your plan has succeeded so far. He insulted me, I struck him, and he'll probably try to kill me to-morrow morning."

"He insulted me, Guy!" she cried fiercely.

"And your treatment of him—what is that, pray?"

"You will kill him, Guy?" she whispered strenuously.

"I sha'n't even try. He is much more likely to kill me."

"You must—you must! He is dangerous. He will ruin us all."

"I am no bravo, to cut throats at your bidding or Lepova's," I answered sternly. "And now I am going out on the balcony to cool down."

"You won't forget the cotillion?" she said, as I was moving off.

"Curse the cotillion! I'm in no mood to go jigging about the room like a prancing ape."

"But, Guy, you must," she said eagerly. "On the stroke of midnight, remember."

"All right. Another scene of the comedy may be a relief." And I walked off.

I went to the spot where I had sat once before and lit a cigar. I glanced at my watch, and saw I had half an hour before the jigging business, and I was soon absorbed in thoughts that were none too pleasant.

I was not afraid of the meeting with Von Epstein. The discipline of the last few days in schooling myself to face the certainty of death rendered me virtually indifferent whether I fell or not. I had one great regret—that I had to meet the man, not in my own name, but in the detestable character of Provost. A little luck, and we should have had that slippery Greek in our hands, and then I could have fought in my own name.

But it was no good in railing against luck, so I accepted the situation for what it was. One thing was certain, of course—I was not going to murder Von Epstein to oblige Stephanie.

Very soon Lepova came out and told me the arrangements he had made: the place and time of the meeting, and that we were to fight with pistols. He said I had been very prudent to force the other man to be the challenger, and so get the choice of weapons, as Von Epstein was a seasoned duelist and an exceptionally fine swordsman.

He was enlarging upon this, and I was paying little attention to him, when I gave a start on noticing something in the road below. My seat was at the extreme left of the house at the back, and it gave a view along a secluded, tree-shaded road, unlighted save for one lamp.

I saw a man leave the house by a side door and hurry along the road. As he passed under the lamp he paused, looked at his watch, and started to run. I had a good view of him as he stood under the light. His tall, angular figure, with its stoop of the shoulders and forward hang of the head, showed up clearly, and he carried one arm in a sling. It was Grundelhof.

What was he doing in such a spot and at such an hour—close to midnight? I gave another start at the thought. Midnight was the hour for the cotillion—the hour when Stephanie had insisted so strenuously upon my being in the salon.

I lost no time in getting rid of Lepova, and sat waiting and thinking. All my suspicions of the previous night revived. Some devilment was in the making.

Two or three minutes later I had what looked like confirmation. An electric motor-car without lights came stealing silently past the house, and stopped under the shadow of some trees, just beyond the wing of the house in which Normia's apartments were situated.

I waited for no more. I made my way through the crowded rooms to the entrance to Normia's apartments. The guard was there.

"Has the princess gone to the ballroom yet?" I asked him casually.

"No, sir." The answer confirmed my suspicions.

For a second I hesitated whether I should force my way past him into the gallery, but a better plan suggested itself.

I ran down-stairs, got my cloak from the attendant—a long, black cloak of Provost's which I had worn, having no overcoat of my own—and, as if in no hurry, lit a cigarette on the door-step, and sauntered out.

Keeping well in the shadow of the building, I stole quickly round to the spot where the alterations to the gallery were being made. The ladder was in position, and a plank, which had been roped to it to prevent its use, had been removed. One of the casements was out of position, too, and the opening was covered with a piece of sacking.

The thing was now as plain as print. Stephanie had taken a hand in the abduction, and had contrived this very cunning plan by which the man—Alexandrov, of course—could get access to Normia's rooms while the merry-making in the other part of the house was keeping everybody else busy.

The night was as dark as they could have wished, but it favored me as much as the others, and in a moment I was at the top of the ladder, listening at the opening for any sound of movements in the gallery.

The place was dead still, and not greatly caring whether I was seen or not, I pushed the canvas aside, and slipped in. There was no one there. My knowledge of the gallery enabled me to move warily; but, in creeping up to the folding-doors which led to Normia's rooms, I ran against a column with a bust on it, and made a little noise.

It was covered with a white cloth, and I had this in my hands when one of the doors was opened, and a light showed. Instantly I flung the cloth over my head and stood as still as one of the statues.

"I heard nothing, monsieur." It was the voice of the little French servant.

"Well, be quick, then," was the reply, in the liquid tones of Alexandrov. I recognized it at once.

The movement of the light, seen through the cloth, allowed of my following their actions. They came close to the folding-doors by which I was posing. The doors were opened, and the lights from within came streaming full on to me, much to my uneasiness.

Then the girl spoke.

"The princess will be quite ready now, monsieur. She has been dressed some time in readiness to go to the salon just before midnight. Wait here, please, until I bring her out."

"Be quick—be quick! There is not a moment to lose," was Alexandrov's impatient reply, and I heard the girl go into the anteroom.

Alexandrov was so close to me that I could hear his breathing, and I half-feared he would hear the thumping of my heart against my ribs in my excitement.

He shifted his feet now and again restlessly; and, just after the girl shut the door of Normia's room beyond, I heard him start and swear softly to himself. His shadow came suddenly between me and the light, and I made sure that he suspected me.

I knew that his knife between my ribs would be his first indication that he had discovered I was no statue, so I lowered the white cloth and looked at him.

He had not seen me, however. He was bending down with his back to me, and his oath had been evoked by some difficulty he was experiencing in unfolding a long black cloak. To see what the trouble was he had stepped forward into the light.

I would not again run the risk of covering my eyes, but held the white cloth so that my face just appeared above it, and stared at him intently.

I did not then realize the uncanny effect of my action, but it was soon apparent. He got the cloak arranged to his liking, and moved back into the shadow to wait. A second later, unable to hold my breath any longer, I let it escape in a long, deep, and somewhat tremulous, sigh.

He heard it, started nervously, glanced round him in search of the cause, and then, fixed upon him with a stolid stare above the white sheet, he saw my eyes, reflecting, no doubt, with a sort of unearthly gleam, the light from the room beyond.

All this time I had not seen his face, but I could tell that he was fascinated with sudden terror. After a few seconds a suppressed groan came from him, and down he went on to his knees, and began muttering his prayers as fast as his chattering teeth could get them out.

He regarded me as a ghostly visitor from the other world, and well content to frighten him away and so avoid other trouble, I stretched out my right hand slowly, and began to glide toward him.

It was my turn then to be amazed.

As I moved toward him, he uttered another gasping cry, and wriggled forward on his knees, his hands held aloft beseechingly, until the fear-sweat on his pallid face glistened in the light.

"Mercy! Mercy!" he moaned. "I will confess. I will confess. Spare me."

I recognized him the instant I saw his face. And at the recognition many things were made plain.

He was the man I had met outside my rooms on the night of Provost's murder. His fright then, and his abject terror now, were alike explained. They sprang from the same cause.

He himself was Provost's murderer, and his tale to Catarina about Dromach was no more than a lie to win her favor and lull her suspicions. He might well identify the knife with which the deed had been done. It was his own!

The truth was out at last, thank Heaven, and I was really a free man again.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DUEL.

No sooner had I made the discovery that Alexandrov was the man who of all others I wished to find than the dif-

ficulties of the situation occurred to me. He was a big, powerful brute, and was sure to be armed with knife or revolver, or both, while I had no weapon at all.

The moment he realized that I was of the earth, and not from the region to which he believed he had sent me, he would fight desperately. The odds were too heavy for me to have a chance of success, despite the fact that he was for the moment paralyzed with fear, and that I should have the advantage of surprise.

On the other hand, if I could drive him away while he still believed that I was my own ghost, his courage and confidence would return with the daylight, and there would be little difficulty in getting him arrested.

It is always safe to play on a low-born Greek's fear of the supernatural; and I decided to try it now, leaving the struggle to come afterward, if it must.

I now sunk my voice to its most sepulchral tone, and moaned, very slowly and deliberately:

"You killed me, Alexandrov. Confess, or never more shalt thou know peace."

He threw his hands on high in a very paroxysm of fright.

"I do confess! I killed you! Oh, Mother of Heaven, have mercy!" And, as if unable to bear the sight of the apparition, he buried his head in his hands.

I seized the chance to step back into the black shadow, leaving the beam of light between us, and threw off the white sheet. In my black cloak I was practically invisible, of course.

"Go!" I thundered out of the darkness. "And, remember." And I let my voice die away, as if I were vanishing.

The illusion was apparently a complete success. He looked up, wiped the sweat from his brow, and rose, staring about him, and staggering and reeling like a drunken man. At that moment the door of Normia's room beyond was opened.

"Go!" I wailed again faintly; and in a yet fainter whisper: "Go!"

He needed no more. With a cry of fear he made headlong for the window, upsetting more than one thing in his rush, and scrambled out just before Normia and the girl showed in the doorway.

"What was that noise? Why is the gallery in darkness, Elise?" asked Normia.

"Some one must have switched off the lights, your highness," answered the ready-witted girl, glancing about her in great bewilderment.

"Switch them up at once."

At that I threw off my cloak and stepped forward as the lights went up.

The maid gave a little scream.

"The foreman!" she cried.

Normia was no less surprised.

"Monsieur Provost!"

"I have a strange story to tell you, princess, and you should know it at once."

The servant began to take alarm.

"It is the hour for the cotillion, highness," said she hurriedly.

"Enough," I said, turning on her sharply. "I know the part you have played to-night. I was here all the time."

"I don't know what you mean, monsieur; but I will fetch the baroness." And off she sped along the gallery.

"What does this mean, monsieur?" asked Normia, in some alarm.

"That the attempt of which I warned you was made to-night, and fortunately I reached here in time to prevent it."

One of the big clocks in the neighborhood chimed midnight, and Stephanie came hurrying in with the maid.

"But I was dressed for the ball, monsieur, and Elise came to fetch me," said Normia.

"Elise had left a man standing in the shadow of that door, and she knew that he was here to carry you away."

"Oh, monsieur! monsieur! How false? How dare you?" cried the girl indignantly. She had overheard this. "Excellency, you will not have my character taken away like this by a man who came here as a spy."

I picked up the long black cloak and a gag which Alexandrov had dropped.

"These things tell their own story," I said quietly.

At this Stephanie thought she saw her chance.

"You would naturally know where to look for them if you had placed them there," she said dryly.

"Or if I had seen them dropped by the man in his flight," I retorted. "There is some plain speaking to come. Had this girl better remain to hear it?" I asked Stephanie. "I don't propose to deal harshly with her. She is, of course, no more than the tool."

Stephanie turned on the girl with a great show of indignation.

"If you have had a hand in this you shall answer for it. You had better go for the time."

"She will go for good, and the sooner the better," I declared.

"Have you any other orders?" snapped Stephanie angrily.

"Let her remain, then, and send for Prince Lepova. He at least will understand what should be done." And at that the girl was sent off.

"I had warned you of this, Normia," said Stephanie, "and you will, therefore, understand why it is that Monsieur Provost is here so opportunely."

"Why not my Christian name, Stephanie?"

She declined the challenge.

"Are you coming to the salon, Normia?"

"What occurred was this," I interposed. "My suspicions were aroused by something I saw as I sat on the balcony. I hastened here, entering by that window—as some one had entered before me. I was in time to see Elise and a man, whom I can identify, and she left him here while she went to decoy you. While she was away the fellow was suddenly stricken with panic—at least, so I presume; and he rushed away, leaving these things behind him."

"A probable story, indeed!" she scoffed. "But intelligible enough if you add the key—that you were here to see the scheme carried through."

But at this Normia astonished us both.

"I believe what Monsieur Provost has told me, Stephanie, and I thank you, monsieur, from my heart, for your service. I am sorry I ever doubted you."

"Thank you," I replied, more moved than I cared for either of them to see.

Stephanie was bitterly angry, but before anything else could be said Lepova came hurrying through the gallery.

"Baroness! Monsieur Provost!" he exclaimed in great surprise. "I came to see why you were so late, Normia. Are you not coming? Every one is agape with curiosity at the delay."

"There has been trouble here, and nearly very serious trouble, too, prince," I said, and told him briefly what had occurred.

"I am in no mood for the cotillion," I added.

"They will say that the baron has frightened you away by his challenge, monsieur," he replied.

"Challenge?" cried Normia, with a start.

"Baron Von Epstein has insulted Monsieur Provost's real country—England—most grossly, and they are to meet in the morning," said the prince placidly.

Normia changed color and bit her lip, and to distract attention from her, I gave my arm to Stephanie. "They shall not say that, prince. Let us return to the salon at once."

We went through the farce of the dance, and at the close Stephanie and I stood together to receive the formal congratulations. But as soon as I could decently get away I left the house.

The prince detained me a minute. He had had a full account from Normia, and thanked me warmly for my part. Then, referring to the morrow's meeting, he said he would call for me at seven o'clock to drive me to the ground.

"I trust you will serve me to-morrow as well as you have to-night, monsieur," were his parting words. A remark which I left unanswered.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The White Horse of Drowning Ford

By B. M. Bower

A very, very creepy ghost episode—with a white horse as the central figure—that comes as a sequel to an alarmingly dramatic narrative told by one of the blithe spirits of the "Flying U" Ranch

PINK, Weary, and Happy Jack sat in the warmth of their camp-fire—the last camp-fire of their journey north. The ranch, where they expected to find the horses they were after, lay a short day's ride beyond. So said Pink, and he was supposed to know; even Happy Jack saw no reason for disputing the statement.

"Wisht we had that shack we camped in," said Happy Jack, kicking an ember into the heart of the glow. "It ain't any too warm camping out, this time uh the year."

"We could 'a' camped in a shack tonight, so far as that goes," Pink informed him, between puffs at his cigarette. "There's one up above here, about four miles—or was, two years ago."

