FEB., 1906

10 CENTS

The Popular Magazine

VOL. V. NO. 4

The Popular Magazine

CONTENTS FOR FEBRUARY, 1906

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION, $1.20 **SINGLE COPIES, 10 CENTS**

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

WING PIANOS

Are Sold Direct From the Factory, and in No Other Way

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When you buy a Wing Piano, you buy at wholesale. You pay the actual cost of making it with only our wholesale profit added. When you buy a piano, as many still do—at retail—you pay the retail dealer's store rent and other expenses. You pay his profit and the commission or salary of the agents or salesmen he employs—all these on top of what the dealer himself has to pay to the manufacturer. The retail profit on a piano is from $75 to $200. Isn't this worth saving?

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WE PAY FREIGHT
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We will place a Wing Piano in any home in the United States on trial, without asking for any advance payment or deposit. We pay the freight and all other charges in advance. There is nothing to be paid either before the piano is sent or when it is received. If the piano is not satisfactory after 20 days' trial in your home, we take it back entirely at our expense. You pay us nothing, and are under no more obligation to keep the piano than if you were examining it at our factory. There can be absolutely no risk or expense to you.

Do not imagine that it is impossible for us to do as we say. Our system is so perfect that we can without any trouble deliver a piano in the smallest town in any part of the United States just as easily as we can in New York City, and with absolutely no trouble or annoyance to you, and without anything being paid in advance or on arrival either for freight or any other expense. We take old pianos and organs in exchange.

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If You Intend to Buy a Piano—No Matter What Make

A book—not a catalogue—that gives you all the information possessed by experts. It tells about the different materials used in the different parts of a piano; the way the different parts are put together, what causes pianos to get out of order and in fact is a complete encyclopedia. It makes the selection of a piano easy. If read carefully, it will make you a judge of tone, action, workmanship and finish. It tells you how to test a piano and how to tell good from bad. It is absolutely the only book of its kind ever published. It contains 156 large pages and hundreds of illustrations, all devoted to piano construction. Its name is "The Book of Complete Information About Pianos." We send it free to anyone wishing to buy a piano. All you have to do is to send us your name and address.

Send a Postal To-day while you think of it, just giving your name and address or send us the attached coupon and the valuable book of information, also full particulars about the WING PIANO, with prices, terms of payment, etc., will be sent to you promptly by mail.

WING & SON
353-389 W. 13th St., New York
1868——37th YEAR——1905

Cut or tear out this coupon and mail to us, after writing your name and address at bottom. We will promptly mail book and other information.

WING & SON
353-389 W. 13th St., New York

Send to the name and address written below, the Book of Complete Information about Pianos, also prices and terms of payment on Wing Pianos.

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YOU DO THE SELECTING

WE have a few very fine odd volumes we shall dispose of at a sacrifice. Each and every one of the volumes is a standard.

They are all books of rare merit by the foremost writers the world has known. If you have not in your library the books here represented, this is your opportunity to secure at least one of them.

These books are as attractive as books can be made: paper, type and printing are the best, the binding is De Luxe Half Leather Style, the richest and most durable of all bindings, full gold back stamping, gold tops with head bands, marbled sides—a genuine de luxe book in every respect; in fact, a book cannot be more attractive or better made than these volumes.

You can select from the enclosed list as many volumes as you desire and pay us, if the books are found to be satisfactory after you receive them, 8 cents per month for twelve (12) months for each volume you select, and we deliver to you.

This will make the volumes cost you 96 cents each, an extremely low price for a book of such high character. This being an odd lot sale, we have of some of the volumes only a few, while of the others we have forty (40) or fifty (50).

The volumes are of uniform size and are bound in three different colors, red, blue and green, and are certainly the most attractive standard volumes published at the present time.

Select the books you desire by filling in an **X** opposite the titles given in this advertisement. We will send all of the books you select if we have them left in stock, if not, all that we have that you select. We will send the volumes to you all charges prepaid for your examination, and after seeing the books, if you desire to keep them, you can pay us a little each month.

As we prepay all delivery charges, we cannot accept an order for less than ten (10) volumes, unless you are willing to pay the delivery charges.

If you would like to see one volume before deciding how many to select, send us the name of the volume you desire and enclose one dollar ($1.00) and we will send you the volume delivery charges prepaid. Money refunded if you do not care to keep the volume.

This is the best opportunity to place in your home some of the most interesting standard volumes at a price far below what the books are worth, and you have an entire year to pay for the books you select.

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.....	84 Under Two Flags	Ouida
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.....	88 Waverley	Scott
.....	90 Whittier's Poetical Works	
.....	114 Woman in White	Wilkie Collins
.....	115 Wreck of the Chancellor	Jules Verne

Cut this advertisement out, mark volumes desired sent for inspection, sign your name and address and mail to A. L. FOWLE, 8 Washington Place, New York, N. Y.

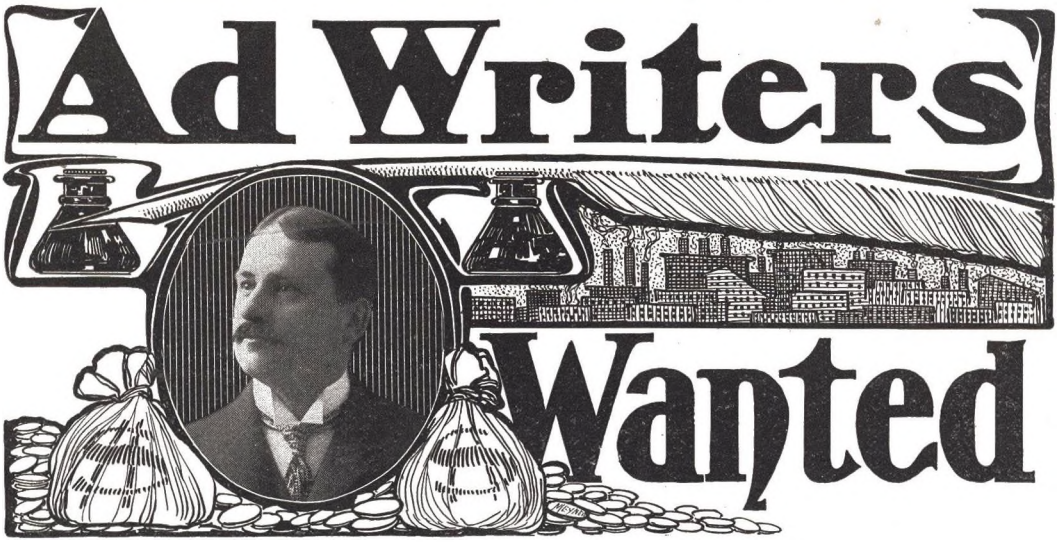
You may send me upon inspection the volumes I have placed an X before. I will, if the books meet with my approval, remit you 8 cents a month for 12 months for each volume. If I do not care to keep the books, I will return them to you all charges collect.

Name .....

Street .....

P F *Town or City and State* .....

A. L. FOWLE, 8 Washington Place, NEW YORK, N. Y.



Increasing demand for brainy young men and women who have been trained to draw trade by modern advertising. Salaries and incomes $1,200.00 up.

Actual, practical ad writing is the only kind of instruction that creates skilled advertising men and women.

Therefore the only real school is the school of experience, and this experience is amply supplied by the Powell System of Correspondence Instruction.

This explains why Powell students are able to double and quadruple their incomes in so short a