"Well, why the dickens——"

"This place is all right; it suits *me*," said Pink. "From the way yuh carried on in that shack with a man cached up above, Happy, you'd go plumb locoed up at Drowning Ford."

"Aw, gwan! It wasn't me was scairt: you and Weary was up with your guns cocked, hunched together like two dogies in a blizzard, when I woke up. Yuh said the shack was haunted. Yuh know yuh did. I never——"

"Cadwolloper and I was only investigating. We wanted to locate the noise before you woke up and got nervous, Happy. It was your good we was thinking of," put in Weary mildly.

"Aw, gwan; I s'pose you'll be saying next it's my good you're thinking of when yuh camp down here with the wind ready to shave a dog, instead uh going on to a shack. I s'pose yuh think it's good fer m' health to let the wind make a sieve out uh me. If Pink knows about a shack close handy by, and don't take us to where it's at, he needs punchin'. If yuh ask me, he's a darn' poor pilot, anyhow." Happy Jack was never sweet-tempered at best; just now he was uncomfortable and cross.

"You can go stop in it, if yuh want to; it's right on up the creek, and yuh can't miss it. Nobody's stopping yuh. But this is good enough for Weary and me."

"What ails the shack, Cadwolloper?" Weary leaned and held a dry twig among the coals till it blazed, and applied it deftly to a fresh-rolled cigarette. Then he threw the burning twig in among the flames and puffed contentedly a moment. "Is it haunted?"

"Not as I know of," said Pink shortly. "But that ain't saying it hasn't got a license to be, if it wanted to."

Happy Jack grunted and glanced over his shoulder, down the dark creek-bottom where howled the wind from the northwest.

Weary pushed a brand farther into the fire with the heel of his boot. "Mama! it's sure a howler," he remarked. "What about the shack, Cadwolloper? Happy's hurting to hear a real creepy yarn—and if yuh can raise a ghost and square it with your conscience, all the better. Happy sure likes ghosts."

"Aw, gwan!" adjured Happy crossly.

"It's sure creepy, if that's all yuh want," said Pink. "But there ain't any

ghost to it. It's the shack at Drowning Ford, where a fellow I knew got killed in the corral; horse stomped him to death—and then some. It was sure a fright."

"I saw a fellow that broke his neck once," volunteered Happy. "It didn't scare *me*. I stayed in the same shack with him overnight, while they was after the cor'ner—me and another fellow. We slept in the same room with him; and I've stayed in the same shack, all by my lonesome, sence then, too, and never turned a hair. I betche——"

"Oh, you're the brave lad—nobody's contradicting yuh," cut in Pink. "But I'll bet ten dollars, after I've told yuh about Conroy, yuh won't have the sand to go up and sleep in that shack."

"It's my money," boasted Happy Jack rashly. "Throw it out uh yuh, and make it good and strong."

Pink lighted another cigarette, adopting Weary's method, with Weary for shelter, and threw a gnarled cottonwood branch on the flaring fire, so that the shadows leaped farther away and danced weirdly around them.

"I ain't going to tell it scarey, Happy; I guess the straight goods'll do for you. There was a no-account fellow ranging up through here by the name of Conroy. Him and I had come together more'n once, and we didn't love each other a little bit. He was—well, he's dead, now, so never mind what he was. But, after a while, the sheriff got to camping on his trail, and he was fogging up to the line, trying to make a getaway. I was with the Cross L, and we was camping right here in this same bottom—it was when we was trailing the first bunch uh stock over the line into the Red Deer country—and Rowdy Vaughan was running the outfit.

"So up rides Mr. Sheriff and a deputy, and wants to know if Conroy had passed this way. Rowdy was down on him like hell, too, but he didn't want to mix up in the deal, so I puts the sheriff next to a man we seen driving a little bunch uh horses down the creek as we swung down the hill over there. I also tells him about this shack and corral at Drowning Ford, where I guess Conroy was headed for. So he fogs on down the creek just at sundown, and I goes with him and the deputy, because I know the lay uh the land. I wintered once in that shack, when it was the line camp of an outfit I worked for.

"Well, we dubbed around a while, and looked through the shack, and didn't find anything of him. There was a big, white horse in the corral, and we could hear leather a-popping and bridle-bit a-rattling to beat the cars, so we know he's somewhere around. I sneaked up and felt uh the gate, and it was tied shut with the same old chain that was always on it. I could just barely see Mister Horse a-rampaging around inside, and snorting, 'Whoo-*oof!*' every few minutes, and once in a while nickering for the bunch, so I know Conroy ain't far off.

"Pretty soon we camps down around that corral, and night-guards it without no relief and with our guns handy, you bet. Conroy was one uh that kind that likes to have a good, broad, human back for a target. I tell yuh right now, it was lonesomer than a pinnacle in the Bad Lands. It's about half a mile above where this creek runs into Milk River, and the corral is chucked down among a lot uh willows and boxelder, and the river goes grumbling along on one side, and the hills on the other. And, squatting in the bushes, with a gun in your fist, not knowing what minute you're going to feel a nice, hot bullet plunk into the small uh your back, gets kinda monotonous along toward morning.

"At daybreak I rubbers around like a hen turkey stealing off to where her nest is cached, and then I sneaks closer to the corral fence. Soon as I could see, I knew the horse—a big, snaky-white devil they called the Fern Outlaw—and I savvied that Conroy had caught him up out of a bunch he'd run across. I knew Conroy's saddle, too—a full-stamped, square-skirted, single-rigged one. One stirrup was hooked over the horn, like he'd been tightening the cinch, and the bridle-rein was dragging, and the horse rough and

sweaty from fretting in the corral all night.

"And down next the fence, trampled till you couldn't tell it for a human, was what was left uh Conroy. The Fern Outlaw had sure been busy all night."

"Hell!" said Weary simply.

Happy Jack did not say anything; he glanced over his shoulder.

"So help me Josephine! there was a few minutes when my knees wobbled till I like to fell over. Pretty soon I gives a kinda croak, and the sheriff come hot-footing around to where I was hanging onto the fence and still wobbling; and he looked pretty pasty himself, I took notice—and the deputy, too. I'd had it in for Conroy, but not to want him to get it like *that!* And the Fern Outlaw's hoofs all red——"

"Oh, saw off!" commanded Happy Jack hoarsely. "Yuh needn't to go into *dee*tails, Pink."

"Yuh needn't worry. And so I pokes my gun through the rails, draws a bead on that white brute, and him a-glaring at me plumb murderous, not ten feet away; and I pulled the trigger till there wasn't anything more doing, and wished I had a few more bullets to pump into his carcass. Right then I knew what it is makes a man want to kill and keep a-killing sometimes. I was mad when that horse dropped, because he wasn't alive so I could kill him over again. I could 'a' stood and shot at him all day. But the sheriff pulled me off, and sent me on to camp, and I ain't seen the darn' place since. We got to go by there in the morning."

For a time no one spoke. Then Pink roused, examined critically his half-burned cigarette, and turned to Happy Jack.

"How about that ten dollars, Happy?" he inquired banteringly.

"Aw, gwan! I ain't lost any ten dollars yet." Happy retorted, but without much enthusiasm. "I've been places where folks have cashed in, more'n once. I don't know's there's any call for you to throw out any slurs, anyway. I notice you're camping out here in the wind rather than sleep in that shack—and, from your story, the shack ain't got anything to do with the deal."

"All right; you take your blankets and ride up there, and sleep in that shack; there's ten dollars in the job," fleered Pink. "*I* wouldn't do it for the money, and it ain't because there's ghosts, either. I don't take any stock in ghosts. But I hate to think about that deal; the Fern Outlaw gives me the creeps, and that's no lie. If ever a horse looked murder, that horse did when I pulled the trigger first time. He'd 'a' liked to got me the same way he did Conroy, and he'd 'a' tried it, if the fence hadn't been between us. I don't want anything uh the blame place, and I ain't afraid to own it. You go on, Happy, and get out uh the wind. Yuh can't miss it; just follow this trail to where it crosses the creek, and then keep straight up the river about half a mile. There's an old ford there that sure has got a swell ghost-story hitched to it. Do yuh want to hear that, too?"

"No. I don't. I ain't got any interest in ghost-stories, as I know of. If anybody should ask yuh, I'm going t' bed." Happy Jack began unrolling his "soogans," with much dignity.

"What about that ten dollars?" Pink again wanted to know.

"Aw, shut up! D'yuh think I'm fool enough t' ride four miles this time uh night, and have t' ride back in the morning for breakfast? I got some mercy on my horse."

"Mama!" Weary murmured eloquently.

"Yuh needn't think I'm *scared,*" cried Happy, whirling indignantly upon him. "I'd as lief sleep up there as not; but I got sense, I hope. And, anyway, the chances is Pink dreamed all that. I'd ride up and find out there wasn't no shack at all, if I was fool enough to swallow the yarn—which I ain't."

"You're sure brave, Happy," said Weary placidly. "You'll dream things to-night, see if yuh don't. Yuh want to cover up your head good."

"Aw, gwan!" Happy muttered glumly.

"This is sure a profitable trip for Weary and me," Pink remarked, with

much satisfaction. "Weary's got your gun and belt to remember the trip by, and I'm ten dollars to the good. We're sure glad to have yuh with us, Happy."

Happy Jack, crawling angrily into his bed, turned the "tarp" up over his head and deigned no reply; and Pink and Weary laughed softly the while they poured water on the camp-fire that the wind might not scatter it into the grass when they slept.

The sun was well up, but shining dimly through thin, gray clouds when they splashed through the little creek, next morning, half a mile below Drowning Ford.

"I'll show yuh, now, that you'd 'a' found shelter, all right, if you'd had the nerve to ride after it last night," Pink observed to Happy Jack, when they jogged on through the lank willow growth.

"'F I was you, I'd keep still about nerve," Happy retorted. "Yuh might uh led us up here last night, yourself."

"Sure, I might—but I didn't. Getting the creeps and owning up to it takes half the cuss off."

They rode into a little open next the river, skirted along the edge, and came upon the corral, half-hidden in the rank, frost-blackened weeds that come quickly where man has lived and where he lives no more. The sagging wings yawned emptily at them as they passed. The gate was closed and tied securely with the rusted chain.

Pink pointed out a heap of something, just where the weeds had grown thickest. "There's what's left uh the Fern Outlaw—damn him!" he said, and lifted his shoulders in distaste of the memory.

"It's sure a hard-looker," commented Weary, and they rode on. "I'd get the creeps, myself, if I had to stop here alone. I don't know as I blame Happy for wanting to stay where he was, ten dollars' worth. Our company was sure worth it."

"Aw, you fellows make me tired!" snorted Happy Jack.

Whereupon Pink and Weary, quick to seize upon so good an opportunity, amused themselves by much discussion of Happy Jack's weakness, and planned many ways of spending the ten dollars which they calmly told Jack he had lost. They gave him advice, prated much upon the courage without which no man may stand the equal of his fellows, and badgered him into sulky silence and riding apart from them whenever the trail permitted. So that for them the day passed quickly, and the journey was pleasant.

That night they slept in the bunk-house of the ranch, where were the horses, and the next morning was spent in branding and venting. So that it was almost noon when they left on the homeward trail, and it was sunset when they neared the bluff which rimmed the river; by the time they had forced the unruly bunch down the narrow trail into the bottom-land, it was growing dusk.

"This bunch uh freaks are going to raise Cain to-night," Pink remarked, at the top of his voice, to Weary, on the other side of the herd. "They'll break back and hit for home, if we don't watch 'em pretty close."

"That's right," Weary agreed, and spurred his tired horse to haze a straggler back into the bunch. "We won't sleep much."

"Why don't yuh corral 'em down here at the ford? Are yuh *'fraid?*" taunted Happy Jack through the gloom.

"That's just what we're going to do, Happy," Pink retorted. "You shouldn't take a joke so blame' serious. If there's any ghost-walking in this flat, you'll be the one that sees 'em."

"Aw, gwan! I betche——" A horse broke back, and Happy interrupted himself to take after it.

"Is that corral solid, Cadwolloper?" Weary called out.

"Sure—or it was, last time I saw it. It looked all right yesterday, anyway. I'll ride ahead and open the gate." He dug his spurs in, and shot ahead of the bunch into the shadows beyond. He really did not care much about stopping there; if there was no particular reason for it, he would much sooner stop elsewhere, because the place held an un-

pleasant memory. But as for fear, Pink counted himself immune, and with reason. He even smiled at the way he had frightened Happy Jack with the gruesome story of the place: the way Happy had crept into his blankets and pulled the tarp over his head was something to remember with secret mirth.

He clattered into the silent wings of the corral and slowed as he neared the gate. Ten feet from it he pulled up short, and his breath came sharply. The gate, swinging wide open, creaked its rusty hinges in the night wind. Even during that first gasp of surprise, something charged out upon him and flashed by with the popping of leather and rattle of bridle-bit: a great, white horse, with empty saddle. As it thundered by him, Pink saw that one stirrup was hooked over the horn.

His own horse had backed and wheeled from the suddenness of the charge, and Pink leaned and drove in the spurs, and fled, panic-stricken, from the place.

Out on the flat the dusky silence was alive with the beat of frightened, galloping hoofs. He could hear Happy Jack and Weary tearing along the river-bank, swearing while they tried to turn the stampeding herd. Pink raced blindly toward their voices.

"Did you see it?" he gasped, when he was close to them, and the sound of the horses, scattered and fleeing wildly, came more faintly.

"Something big and white shot into the herd, and hell broke loose. What was it?" Weary rode closer and listened ruefully to the distant pound of the runaways.

"Boys, you can laugh—but if it wasn't the Fern Outlaw——"

"Get out!" Weary was frankly amused.

"That's all right"—Pink's voice had an odd note they had never heard in it before—"but so help me Josephine! when I rode into the wings a big, white horse shot out uh that corral and past me like a cyclone."

"Go to the devil! That gate was shut—and *tied!*" objected Weary.

"It was, but it ain't now," Pink insisted doggedly. "And that ain't all; it had a saddle on. And one stirrup—was hooked—*over the horn!*"

"Aw, gwan!" quavered Happy Jack unhappily, and looked fearfully behind.

"Cadwolloper——"

"It's the God's truth, Weary!" said Pink, in a tone that forced belief.

"Aw, say, let's get out uh this," Happy Jack implored them.

"Here comes Collins with the pack on, all right," said Weary, in a relieved tone, as a dark shape ambled toward them out of the gloom. "Come on—we'll go."

Without another word, they turned and rode down the river toward the ford, headed for their old camp up the creek. When they passed the corral, though pride kept them to the trail, they rode close-huddled, with Collins jogging meekly behind. Collins was a good packhorse and never left his masters. Their eyes turned to the yawning wings, with the posts standing grim and ghostly in the night. Where the gate had been was shade, but this much they could see: the gate, which had been fastened with a chain, swung open. As they rode slowly past, it creaked weirdly in the wind, and not one of the three but felt a quick tightening of the scalp, a prickling along the spine.

From behind, a horse whinnied, and the mount of Pink lifted his head and sent shrill answer. The three, moved by one impulse, broke into a lope. Down the willow-shrouded trail they galloped silently to where it crossed the creek. There their horses would have stopped to drink, but their riders kicked them into more speed. Again came the horse-call from behind, and again Pink's horse shrilled answer.

"I guess that's Glory," Weary observed, in a peculiar, hushed voice.

A horse splashed into the creek, stopped, and came on, galloping. They heard the splash, and the pounding gallop, and then the popping of saddle-leather. Pink turned, and, for the first time, looked back.

"Oh, my Lord, boys! *It's coming!*" His quirt swished and came down along the rump of his mount.

"Aw, say! Come *on*, boys!" The quirt of Happy Jack was swishing, also, and Weary kept pace with them. A big, white shape was pounding down the trail behind, and the creak and rattle of saddle-leather came clearly to them in the gloom. And always they fled before, with blank, staring terror clutching sickeningly at their hearts.

They reached the old camp, and passed it on a run, with Collins puffing faithfully along behind; with the pounding gallop of that mysterious, white shape, and the popping of saddle-leather, coming after.

When the sound ceased and the white shape no longer pursued not one of them could tell. They rode up a long slope, their horses loping stiffly, and it was Weary, looking back, who saw a silent, deserted trail behind.

"I guess we've outrun it," he said, pulling down to a walk. "We can afford to let our hair lay down again, Cadwolloper."

"Aw, what yuh got t' say about ghosts *now?*" croaked Happy, after they had ridden slowly for a time, still looking often over their shoulders; still listening, too, for their pursuer.

"We ain't saying anything. We're busy thinking," Pink retorted, with something of his old aplomb.

"Mama! It's the first time I ever knew horses had ghosts," mused Weary, after another silence.

"That Fern Outlaw never was like any other horse," Pink observed gloomily. "He always had more devil in him than was human."

"He sure wanted yuh bad, Cadwolloper," Weary remarked sympathetically. And Pink looked again over his shoulder, but made no answer.

After another mile they pulled down the creek and camped for the night; and once a fire was going and the coffee was sending steam up into their eager nostrils, they felt more themselves, and could go several minutes without lifting chin and staring rigidly, listening for the creak of saddle-leather and the rattle of bridle-bit, and the rhythmic *pluck, pluckety-pluck* of galloping hoofs.

When they had eaten fried bacon and bannock, and had drunk all the coffee (Weary had made it stronger than usual), they felt still more masters of their nerves, and could discuss the thing—and even laugh a little, in a half-hearted fashion. All, that is, but Happy Jack. He had always secretly believed in ghosts, and with his terror was mixed some triumph: he had seen Weary and Pink, the two most skeptical fellows of the Flying U, thoroughly and unequivocally scared. They did not even attempt to deny it, although they laughed and told just how the crimples felt going up and down their spines. Weary even announced, after a cigarette or two, that it was simply a case of nerves: but not even Pink would abet him in that theory.

"I wasn't scared till after it happened," he protested. "I rode into them wings thinking about Happy pulling the 'tarp' over his head, night before last. And then I seen the gate was open, and then, *swoosh!* comes—whatever it was. And I know it was a horse, and a white one: and I know it had a saddle on, and that one stirrup was hooked over the horn. And yuh can't work all that into a case uh nerves, Weary."

"Maybe it was, though: yuh see, Cadwolloper, a guilty conscience—"

"Was *your* conscience guilty?" Pink demanded hotly. "And didn't yuh hear it yourself—and *see* it? And didn't Happy hear and see the same? I don't say it was a ghost; I merely say it's damn' queer."

"It sure was, Cadwolloper," Weary agreed, solemnly. "And here's hoping it don't ramble into camp while we're asleep, and do things to Happy."

"Aw, it won't be me," Happy Jack protested uneasily. "Pink's the one it's after."

To this Weary would not agree. "Ghosts," he asserted calmly, "takes after whoever's the worst scared in the bunch: and I leave it to Cadwolloper if your teeth didn't sound like bones in a coon show. I read a story once about a house that was haunted. And them that was scared got it a-plenty;

a dog that was along took to dropping his tail at half-mast and sneaking around behind furniture—and, Happy, that dog had its neck broke by the ghosts. They don't like to have folks give 'em the shy glance and edge off and not act polite and glad to make their acquaintance. They're sensitive, Happy, and their feelings are easy hurt. Yuh want to be nice to 'em, and give 'em the glad hand——"

"Aw, that's all right," sneered Happy Jack, with an effort. "But I notice you and Pink didn't give no glad hand, and yuh didn't act real tickled, either, when it come—after us." He glanced behind him nervously, and edged closer to the fire. "Yuh hit the trail up the creek about as fast——"

"We did try to keep up to yuh, Happy," Weary said brazenly. "We kinda feel responsible for yuh; we didn't want yuh to stray off and get lost, and maybe have that big, white——"

Out in the darkness a horse whinnied shrilly, with a peculiar, insistent note that made their nerves crimple. They looked at one another in a questioning, startled way, and Weary forgot to finish what he was saying. After that they built up the fire, instinctively comforted by the jolly, leaping flames that seemed to laugh at the darkness, and drive it back, and at the white mystery which the darkness sheltered. With little speech they unrolled their beds and lay down, and stared at the weird dance of the shadows.

Once Collins lifted his head from cropping the young grass just outside the glow of the fire, and snorted at something which he heard or saw—or both. Happy Jack, with his bed so close to the bed of Pink and Weary that the blankets touched, shuddered and dove farther under the shelter of his tarpaulin. Weary turned his head on the makeshift pillow and met the big, lustrous eyes of Pink staring at him in the uncertain light.

"If it comes mooching around here, Cadwolloper, I'll just try your medicine and empty my gun into it," he murmured.

Pink grinned. "Go to it, Weary; but what gets me is, what the devil *is* it? I never heard of a horse ghost——"

"Aw, say! can't you fellows drop the subject?" came, muffled but insistent, from under the "tarp" of Happy Jack.

Pink and Weary dropped the subject as requested, and, after a while they slept—and not even I will say that their dreams were pleasant or peaceful.

A slanting sunbeam waked them, and they got up to face a new day, and whatever it might hold for them. They were just two minutes in making the discovery that, for one thing, the new day held a horse that had somehow broken his hobble and was grazing afar and relishfully.

Happy Jack insisted upon reading into the incident something uncanny, because the horse was Pink's own Toots, a plump little roan with mild eyes and an unlimited capacity for mischief—not unlike Pink himself. Because it was only Toots, Pink took his rope and walked unconcernedly toward him; Toots was dead gentle, so that one could walk up to him anywhere and lay hand upon his shoulder. Because the night of uncomfortable experiences was gone and the sun was shining into the creek-bottom, Pink whistled as he went.

In half an hour he had forgotten to whistle. Toots was grazing fifteen feet away, and had one eye warily turned toward Pink, just as he had done a dozen times before. Happy Jack had caught his horse, saddled him, and was coming to help, gloating openly at the need of it.

"Aw, let me get him for yuh, Pink. He's the gentle nag that's always handy t' have on a pack trip, 'cause he won't leave camp, and yuh can always walk up to him!" he fleered. "Breakfast's ready; yuh better go on and eat, and I'll bring in your little old duck-leg Toots."

"All right, Happy," Pink said sweetly, and faced toward camp. It was then that he went back to whistling; Toots had some traits that he knew better than did Happy Jack. Twice Pink looked back: the first time Happy

was swinging his loop over his head within easy roping-distance, and Toots was watching the performance with mild interest. The second time Pink looked Happy was charging indignantly—and surprisedly—down the creek, and Toots was some distance in the lead. Pink smiled, and took up the tune where he had left off.

Pink and Weary ate their breakfast in leisurely fashion, rolled the beds, and packed what they could without robbing Happy Jack entirely of breakfast. They smoked a cigarette apiece, the while they listened interestedly to stray bits of fervid language which came to them from afar. They watched Toots play with the temper and the patience of Happy Jack, and laughed when the loop descended, to find the horse elsewhere.

Then Pink suggested that they go, before Happy got desperate and took a shot at Toots. Weary got up and swung into the saddle, and Pink put his saddle on Collins and followed. After that there were three roughened tempers instead of one, and the creek-bottom was an animated place, and the hills fairly shuddered at some of the words they had to repeat. Back on the campfire the coffee boiled over, and then went dry and burned, with a villainous smell, and a gopher came up and sampled the batter left for Happy's flapjacks.

At ten o'clock Pink led Toots ungently into camp, and Toots looked exceeding meek, and a bit down-hearted because he had been caught a full hour before he had intended. They unpacked, built another fire, and washed out the coffee-pail and cooked dinner to save time and because they were all hungry. So the shadows lay straight to the north and the sun was at its brightest when they once more splashed through the creek and rode up the winding, willow-fringed trail to Drowning Ford. Then they came out into the open where stood the corral, and at the first glance they caught their breaths and looked curiously at one another.

The yawning, empty wings lay open to the yellow sunlight; the gate, which had swung open, creaking in the night wind, was closed and tied with the rusty bit of chain. Happy Jack pulled sharply out of the trail and went close along the river-bank—and he went at a gallop. Pink and Weary kept to the trail, but they, also, went at a gallop. It was not till they had reached the top of the bluff beyond that they pulled up and looked down, at the leaning, sag-roofed cabin and the corral with its time-blackened posts and rails, and at the gate tied shut with the chain.

"Well, I'll be—ding-donged!" said Pink solemnly.

"So will I, Cadwolloper!" Weary answered, quite as solemnly.

Happy Jack stuck in the spurs. "Aw, come on!" he implored unhappily.

Next day they were once more headed south with their herd, when they rode over a hill, and met, face to face, two horsemen who greeted Pink like a brother. While they were talking, one whom Pink called Bill got down from his horse—a big, white horse—and handed the hackamore rope to the other.

"I want yuh to hang onto this son-of-a-gun while I tighten the cinch," he said grimly, as he hooked the stirrup over the horn. "I don't want to be set afoot, like I was at Drowning Ford the other day when we was corralling them horses there. Yuh know what this old devil done to me, Pink? Lunged at me like he was going to eat me up, when I was going to tighten the cinch, and pulled out; and I didn't get him, either, for twenty-four hours—and then we run him back into the Drowning Ford corral and caught him yesterday morning. I'm going t' get me an anchor, and drop it like he was a steamboat, when I get off him after this."

Pink rolled a cigarette the while he looked at the horse. "He's a dead ringer for the Fern Outlaw, ain't he, Bill?" he remarked.

"Sure. He's own brother to the Fern—and mighty near as devilish when he takes a notion that way; but he's sure a drifter, all right."

When the two rode off, the three looked after them thoughtfully. Then they glanced at one another and grinned foolishly.

The Adventures of Felix Boyd

By Scott Campbell
Author of "Below the Dead Line," Etc.

XIX.—THE WINE OF LIFE

(*A Complete Story*)

IT issued from under the lower berth—a tiny rivulet of red! By slow degrees it crept along the dark magenta carpet, till presently it stole under the closed door, collecting in a tiny pool outside, and glistening faintly in the glare of light from the grand saloon.

The Irish coast was barely discernible in the deepening twilight. The stop at Queenstown for the mails had been a brief one. The tender had brought off the pouches, as well as a number of passengers, chiefly second and third-class. Others had been taken ashore, and the stir and confusion had subsided. Many of the saloon-passengers, who had lingered on the promenade-deck in enjoyment of the early evening air, now were on their way to the dining-room, it being nearly eight o'clock.

About that time a saloon steward coming through one of the long corridors from which some of the first-class staterooms were entered, noticed the glistening spot on the carpet near one of the doors, only a few yards from the entrance to the main saloon. He bent down and touched it, then looked at his hand and found it red with viscous blood.

Captain Redlaw happened to be passing through the saloon on his way to the deck at that moment. With affrighted eyes and countenance turned to a greenish-gray, the steward rushed up to him and displayed his stained fingers. The captain, a burly, outspoken old Englishman, halted and stared.

"What in thunder's that?" he demanded.

"Blood, sir! There's something wrong——"

"Wrong where?"

"Here, sir. I noticed it as I——"

Captain Redlaw thrust him aside, stared down at the little red pool, then tried to open the stateroom door. Finding it locked, he crouched and peered into the keyhole. The key was not in the lock.

"Bring the steward who has charge of this room," he commanded. "Look lively."

Startled passengers, observers of the incident, were drawing nearer. Others followed, thronging to that corner of the saloon adjoining the corridor, and a moment later Captain Redlaw caught sight of Mr. Felix Boyd and Jimmie Coleman, returning from the dining-room.

"I say, Boyd," he cried, with a familiarity born of long acquaintance. "Look this way, will you? There's something amiss in this cabin. There may have been a crime committed, for here's a pool of blood near the door."

"A crime, Captain Redlaw?"

"I hope you'll look into it for me in that case, since that's in your line and out of mine. Make way, there, gentlemen. The saloon is the place for you, ladies. Don't block the passage."

"Well, well, Jimmie, it appears that even on the high seas we are not to be exempt from professional calls," Boyd

quietly remarked, as the two threaded their way through the gathering crowd. "Yes, yes, by all means command me, Captain Redlaw, if the occasion requires it. I'll do the best I can for you. What seems to be the matter?"

"Matter enough, Mr. Boyd, I fear. We shall know when the steward comes with a key to this room."

There were faces growing pale with apprehension among the observers, and awed eyes were turned upon Mr. Felix Boyd. Many wondered why Captain Redlaw appealed to him so quickly, for both Felix Boyd and the Central Office man, then en route from Liverpool to New York, were personally known to only a few on board the huge ocean liner. With her commander, however, Boyd long had enjoyed friendly relations, and the appeal was only a natural one under such ominous circumstances.

Boyd glanced down at the blood-stained carpet, then at the closed door.

"Who has this cabin, captain?" he inquired.

"I don't know—I have only just heard that——"

"Better send for the purser and ascertain," Boyd interrupted. "It may be that a crime has been committed, as you say, though more probably we shall discover a case of suicide. An ocean liner is not a likely place for violence, and——"

"Here's the steward. Open this door, Frazer."

The steward had hurriedly approached, and at once proceeded to unlock the stateroom door. Captain Redlaw, followed by Felix Boyd, stepped into the room and switched on the electric light.

"Good Lord!" The seaman recoiled with a horrified gasp.

Felix Boyd took in the scene in a flash, and, seizing Captain Redlaw by the arm, drew him back nearly to the door.

"It's murder—not suicide!" he said positively. "Wait one moment, Redlaw, while I look around."

In the lower berth Boyd found a dead man, his figure awry, his feet thrust into the farthest corner, his head near the outer edge. There was a deep wound on the left side of his throat, and an open razor lay back of him in the berth. He was entirely dressed, with the exception of his coat, which hung on a hook in the wall; yet his vest and undergarments had been rudely torn open, as if he had been forcibly and hurriedly searched. The man was apparently about forty years old.

The room was in considerable disorder. On the floor were two empty portmanteaus, the contents of which had been removed and scattered in all directions. In one corner was a large leather bag, quite old and defaced, the straps of which still were secured. On a stand near-by was an open champagne-bottle, quart size, yet a glass near it had not been used.

Felix Boyd took up the bottle, holding it between his eyes and the electric light, and found it nearly half-full. He shook it slightly, then set it down and glanced at his watch. It was precisely eight o'clock. Stepping to the berth, he laid his hand for a moment on that of the dead man, which he found to be cold and nearly rigid.

"Do you really mean, Captain Redlaw, that you wish me to investigate this affair?" he abruptly asked, reverting to his companion.

"Do you really think it is a case of murder?" Captain Redlaw inquired.

"I haven't the slightest doubt of it."

"Before we're fairly at sea, too! This points to a rough passage. Do what you can for me, Mr. Boyd, that's what I say. I cannot put back to report the case, nor to land the body; that's out of the question. If you can get at the truth for me——"

"May I handle the case in my own way?"

"Yes, yes, that you may. What's to be done first?"

"Nothing can be done for this man," Boyd quickly replied. "He's as dead as a door-nail. I will examine the evidence here a little later. Send for the purser and we'll learn who was booked for this cabin. Let's step outside until he comes."

The news of the crime had spread through the grand saloon, filling all hearers with dismay; and inquisitive men and pale, staring women, impelled by a curiosity greater even than their dread, were pressing forward.

In the corridor Captain Redlaw gripped Boyd by the arm, saying quite hurriedly:

"I'll leave this affair to you for a time. I will send Mr. Gill, the purser, also the chief steward, Bob Webb. Both will be subject to your orders until I can come below again. I'll so instruct them."

Boyd merely nodded, then glanced at the Central Office man.

"Keep an eye on the door, Jimmie, and see that it's not opened," he whispered. "I want nothing disturbed in there."

"What do you make of the case?" queried Coleman, under his breath.

Felix Boyd shook his head but said nothing. He stood in silence with his back to the wall, his hands thrust into his pockets, and his gaze vacantly drifting from one to another of the many faces around him.

The observers thronging the saloon and corridor stared at him and wondered. His name had been whispered among them, and a general interest had been aroused concerning him and what he would do in this emergency. Yet Boyd continued mute and motionless, apparently oblivious of the inquisitive gaze of all, until the ship's purser approached with his lists.

Mr. Gill was a slender, dark man, obviously inclined to nervousness. He was followed quite closely, however, by a man of exactly the opposite type: a strapping, broad-shouldered, prepossessing fellow, of thirty, with the florid face, yellowish hair, and clear, blue eyes of a thoroughbred Saxon—the chief steward, Mr. Bob Webb.

Boyd measured them with a glance, and now the watching throng were treated to a sample of his work, evidently one for which they had been waiting, for necks were craned and ears strained when he began a rapid fire of questions.

"Now, Mr. Gill, let's get at this without delay," he said bruskly, when the purser approached. "Who was booked for this cabin?"

"Two men, sir." Mr. Gill already had consulted his lists.

"Their names, please."

"Hendrick Chisholm and Walter H. Sterling."

"Is either name familiar to you?"

"No, sir."

"You don't recall either man as a former passenger on this steamer?"

"I do not. Yet it's not impossible that——"

"It doesn't matter," Boyd tersely interrupted. "Where were the bookings made?"

"At the London office, sir, during yesterday."

"Were they made at the same time?"

"Evidently not. The names appear in different parts of the list."

"Ah, that's quite significant," cried Boyd. "Can you tell me who was booked first?"

"The man named Chisholm. He was given the lower berth, the one almost invariably selected by a man taking a two-berth cabin."

"Yes, yes, I see," nodded Boyd. "Better for him, perhaps, if he had chosen the upper. Can you tell me how long afterward Mr. Sterling was booked for the same cabin and given the upper berth?"

"Not more than an hour, I should say. The names are not widely separated on the list sent from the London office."

"You think an hour fairly accurate?"

"Yes. I should say less, if anything."

"Do you recall seeing either man after he came on board this morning?"

"I do not."

"Well, well, it now looks as if the occupant of the lower berth, Mr. Chisholm, had been murdered by his fellow passenger, who may have gone ashore in the Queenstown tender. In that case—here, steward!" Boyd swung around and called to the man who had discovered the crime.

"Yes, sir."

"See if you can find Mr. Walter H.

Sterling anywhere on board. It's barely possible that he has not heard of this affair. He may be at dinner, in the smoking-room, or on deck. Hurry, won't you, please? Don't you know, purser, whether or not the two men came on board together?"

Boyd's caustic bluntness at such times, of which he was entirely unconscious, was far from agreeable. It was born of the irrepressible energy and eagerness with which he invariably pursued an inquiry of this kind.

Mr. Gill shook his head, frowning darkly, and replied with some asperity:

"I already have said, sir, that I did not see either——"

"Yes, yes, I remember—excuse me!" Boyd interrupted. "Yet surely some of you passengers must have seen one or both of these men, either entering or leaving this stateroom. Speak up, please, if you did. It's utterly improbable that neither man has been noticed during the day's run from Liverpool. I want a description of Mr. Walter H. Sterling."

For several moments the forcible appeal brought no response. Men stared mutely at him and dubiously shook their heads, while most of the ladies near-by were awed by the very nature of the scene. Presently, however, a slender little woman who stood trembling at the open door of the next stateroom forward, from which she had emerged only a few moments before, ventured a little nearer and said, with obvious timidity:

"I saw both gentlemen this morning, sir, when they came to their cabin."

"Ah, thank you, madame." Boyd turned with a bow and smile. "Where were you at the time?"

"Seated in the saloon, sir. I was curious to know who were to occupy the rooms adjoining mine, as I am traveling only with my maid, and I saw both men enter this stateroom."

"Then perhaps you can tell me more about them," said Boyd quickly. "Did they arrive together?"

"No, sir."

"Which came first?"

"A tall, light-complexioned man, with two portmanteaus. He looked like a German."

"Chisholm—no doubt of it!" cried Boyd. "Go on, madame, if you please."

"He entered the room, and I have not seen him since. I think he has remained there all day. At least, sir, I have heard sounds from there at intervals, for I have been confined to my room all day with a severe headache."

"Your testimony is very valuable," Boyd quickly rejoined. "Can you tell me at what hours you heard sounds from this room, and of what they consisted?"

"Well, yes, in a general way," the woman said slowly. "I heard nothing of consequence during the morning and early afternoon. About three o'clock, however, I heard somebody knocking on the door. I think it was one of the stewards, for the knocking was repeated a little later, and I inferred that something had been ordered and brought to the man in this room. I had heard him at intervals from the time I entered my own cabin."

"Yes, yes, I see," nodded Boyd. "Did you hear a disturbance at any time?"

"No, sir."

"Or persons talking?"

"Only once."

"When was that?"

"When I first came to my room soon after we left the Liverpool dock. The other passenger then was in the room, and——"

"Ah, yes! Stop a moment," Boyd interrupted. "I remember your saying you saw him arrive. You still were seated in the saloon, I infer."

"Yes, sir."

"Did he arrive soon after Mr. Chisholm?"

"About five minutes, I should say. He carried a leather bag with straps around it——"

"Yes, yes, that's the man," cried Boyd, with an unusual display of eagerness. "You can, of course, describe him for me. Try to do so, I beg. This is very important."

The woman drew back a step and colored in some confusion.

"Really, sir, I can do so only in a

general way," she nervously answered. "He was quite a large man, with bowed shoulders and a heavy figure. He was about fifty years old, I should say, and I thought he looked like a sea-captain."

"Why so, please?"

"Because he was very brown, as if tanned, and he wore a heavy dark beard. He was not as well dressed, moreover, as most gentlemen who travel first-class. He entered this room, and a little later I heard the two men talking, but could distinguish nothing that was said. The large man, I judge by his heavy tread, left the room after half an hour, and I did not hear him return. In fact, sir, I have heard nothing more from that room than I have stated, until a few moments ago."

"The last is not material," Boyd quickly rejoined. "The absence of Mr. Sterling, providing he cannot he found, admits of only one interpretation. If your description of the man is correct, madame, and I have no reason to doubt ——"

"The lady's description is perfectly correct, Mr. Boyd," interposed the chief steward. "I remember having seen just such a man on the upper deck this morning. The same man went ashore at Queenstown, moreover, for I saw him board the tender while we were taking on the mail."

"Well, well, that surely settles it!" Boyd turned to the man who had spoken. "Are you quite positive of that, Mr. ——"

"Webb, sir."

"Ah, yes, I remember. Captain Redlaw said he would send you here to assist me. Are you quite sure, Mr. Webb, that the same man boarded the Queenstown tender?"

With an inquiring stare at the blue eyes of the chief steward, Boyd drew even nearer to him while speaking.

"Well, sir," Webb replied with a laugh, "I am sure that a man such as this lady has described——"

"That's what I mean, of course."

"I saw him board the tender, sir. I'm positive of that."

"It's only what I have suspected from the first." Boyd drew back with a frown. "That's all, purser. I'll not detain you any longer. Mr. Webb will, I think, give me any further aid that I may require."

"Yes, sir," Mr. Webb quickly assented. "Captain Redlaw told me to take your orders."

"They'll be few and far between," Boyd responded, with dismal assurance. "I reckon there's not much more to be learned. It's plain enough that Mr. Walter H. Sterling has eluded justice for a time, at least. This way, Jimmie. We'll see what we can find that may throw any light on the crime. Much obliged, madame, for your valuable information. Come with us, Mr. Webb, in case I need you."

Boyd again had opened the cabin door and was thrusting the Central Office man into the room.

II.

It would have required a clairvoyant to have discovered any promising sign in the clouded countenance of Mr. Felix Boyd. It was plain that he had come to the only conclusion tenable under the incriminating circumstances—the same at which Jimmie Coleman had arrived, as well as every hearer of the inquiry just ended. The case seemed, in fact, to admit of no other solution.

With the solution of a mystery, moreover, the interest in it at once begins to subside. The throng in the corridor gradually dispersed, seeking a more cheerful atmosphere, and only the closed door of the fatal room into which Felix Boyd had entered with his two companions repaid the persistent curiosity of the few who lingered.

Frowning with aversion, as if the whole affair was an irrepressible bore to him, Boyd quickly threw off his coat after entering and tossed it into the upper berth.

"There's nothing to it, Jimmie, nothing at all," he declared, with nervous asperity. "We'll see what we can learn, of course, since Captain Redlaw expects it, but really there is nothing to it. Sit down, Mr. Webb, if you like. Take

the chair near the door. I'll speak if I need you."

"Certainly, Mr. Boyd; all right," Webb said genially, but he stared and wondered at his bruskness.

"Nothing to it, Felix, did you say?" Coleman repeated questioningly.

"I mean nothing under the surface, of course," cried Boyd, crouching at the lower berth to view the dead man. "It's all aboveboard, Jimmie; as plain as daylight. The rascal who did this job took no pains to hide his tracks. He may have been disguised, but that's all."

"Think so?"

"He was trailing his victim in London, that's evident. He booked soon after him; made sure of securing the upper berth in the same cabin; followed him to Liverpool by rail, and—well, well, you may see for yourselves. He quietly did the job this afternoon; late enough to head off detection before he could board the Queenstown tender. That's about the size of it, Jimmie."

"Unless Walter Sterling still is on board?"

"You don't expect that, do you?" cried Boyd. "It's a hundred to one his name was fictitious, and that the rascal now has eluded the police. Captain Redlaw will not put back to report the case—of course he'll not—hence the knave has at least a week's start of Scotland Yard, and that should be enough for any man. Well, well, we'll see what we can learn, since I've consented to do so."

"You must be right, sir," Webb ventured to remark, despite the intense irritation Boyd was displaying. "There seems to be no way of getting around it."

"There is no way, none at all, Mr. Webb, or I should discover it," Boyd curtly responded.

The Central Office man shrugged his shoulders, frowning with grim disapproval; at which the steward glanced up at him, then smiled faintly and shook his head. He sat with his back toward the door, his powerful figure bowed forward, his arms across his knees, his attention fixed upon Boyd's every movement, and his full, florid face and clear blue eyes reflecting an interest he made no attempt to conceal.

"You fellows seem to think I'm lame," snapped Boyd, observing the glance that passed between them. "See for yourselves. It cannot be a case of suicide. Note that the wound is on the left side of the throat, severing the jugular vein, yet here lies the open razor behind him in the berth. He could not have placed it over there after inflicting such a wound. Besides, the blade is perfectly clean. It can't be a case of suicide."

"By Jove! I saw this man last evening in London," broke in Webb, who had come close to the berth. "He boarded the night express on which I came up. I'll swear he's the one."

"That doesn't help us any, Mr. Webb, since we already know he probably traveled by the night express," Boyd curtly replied. "If you had seen Walter Sterling instead, and could give us some clue to his identity and movements—but that's equally vain, since you cannot have seen him. You were in London, eh? We left there Tuesday."

"Only for a day," Webb carelessly nodded. "I run down for a talk with my sister each time we make Liverpool. She sort of expects it, you know, and——"

"See who knocks."

The burly Saxon swung round and opened the cabin door a few inches, in response to a knock on the panel. It was the saloon steward, who came to report that Mr. Sterling was nowhere to be found.

"Humph!" Boyd ejaculated, when Webb informed him. "That no longer surprises me. The man may be in Dublin by this time, or on his way there. By the looks, Jimmie, robbery was his motive."

"So I think."

"Chisholm must have had something the scoundrel was after, for not only have his pockets been emptied, but his garments also have been opened, as if Sterling suspected him of wearing a money-belt. Yet I can find no evidence that he wore one."

"Such a suspicion is significant, Felix, for all that," Coleman quickly declared.

"True, Jimmie. It indicates that Sterling and this man were not strangers, and this job was previously planned, and with definite knowledge. It would be worth while to know what Chisholm had that Sterling was after."

"Money, in all probability," Webb remarked, with his ever ready smile.

"Quite likely, since that is most frequently the incentive to such a crime," Boyd admitted, with a nod. "If we can learn a little more about this man, we may be able to discover the relations between the two. Let's see what we can find."

He began a hurried examination of the two portmanteaus and the garments scattered about the room. None of the latter were marked in any way, yet on one of the leather portmanteaus he found the initials of the murdered man, and under it a quantity of business-cards. These he seized and hastened to examine.

"Oh, ho!" he quickly exclaimed. "A commercial traveler, eh? 'Helmhurst & Straus, Bremen. China and porcelain.' Evidently, Jimmie, this man was agent for a German china concern. Here's his name in red letters on the card—'Hendrick Chisholm.'"

"That's right, Mr. Boyd, surely," Webb quickly interposed, with some eagerness. "There are two large sample-trunks on board, moreover, bearing the name of the same firm. I saw them sent into the hold."

"Very good, very good," Boyd reiterated, still studying the card. "There now appears to be no doubt of the man's identity and vocation."

"None whatever, sir, I should say," supplemented Webb.

"Yet just who Sterling was, and—ah, by Jove! this may give us some clue to the rascal." Boyd seized the black leather bag previously mentioned, dragging it from the corner and hastening to undo the straps.

"That was Sterling's, eh?" inquired Coleman.

"The lady in the next room saw him bring it aboard," nodded Boyd. "Just why he left it here, if his, is hard to say. He may not have dared return for it after committing the crime. Probably he knew it contained nothing by which he could be identified. Or possibly he has stuffed it with garments not his own size, thus aiming to mislead the police. That would be a shrewd trick, and one that might be played with some success, providing no one specially observed him after he came on board, noting his size and—— Locked, eh? Got any keys, Jimmie? Got a key, Mr. Webb, that will fit this?"

Boyd looked up with a single swift glance from one to the other. The Central Office man growled a negative, and grimly shook his head. For the bare fraction of a second the cold, blue eyes of the chief steward, intent upon Boyd's every move, took on a gleam like that from a blade of steel, and the genial look disappeared for a moment from his face. Before either man could offer any aid, however, Boyd bruskly added:

"Don't bother. There's a way of getting into it, Jimmie. How's this?"

"It beats a key, Felix, for fair."

With his knife Boyd had quickly slit both sides of the leather bag and revealed its contents. It was stuffed full of—worthless old rags and crumpled London newspapers!

The chief steward uttered a cry, and Coleman stared his amazement.

Boyd cast the bag back into the corner and rose to his feet.

"That doesn't surprise me, Jimmie," he said. "I guessed as much when I found it locked. The bag was only a blind. It deceived this unfortunate fellow, and for that only it was intended. Mr. Walter H. Sterling has done his villainous job, and has cleverly made his escape; so cleverly that it's odds he will never be taken."

"I'm blessed if I can see, however," Coleman mused. "just when and how he caught this man napping, and managed to kill him unheard. But Chisholm may have been asleep."

"Yes, that may be," Boyd agreed. "Or possibly he had been drinking

and—— Step down to the bar, Mr. Webb, will you? Find out at what hour this bottle of wine was ordered, and bring up the steward who served it. I wish to ask him a question."

Webb sprang up like a man eager to comply.

"I'll have him here in two shakes of a lamb's tail, Mr. Boyd." And he hurried away.

Boyd lazily watched him depart, but with the slamming of the door he surprised the Central Office man by abruptly renewing his investigations, moving with eagerness and haste that were fairly startling. Darting to the berth, he began to search the dead man's garments, chiefly the linings, going even so far as to examine his stockings and shoes.

"What are you after now?" demanded Coleman, in amazement.

"A hidden pocket, Jimmie, or some secret concealment."

The reply had come in a sharp whisper. A startling change had come over Felix Boyd. His brows were knit, his eyes aglow, his features white and drawn—signs the Central Office man long ago had learned to read correctly.

"Great Cæsar!" he exclaimed. "Are you off on a new track?"

"That's what, Jimmie."

"You don't mean, Felix, that you're on the track of——"

"Haven't you eyes, Jimmie? Can't you see two or three hours were spent in a search for something after this murder was committed? Even the bedding of the lower berth has been overhauled and tucked back. No steward ever left it in that shape. Berth, man, garments, luggage—everything has been hurriedly and thoroughly searched. I must know for what."

"Yet you've said——"

"No matter what I've said. Back up against the door, Jimmie. I don't wish to be disturbed. Something was hidden here that Sterling was determined to find and get away with. It was for that he committed the crime. He did not find it readily. The search required time, much time, as the disorder here plainly proves. Yet he must have known it was here, and I reckon the rascal found it. I should be able, then, to find the hiding-place, at least, which may give us a clue to the kind of plunder he was after. It may help us if I can—— What's this?"

Though he spoke and moved like one in frantic haste, Boyd was not excited. His rapid movements, his forcible remarks, rarely above a vehement whisper; his swift, searching glances, fairly fierce in their intensity—these were only outward signs of the nervous energy and passionate determination with which, when his keen detective instinct was stirred, he sought the solution of such mysteries as this.

While he spoke, having examined the larger portmanteau, Boyd had seized the smaller of the two, and was eagerly studying numerous express and transportation labels that were pasted on either side. One of these, a dark-blue one, that of a German express company, was pasted so neatly over another that it aroused his suspicion.

"Stuck on very carefully," he muttered, taking out his knife with which to scrape off the upper label. "Expressmen plaster these things on haphazard, yet this appears to have been pasted over another with a design to hide—— Dutch, eh? What's this? Amster—Amsterdam—oh, by Jove!"

Boyd had brought to light, on a faded yellow label under the blue one, the name of the famous old city. Instantly, under a startling impulse, he turned and glanced again at the lower berth. With augmented eagerness he renewed his examination of the portmanteau, inside and out, sounding the bottom of it with his knuckles, then pressing it with his thumbs, and all the while with his eyes growing brighter.

Presently he discovered in one of the interior corners a few faint scratches, as if a thumb-nail had occasionally been forced under a neat fold of the inner leather. Forcing his own beneath it, he found that he could raise an artfully concealed false bottom, disclosing a space barely half an inch in

depth in the apparently solid bottom of the portmanteau.

"Eureka!" he cried, glancing up. "I have it, Jimmie."

"What now?" Coleman drew nearer, with eyes dilating.

"A false bottom here—a secret concealment, Jimmie," Boyd hurriedly replied. "Only a small space, eh? Yet ample to contain well, well, say a package of bank-notes, a few folded bonds, or a number of valuable documents. Amsterdam, eh? If I'm not mistaken, old chap, we yet shall get at the bottom of this affair, and— some one coming, eh? Not a word, Jimmie! Do only what I tell you!"

As quick as a flash Boyd had replaced the neatly fitted leather bottom and rose to his feet, leaving the portmanteau on the floor. At the same moment Mr. Webb reentered the room, accompanied by a cabin-boy.

"Here is your man, Mr. Boyd," he said heartily. "He brought a bottle of wine to this cabin about three o'clock."

"Three o'clock, eh?" Boyd indifferently echoed, surveying the two with an insouciant stare. "Are you quite sure of the hour, my lad? It's of no special consequence, yet——"

"Yes, sir," the boy interrupted, having found his voice after his first horrified look at the scene. "I'd just gone on duty, sir."

"This man ordered the wine, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"What was he doing when you answered his ring?"

"He was lying in his berth, sir, as if he'd just woke up."

"And when you served the order?"

"He still was in the berth, sir."

"Alone here?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's all, thanks. Don't talk about this among the passengers." Boyd nodded and waved him from the room. "Much obliged to you, Webb, for bringing him here. I wanted to know only whether Chisholm was alone when he ordered the wine."

"Aye, I see, sir," Webb affably rejoined.

III.

The smoke from fragrant Havanas hung like a filmy gray mist on the quiescent air. Men seen at a distance across the broad smoking-room appeared like visionary figures viewed through an intangible veil. It was approaching midnight, yet the room was far from deserted.

At one of the large card-tables several men were engaged in a game of poker, but their play was listless, and the game lacked spirit. The grim specter of crime and death stood at their elbows, even, and they had less interest in their cards and chips than in the garrulous remarks of the chief steward, who was seated at another large table near-by in company with Captain Redlaw, Mr. Gill, and the first mate.

"He's all right, sir, this man Boyd," Mr. Webb was saying, with a rare display of enthusiasm. "Let him alone, Captain Redlaw, to have got at the truth! I've heard of sharp detectives —in fact, sir, I've seen a good bit of the work done by some of our Scotland Yarders; but I never saw one sound to the bottom of a mystery more quickly and keenly than this man Boyd. I'll lay my month's pay against half a sovereign, sir, that he is right."

There was a flush on the face of genial Bob Webb, a bright light in his clear blue eyes. His praise of Mr. Felix Boyd and his discernment had been so forcibly uttered that it attracted general attention, and the interest of many hearers was at once augmented. They were venturing to approach the table, and soon were standing in groups around it. The poker-players were laying aside their cards and turning to listen. Observers more removed were shifting to chairs in that part of the room, where, one and all seemed to anticipate, startling revelations soon were to be made. That they were to witness the final act of a dreadful drama, however, no one among them appeared to expect.

Captain Redlaw had listened grimly, and now rejoined:

"He thinks Sterling did the foul job, does he?"

"He does, sir."

"And that he landed at Queenstown?"

"He has no doubt of that, sir," Webb declared. "I convinced him of that. I saw the bearded scoundrel when he boarded the tender, just after we took on the mail."

"You did, eh?"

"Aye, sir, I did. I can tell you pretty well just what Boyd thinks of the case, and what——"

"What I think, Mr. Webb, could not easily be told by any man except myself."

"Oh, beg pardon! Are you here, Mr. Boyd?"

None had heard his quiet step. None had noticed him approach. Nobody was aware of his presence until his calm, incisive voice was heard, and his tall, lithe figure appeared back of the chief steward's chair, much as if he had come up through the floor. If his observers had known him better, they would have been awed by the gravity of his thin, white face.

"Don't rise, Mr. Webb," he said quietly. "I'll sit over yonder."

Boyd moved to a seat at the opposite side of the table while speaking. At the same time the Central Office man appeared from behind a group of interested observers, and, upon seeing no vacant chair, he came and coolly perched himself on the arm of that occupied by Mr. Webb.

"Don't get up," he muttered. "This is good enough for me."

"Have the chair," said Webb genially. "I'll send for another."

"No, no; sit still. Here's room for both."

"Just as you say."

"Is it too late, Captain Redlaw, for you to hear my report?" Boyd was asking meantime.

"No, no, it's not too late; far from it," Captain Redlaw bruskly replied. "I'll not sleep before hearing it, since I must shape my course by it. Will you go to my room, or——"

"There is no occasion," smiled Boyd. "What little I have to say may as well be said here."

"As you like, Mr. Boyd. I reckon it doesn't matter."

Boyd drew forward, resting his arms on the table.

"I first will state what occurred, Captain Redlaw," he began, amid a silence that grew oppressive. "I then will mention the discoveries and deductions I have made, which point to the motive for this crime and the possible identity of the criminal."

A curious, quite indescribable expression, and one that killed forever his attentive smile, appeared for a moment on the face of the chief steward. It immediately lost its poignant intensity, however, when Boyd pointedly added, still gazing at Captain Redlaw:

"I do not expect, mind you, that I have hit the nail squarely on the head."

"No, no, that's not likely; not to be expected. Go on, Mr. Boyd."

"Captain Redlaw, the man entered on your list as Hendrick Chisholm was booked yesterday at the London office. Soon after a second man, giving the name of Walter H. Sterling, secured the upper berth in the same cabin. Both men came to Liverpool on the night express, and boarded your liner this morning. Chisholm was the first to come on board, bringing two portmanteaus. He entered his cabin at once, and, for reasons I presently will disclose, he did not intend to leave it until after the stop at Queenstown."

"How do you know that, Mr. Boyd?" Webb impulsively asked. "How do you know that he did not intend to leave it?"

"Since we cannot learn that he did leave it, Mr. Webb, we may reasonably assume his intentions," Boyd replied, with a faint smile.

"Aye, mebbe so," Webb admitted, suddenly becoming aware that he was attracting attention.

Boyd resumed, without further comment:

"At three o'clock, after remaining several hours in his cabin, Chisholm ordered a bottle of champagne. It was served by a cabin-boy, who states that

he found Chisholm alone in the room, lying in his berth, and that he was told to leave the bottle and glass on the cabin stand."

A second question rose to Webb's lips, but it was not uttered. There are moments when one may feel that self-preservation hangs upon self-restraint.

Felix Boyd did not appear to notice him, and the gaze of all had again reverted to himself.

"Now concerning Sterling," he continued. "The circumstances plainly indicate that he and Chisholm were acquainted, that he was watching Chisholm in London, that he booked sufficiently soon after him to secure a berth in the same cabin, where we know that the two men met this morning. It is perfectly safe to assume, then, that Sterling was in disguise. He remained with Chisholm a short time, then left the stateroom. He did not return to it, so far as we know, until after three o'clock, at which hour Chisholm was alive and lying in his berth. Later, however—just how much later is not material—Sterling entered the room, quietly killed and robbed Chisholm, and then made his escape undetected. A lady occupying the next room has given us a very reliable description of the criminal, and Mr. Webb has positively stated that he saw the same man board the Queenstown tender."

"Aye, he did, sir, and I'll swear to it," Webb forcibly declared.

"On the contrary, Mr. Webb, he did nothing of the kind."

It came like a bolt out of the blue, this startling assertion. Captain Redlaw stared in blank amazement, silenced for a moment by the bare possibility; while Webb swayed forward until his broad breast touched the edge of the table.

"Nothing of the kind?" he hoarsely echoed. "Why do you say that, Mr. Boyd?"

"Because it is true." Boyd's voice took on a sharper ring. "Contrary to your positive assertion, Mr. Webb, and the conviction of nearly all, Walter H. Sterling did not board the Queenstown tender. He still is on this vessel."

"Good heavens!" Captain Redlaw shouted, starting up from his chair. "If that is a fact——"

"One moment!" cried Boyd, throwing up his hands and quickly quelling the confusion and excitement occasioned by his startling statement. "Continue to give me your attention, gentlemen. Lest I possibly have erred, Captain Redlaw, it is imperative that you should know on what I base my belief."

Captain Redlaw, flushed and frowning, dropped back in his chair.

The stir and confusion around the table subsided. Nearly every eye was fixed upon Felix Boyd. None appeared to notice the genial Bob Webb, whose geniality had now given place to extreme nervousness. His cheeks were no longer ruddy, but deathly pale, and his eyes aglow with sinister fire.

"Having informed you what I believe to have occurred, Captain Redlaw, I now will state the discoveries and deductions on which my opinion is founded," Boyd quickly resumed. "I shall be as brief as possible."

"Take your own time, Mr. Boyd. If what you say is true——"

"You shall judge for yourself, sir. One of the first things I noticed upon entering that stateroom, Captain Redlaw, was the bottle of wine and the empty glass left by the boy. I saw at once that the glass was clean. It had not been used, despite that the wine had been opened."

"Yes, yes, I remember. You examined the bottle by holding it up to the light."

"I examined the wine that it contained, rather than the bottle," Boyd corrected him, with a faint smile. "The bottle was about half-full, and the wine had not gone entirely stale. By shaking it a little, the tiny bubbles of the effervescence still could be seen."

"From which you infer?"

"Not infer, but *know*," Boyd quickly declared. "I have made a careful study of numerous kinds of champagne, particularly the brand under discussion, with a view to learning just how long a time must elapse before the wine be-

comes perfectly flat. In this particular brand, Captain Redlaw, the extreme limit of time, as proved by testing more than one hundred bottles, is a little more than one hour."

"Well, well, what does that signify?" Webb impulsively asked, still bowed forward to the table. "What do you make out of that?"

Boyd turned a little in his chair and, for the first time, addressed himself exclusively to the chief steward.

"It signifies much, Mr. Webb, when in conjunction with one other fact," he replied, with some austerity.

"What fact is that?"

"I found that the body of Chisholm was cold and nearly rigid, a condition which, in the case of a man killed by violence, could not have come in less than two or three hours. Do you see the point, Mr. Webb? The life of the wine when I examined it plainly proves that the bottle could not have been opened by Chisholm, for it had been opened within the hour. Chisholm had been dead at least two or three hours. It must, then, have been opened by his assassin, who drank about half the contents of the bottle. That he drank it from the bottle, moreover, rather than delay to pour it into the glass, plainly indicates his haste and the excitement under which he was laboring."

"That theory may be all right," Webb scornfully cried, with lips nervously twitching. "But what does it amount to? Suppose he did open the wine and drink it out of the bottle? That proves nothing."

"You are wrong, Mr. Webb."

"How wrong?"

"One fact is positively proved by the slight effervescence remaining in the wine when I examined it."

"Well, well, what is it?"

"The bottle, as I have said, had been opened within the hour," Boyd forcibly declared. "Of that fact I am absolutely certain. Yet nearly two hours had elapsed since the departure of the Queenstown tender, Mr. Webb, on which you say you saw the criminal leave the liner. You are wrong, sir. I know that the assassin still was in his stateroom when the Queenstown tender departed, and that he still is on board this vessel. The evidence admits of no other conclusion."

"Mebbe it doesn't—mebbe it doesn't!" Webb hoarsely reiterated, twisting uneasily in his chair. "But your opinion is based only on a theory—an infernally lame theory, at that. I'll not swallow it, sir, nor take back my statement. I still say I saw the man leave on the Queenstown tender."

"Very well, very well, Mr. Webb, since you are so sure of it," Boyd curtly replied. "Let us go a step farther, then. The disorder in the stateroom plainly showed that, after committing the crime, the criminal spent a long time searching for something, obviously that for which the deed had been done. It occupied him from the time he killed Chisholm until he opened the bottle of wine, at least two or three hours, Mr. Webb."

"Suppose it did!" cried Webb, half in his throat. "What of that?"

"No ordinary incentive could have induced a man to remain so long on the scene of a murder he committed," Boyd quickly answered. "In searching for some clue to what Sterling was after, Mr. Webb, I discovered evidence plainly pointing to the true character of Chisholm and his motive for remaining in his stateroom."

"You did, eh? What did you find?"

"I will tell you what I found," Boyd quickly answered. "On one of the numerous labels pasted on one of Chisholm's portmanteaus, I found evidence that he recently had been in Amsterdam. That city, as you may know, is one of the diamond markets of the world. It at once occurred to me, Mr. Webb, that Chisholm might have had diamonds in his room; that his name, cards, and sample-trunks might be only blinds by which to hide his true identity and designs, and that he was about attempting to smuggle a quantity of diamonds into the United States."

"Faugh!" Webb hoarsely ejaculated. "That's absurd!"

"Yet his keeping his room, as a man might do who feared that officers were

on his track, and would journey as far as Queenstown, tended to confirm my suspicion. That I was right," Boyd quickly added, with startling austerity, "lies in the fact that I finally discovered under a false bottom in the same portmanteau the hiding-place in which the diamonds had been concealed. Mr. Webb, the hiding-place was empty——"

"Empty!"

"But the diamonds are here! Look out—look out for him, Jimmie! Get a grip on his arms! Don't let him pull a gun! If you do—— Too late! He's done for!"

The climax of the intensely dramatic scene came like a flash, and terminated in a moment. As he reached the end of his long recital, amid a silence broken only by the sound of his own low, ringing voice, Boyd's hand suddenly had appeared above the edge of the table, and over the dark cloth top he scattered fully half a hundred loose diamonds, that gleamed and glittered with scintillating flashes while they rolled and danced across the table, like things endowed with life and a light all their own.

Cries of amazement arose on every side, but one and all were drowned by the roar that broke from the lips of the chief steward. He leaped up like a man electrified, only to feel Coleman's arms close around him, only to hear the ringing commands that came from Felix Boyd.

In a frenzy of utter desperation, endowed with the strength of madness, he tore himself free for a moment, got one hand to his hip pocket, swayed to and fro like an oak in a gale in his mad endeavors to shake off the half-score of men who had closed in upon him; and then, despite all efforts to prevent it, the ringing report of his revolver, turned upon himself, thundered through the smoking-room, and genial Bob Webb dropped to the floor in the very midst of his adversaries, with a bullet lodged in his lungs.

"Rough on him, Jimmie, so it was," Felix Boyd gravely assented, while he and the Central Office man were preparing to turn in that night. "But he who sows the wind must expect to reap the whirlwind. He got only what was due him, Jimmie, and it's just as well for him that the inevitable end came quickly. He will, at least, be spared the agony of a trial, conviction, and execution."

"Not yet dead, is he?"

"He was alive when I left him, but he cannot last until morning."

"Made a full confession, did he?"

"Yes. That was hardly needed, however, for I had the case down pat. From the moment he said he saw Sterling board the Queenstown tender, I was sure he was my man."

"Because of the fact that you knew Sterling still must be on board?"

"Certainly," nodded Boyd. "You already know how I deduced that fact. It's a curious circumstance, Jimmie, that my discernment of the truth hinged entirely upon that wine. If Webb had not opened it, it's odds that he never would have been suspected, and that the affair would forever have remained an unsolved mystery."

"I reckon so, too, Felix."

"Knowing when I began my inquiry that the criminal must still be on board, despite the general belief to the contrary, I was merely contriving to evoke a declaration from some person to the effect that Sterling had been seen to board the tender at Queenstown. If I could do that, Jimmie, knowing it would be a lie, yet one most natural to a man aiming to avert suspicion from himself, I realized that I should at least establish the identity of the criminal."

"I see the point, Felix."

"The assertion came from the last man I expected, however, one of the vessel's crew," continued Boyd. "I rather looked for it from one of the passengers. Upon stepping close to Webb a moment later, I detected the odor of wine on his breath, and I then had no doubt of his guilt."

"That was before you took him into the stateroom?"

"Certainly. I then aimed only to blind him with a conviction that I was on the wrong track, Jimmie, until I

could evoke further remarks from him, or make such discoveries as would clear up the entire case. When he said that he was in London yesterday and saw Chisholm board the night express, I saw that he had no misgivings concerning me. You already know, Jimmie, how I got at the truth after sending him for the cabin-boy, which I did only to continue my search unobserved by him."

"Yes, yes, that's plain enough."

"While he was gossiping in the smoking-room I searched his stateroom, which I contrived to enter with your skeleton keys. It required some little time for me to locate the stolen gems, but I finally found them in one of his rubbers."

"Good work, Felix," Coleman nodded approvingly. "What had he to say in his confession?"

"About what I expected," Boyd replied. "It appears that Chisholm made a business of smuggling diamonds across the water, and covered his game by pretensions similar to those employed on this occasion. His true name is Chester, however, and he has been at this work for some time, under one alias or another. Webb long has known him, and on previous occasions has aided him to get his goods ashore. It's an easy matter for a ship's steward, you know, to evade the customs inspectors, and he has been well paid."

"But what led him to do this rascally job?"

"Avarice," Boyd tersely rejoined. "He had, it appears, been engaged by Chisholm to land a lot of diamonds in New York soon after our arrival. This job was put up in London while Webb was visiting his sister. Not satisfied with the sum to be derived by dealing squarely with his confederate, Webb resolved to secure the entire lot of gems by killing and robbing him. He obtained a suitable disguise, booked in London soon after Chisholm, and secured the upper berth in the same cabin, and boarded the steamer as a passenger. After a brief talk with Chisholm in their cabin, during which the latter did not recognize him, Webb went to his own room, left his disguise, and assumed his customary duties. Naturally, then, nobody saw Sterling during the day, a fact that further confirmed my suspicion."

"Yes, yes, I see."

"About four o'clock Webb went to his room and resumed his disguise. Leaving his cabin unobserved, he went to Chisholm's stateroom and found the latter asleep in his berth. He had ordered the wine about an hour before, but had not opened it, probably dropping asleep before he felt inclined to drink it. Webb locked the door, and did his rascally job without being heard. Then he began a search for the diamonds, which he knew to be in the room, but was not informed of their hiding-room. It took him until seven o'clock to find them."

"He was a persistent dog. I'll give him credit for that," Coleman remarked, with a growl.

"Decidedly so," Boyd assented. "A bit unnerved by his work, however, Webb then opened the wine and drank a portion of it from the bottle. In the stir and confusion that followed the departure from Queenstown, he succeeded in leaving the room and reaching his own unobserved. There he again removed his disguise and resumed his customary duties. It has been his habit to be off duty during the hours he was engaged in his knavish work, and a statement that he was asleep in his room would ordinarily have been believed. Nearly an hour later the crime was discovered, Jimmie, and—well, well, you know what followed."

The Central Office man was silent for a moment, then grimly nodded and rejoined, as he tumbled into his berth:

"Yes, I know, Felix; I know. I reckon you're all right, too, in thinking it's better as it is. The sooner the end comes, poor devil, the better."

"Far better, Jimmie."

Felix Boyd reached up and switched off the light.

A Chat With You

EVERY month we receive and answer some two thousand letters from our friends who read THE POPULAR. We are glad to receive each one of them; we would publish all of them if we could—but the 224 pages of the magazine are for the fiction that our readers want, and the pages which you are reading now are set aside for the little personal talk which we have with you each month. All the letters which we receive praise the magazine. We have only one fault to find with them. Our correspondents tell us that they like all the stories in the magazine. We are glad to know that, but we want to know which ones they like the best. We want more letters from you, we want every one who reads this page to write to us. We want you to tell us what you consider the strongest feature of the magazine.

TAKE the present number of the magazine for instance. The variety of its contents is so great that there must be some difference of opinion as to which is the best story. "The Taming of Red Butte Western" is an American railroad story, with an intricate plot and a great many characters; "The Boss of the Bonnechere" is a strong, simple story of primitive men and fighters in the Northwest; J. Kenilworth Egerton's story, "The Adventure in the Petticoat Maze," is still another type of story. It is a story of adventure and intrigue, but it is a story of people in a high state of civilization, people who are accustomed to disguise and suppress their emotions, while "Votaries of Voodoo," by Francis Whitlock, is a tale of the West Indian jungle and the primitive black man. Which of these stories do you like best? We feel confident that you will like them all. If a story is a POPULAR story it must be interesting and exciting, no matter where the scene is laid or what the style of the author. We want to know which of the stories pleases you best according to your individual taste, and we shall feel personally grateful to you when you write to us.

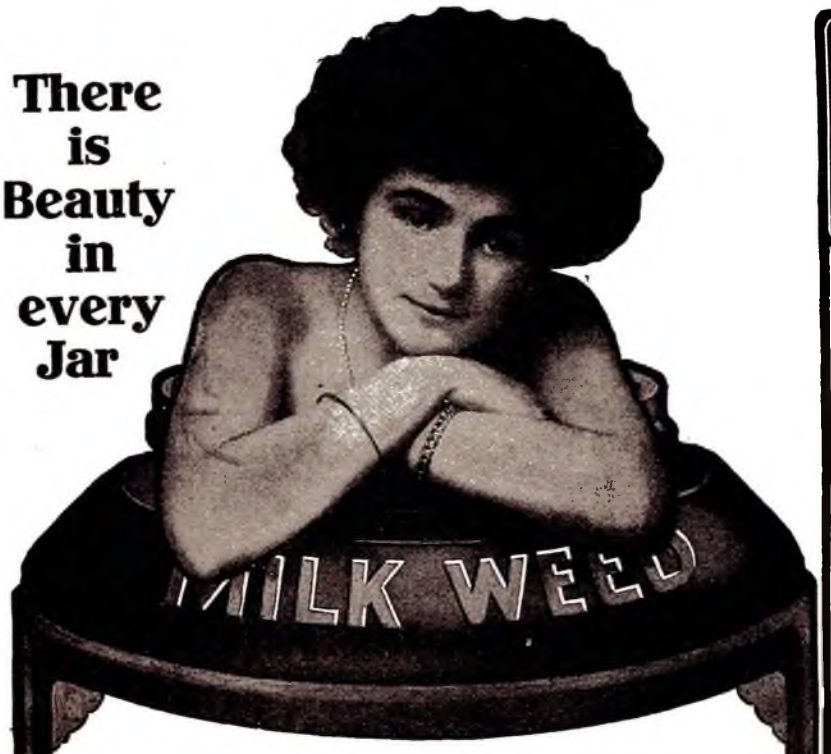
WHEN you have finished this number lay it aside until next month, and then compare it with the September issue. We promised that we would continue to improve the magazine through-

out the year with each successive number, and we wish to call to your notice the fact that we are living up to this pledge. Next month's issue shows the effect of the most aggressive campaign ever made by the publishers of any magazine to secure the best fiction that was written. "The Door of the Double-Dragon," the complete novel which appears in the September number, is the biggest thing ever written by George Bronson-Howard. It is a tale of America and the mysterious Chinese Empire which no one fully understands, and which now appears to be waking out of a sleep of a thousand years. This novel is the result of a trip to China and a period spent as a foreign officer in the Chinese Army by the author. "The Norther," by C. T. Revere, is the story of a cowboy, a blizzard, a pack of wolves, and a beautiful woman. There is some real life woven into this narrative, and you will feel the thrill of it when you read it. Another story, "The Skewbald Panther," by Edward Lucas White, is worthy of mention not because it is better than any of the other stories, for they are all the best that money can buy, but because of its unusual type. It is an account of a thrilling episode in the amphitheater of ancient Rome, but there is nothing old-fashioned in the manner of its telling. It is as vivid, as up-to-date and natural as a story can be. Perhaps you think that this is impossible. You will change your mind when you read the story.

REAL spontaneous humor is about the hardest thing in the world to get hold of. We all have, or think we have, which amounts to almost the same thing, a keen appreciation of the ludicrous, but how many people are there among your acquaintances who can really make you laugh heartily? How many actors are there who can keep you laughing as long as they are on the stage? How many comic papers are there that seem to you genuinely and spontaneously funny? Very few, if your experience has been anything like ours. The man who can tell a funny story is all too rare, but the man who can write one is rarer still. We have known a good many men who could keep a dinner-table in an uproar of laughter, but whose wit suddenly deserted them when they were given pen and paper and told to write it out. We have been searching for the man who could write funny stories with a fine tooth comb. We found him in A. M. Chisholm. You will read one of the most laughable of his yarns in next month's POPULAR.

NEVER in the history of the magazine has it contained three serials of the strength and interest of "Zollenstein," "The Devil's Pulpit," and "The Man Who Was Dead." We only mention this in passing. No doubt you have noticed it already. We just want to remind you that the best part of these three stories is yet to come, and the strongest instalments printed yet will appear in the September POPULAR.

There is Beauty in every Jar



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SEE YOU CAN HANG IT UP

A Moral Thief is Not a Legal Thief

in the eyes of the law, and by that token many a man is at home when his rightful place is in jail.

¶ A man, by dint of thought and work, invents an article of food, of wearing apparel, or for domestic use. He carries out his conception; he gets it ready for the market; he recognizes the requirements of the law of the land and patents his article; he invests large sums of money in letting the people know about it, and he makes a success.

¶ Along comes a man who has no brain wherewith to conceive except to trade upon the other man's success, and "Uneeda Biscuit" becomes "Uwanta Biscuit"; "Jap-a-lac" becomes "Jac-a-lac"; "Cottolene" becomes "Cottoleo"; "Pears' Soap" becomes "Peer's Soap," and so on. All these imitations are purely and palpably intended to mislead the public, to confuse the buyer.

¶ Such a parasite not only lives on the brain and capital of another, but he also directly hopes to get an undeserved livelihood by playing upon the credulity of the public. He is a coward, as is proved by the fact that he imitates. His article is never so good as that which he imitates, for the same moral twist that plays upon a name will play upon the quality of the article. As a matter of fact, he has no need to think of the quality of his article, for he relies on his misleading label; hence, quality, to him, is of slight importance, and therein lies the fraud against the consuming public.

¶ The bid for patronage upon which he usually relies is his untruthful assurance that his article "is just as good as others" and—here comes in his strong point—"it is cheaper in price." And thus thousands are fooled: trapped into supporting a moral thief and a business coward.

¶ Perhaps you fail to realize that you have it in your power to raise the standard of American business honesty by a refusal to patronize such imitations. For just in proportion as you make it easier or harder for these moral thieves to succeed, so do you make the business of honest dealings easier or harder for your husband, brother, father or son.

¶ Business will be honest just so far as the public demands it shall be. The two or three cents saved in your support of an imitative article represent the costliest investment you can make toward the lowering of these business ideals with which the men of your family must sooner or later battle when they go out into the commercial world. You, by your patronage, build up or tear down honest business ideals.

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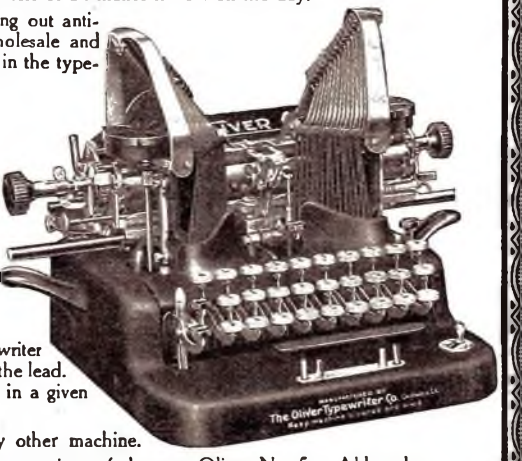

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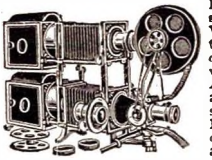

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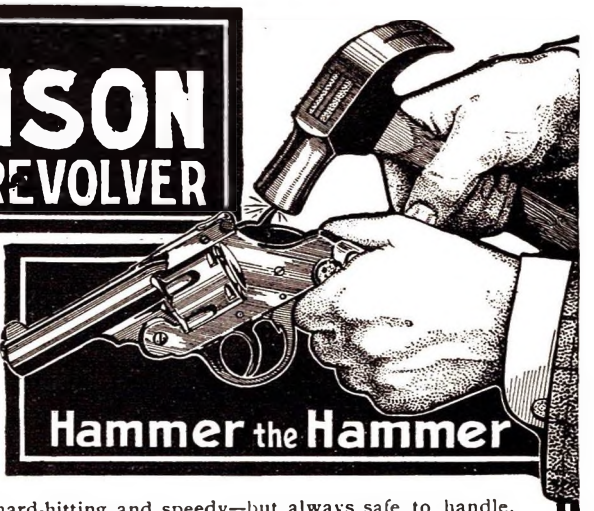

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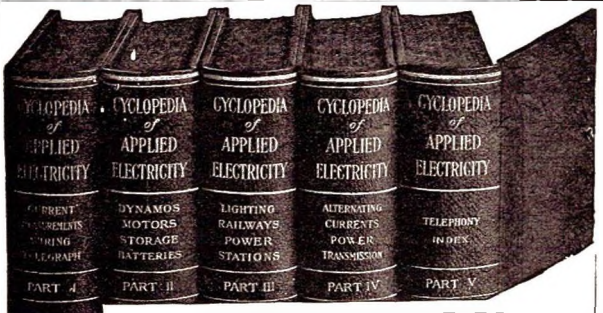

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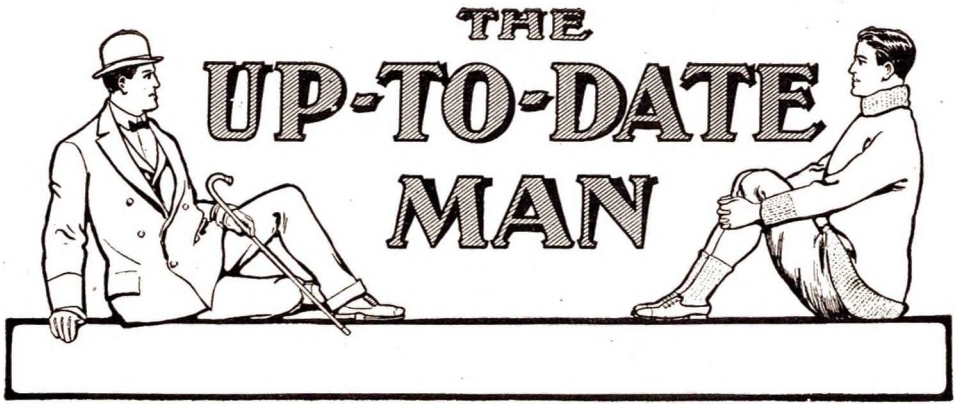


GAMES and sports do not require the distinctive mode of dress which was so much in vogue some years ago. Then scarlet golf-coats, knicker trousers, brilliantly colored handkerchiefs, and the like were considered inseparable accompaniments of every outdoor pastime. One "dressed up" for field and links, with the result that, while a man looked exceedingly picturesque, he felt exceedingly uncomfortable. This, of course, is an absurdity. "Dressing up" has no place in real sport, which is supposed to be followed for the pure pleasure of it, and not for parading the extent and variety of the wearer's wardrobe. Elaborate dress on field and links is the badge of the tyro. The seasoned sportsman is too absorbed in the task in hand to concern himself with "smartness." Still, one can dress both becomingly and comfortably; and some attention to the special needs of a particular game or sport will be found to promote comfort, make the player feel more at home, and lend him ease and poise. The first consideration should be comfort—style is secondary. Neither need be surrendered to the other.

Athletic Underwear.

It may be remarked, at the outset, that every sportsman should wear an athletic undersuit of one cut or another. The sleeveless shirt leaves his arms free to swing club or racket with sureness and precision; and the short drawers do not hinder easy moving about, an all-important thing in any game out of doors. Moreover, one feels much cooler, and perspires less than in full-length garments. The so-called athletic "union suit" (made with shirt and drawers in one piece) is especially suited to the

sports, because the drawers, being fastened to the shirt, cannot creep up or down, no matter how vigorously one exercises. But then the usual two-piece undersuit may be found to serve the purpose nearly as well. Short drawers are not as prone to slip downward as long drawers, for the latter are constantly pulled below by the tugging of the socks over them.

The tennis-player wears cream-colored flannel or white duck trousers, with turned-up bottoms, a flannel shirt with a white four-in-hand cravat, white lisle socks, and low shoes of white buck, white canvas, or russet leather, with rubber soles. He usually goes coatless and hatless. If a hat be worn, it may be an ordinary straw "sailor," or a round-crowned "boater" of white duck or white or blue flannel. Professional tennis-players are fond of wearing white canvas shoes, with soles and heels having blunt spikes. These, however, are more suited to cricket or to tennis that is played on a turf court. The belt may be a narrow one of white buckskin or silk webbing. To lend a picturesque aspect to the tennis-costume,

Summer Tuxedo Waistcoat.

a large silk handkerchief is sometimes passed through the trousers' loops, and made to serve as a belt. There may, of course, be slight departures from the dress described as individual taste prompts.

The golfer wears flannel trousers with turned-up bottoms, though they must be dark in color for the rougher work on the links. White ducks are not worn a-golfing; nor are "knicker" trousers in vogue to-day. Shirts cut with half-sleeves are as comfortable as they are convenient. Some men dispense with both collar and tie, leaving the top button of the shirt unfastened for greater ease and coolness. Others knot a large, brightly colored handkerchief round the neck. "Stocks" are not worn; and, indeed, they are so clumsy and heating that the wonder is they were ever approved. The golf-shoes are low cut and made of black calfskin or tan leather, with rubber soles. Hobnails or rubber disks, intended to give a firmer foothold, may be bought separately and attached to the shoe by the wearer.

The yachtsman wears a blue serge coat and white duck trousers, with turned-up bottoms, white shoes with rubber soles, white lisle socks, a white shirt with a soft collar of the same material, and a yachting-cap of the conventional shape, embroidered with a club or individual device or symbol. It may not be amiss to add that an excessively "yachty" costume is apt to suggest the landsman who has only sniffed sea air from afar. The true sailor avoids the promiscuous display of button and braid, and is careful to differentiate between deck and shore dress.

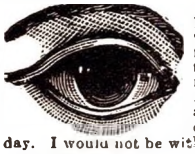
The horseback-rider wears the regulation cutaway coat and "Tattersall" waistcoat, tightly fitting breeches of tweed, cheviot, khaki, duck, or moleskin, and boots of tan or black Russia leather, or puttee leggings of tan pigskin or black calfskin. This is the accepted formal riding dress. Informal dress allows a man to wear pretty much what he pleases, and the ordinary sack suit, soft felt hat, leggings, gauntlet gloves, and the like are considered correct form.

BEAUNASH.

EYEGLASSES NOT NECESSARY

Eyesight Can Be Strengthened, and Most Forms of Diseased Eyes Successfully Treated Without Cutting or Drugging.

That the eyes can be strengthened so that eyeglasses can be dispensed with in many cases has been proven beyond a doubt by the testimony of hundreds of people who publicly claim that their eyesight has been restored by that wonderful little instrument called "Actina." "Actina" also relieves Sore and Granulated Lids, Iritis, etc., and removes Cataracts without cutting or drugging. Over seventy-five thousand "Actinas" have been sold; therefore the Actina treatment is not an experiment, but is reliable. The following letters are but samples of hundreds we receive.



Mr. S. M. Walker, corner Carolina and Palmetto Sts., Los Angeles, Calif., writes:—"About two years ago my sight began to fail rapidly. I consulted so-called scientific oculists and had special glasses made, but all to no avail. I bought an Actina and in less than thirty days threw away my glasses. Thanks to Actina I can read or write now for hours every day. I would not be without it for any amount of money."

Mrs. Charles Longstreet, No. 290 W. 147th St., New York City, writes:—"It gives me great pleasure to recommend Actina. Having suffered much with my eyes neither any treatment nor glasses availed, I was induced to give Actina a trial, and after a few weeks' use of Actina, I am able to read or write without that intense pain. My eyes are now so strong that I can use them freely."

E. R. Holbrook, Deputy County Clerk, Fairfax, Va., writes:—"'Actina' has cured my eyes so that I can do without glasses. I very seldom have headache now, and can study up to eleven o'clock after a hard day's work at the office."

"Actina" can be used by old and young with perfect safety. Every member of the family can use the one "Actina" for any form of disease of the Eye, Ear, Throat or Head. One will last for years, and is always ready for use. Actina will be sent on trial postpaid.

If you will send your name and address to the Actina Appliance Co., Dept. 96N, 811 Walnut St., Kansas City, Mo., you will receive, absolutely FREE a valuable book —Professor Wilson's Treatise on Disease.

I permanently remove superfluous hair. My FREE sample proves it

We want to give to every woman afflicted with a disfiguring growth, a liberal sample of this depilatory. *CHARMENE* is a most delightful toilet preparation which absolutely removes every vestige of hair from the face, neck or arms. It is guaranteed to permanently destroy the root forever.

CHARMENE contains no caustics and will not injure the most delicate skin. It softens, whitens and beautifies the skin and may be used even though no hairs are present. Its dainty cosmetic effect is soothing and grateful.

When we send the sample package free, we will also send our handsome book on "Beauty Advice," with complexion hints and advice on other *CHARMENE* preparations, Massage Eu Cream, Face Powder and Hairluxe.

Write today—NOW—for the free sample and book. It will prove well worth while.

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DEALERS write for special prices and catalog listing 10,000 subjects, imported and domestic.

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is absolutely harmless.

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GLYCOZONE cannot fail to help you, and will not harm you in the least.

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C22

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On Sale June 27th

CATCHY new songs by old favorites, beautiful ballads, spirited marches, sacred selections, hits from the comic operas, and musical comedies and clever dialogues are all included in the new Edison Records for July. Hear them at your dealer's and make your selections for the home, seashore, mountains or wherever you will be in July. No need to exert yourself for the sake of entertainment these summer evenings. Leave it to the Phonograph and the July Records. Here is the list:

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9579	Ta, Ta, Au Revoir, I'm Goin' to Go (Lowitz)	Ada Jones
9580	I Want You for My All Time Girl (deKoven)	Irving Gillette
9581	Kimmble March (Kimmble) *Accordion*	John Kimmble
9582	And a Little Bit More (Fischer)	Arthur Collins
9583	While the Birds are Singing to Me (Fulton)	Harlan and Belmont
9584	I'd Live or I Would Die For You (Ball)	Harry Anthony
9585	Dream of the Rarebit Fiend (Thurban)	Edison Military Band
9586	Because I'm Married Now (Ingraham)	Billy Murray
9587	Speed Away (Woodbury)	Edison Mixed Quartette
9588	You'll Not Be Forgotten, Lady Lou (Meyer)	Frederick H. Potter
9589	The Broken-Hearted Sparrow (Bendix)	Edison Symphony Orchestra
9590	You'll Have to Wait Till My Ship Comes In (Evans)	Bob Roberts
9591	I Know Dat I'll Be Happy Till I Die (Rogers)	Collins and Harlan
9592	Hymns of the Old Church Choir (Solman)	Frank C. Stanley
9593	Anvil Polka (Parlow)	Edison Concert Band
9594	Flanagan and His Servant Girl (Original)	Steve Porter
9595	Sweet Jessie Dear (Fontelle)	Edison Male Quartette
9596	Save a Little Money for a Rainy Day (Silver)	Edward Meeker
9597	The Chorus Lady March (Kingsbury) *Xylophone*	Albert Benzler
9598	Tale of the Bucket (Bald)	Will F. Denny
9599	Blondy and Johnny (Original)	Ada Jones and Len Spencer
9600	It's Great to be a Soldier Man (Morse)	Byron G. Harlan
9601	Shoulder Arms March (Rose)	Edison Military Band

THREE BOOKS FREE. July Supplemental Catalogue, outlining each Record; July Phonogram, going more into detail; complete Catalogue, giving all Edison Records now in stock, will be published July 27th. Write for them today while you think of it.

Thomas A. Edison

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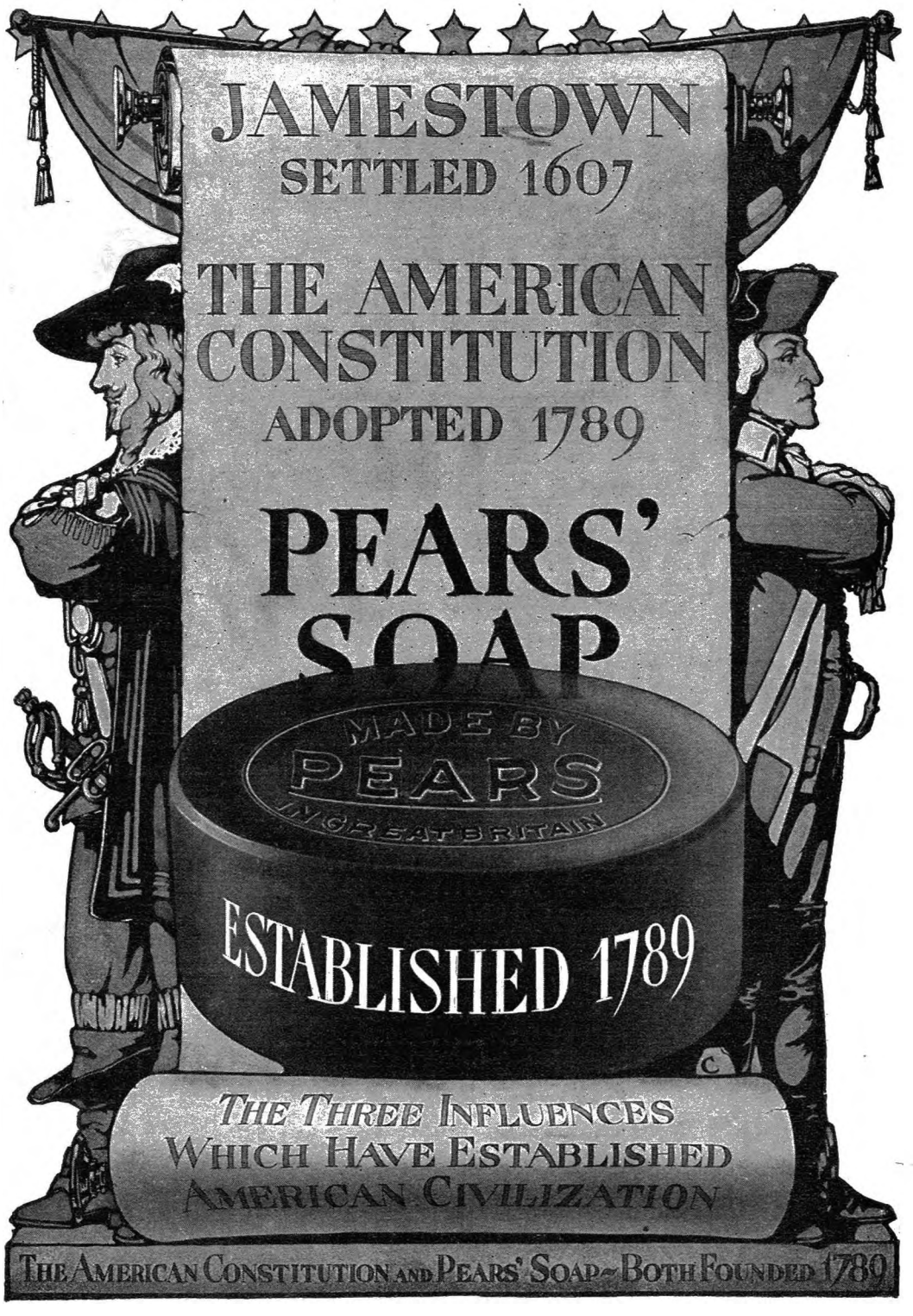

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YOU'VE heard smokers speak of "finding" a good cigar—usually they consider it a real discovery—rare good luck. That's because cigar-buying has always been such a game of chance—**a** "lucky-if-you-win" proposition.

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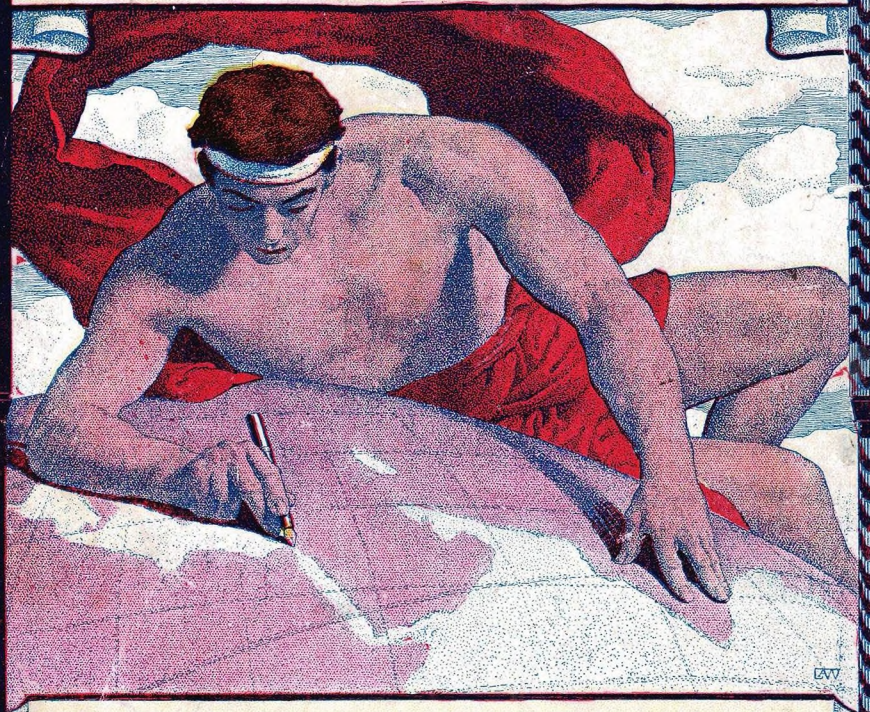

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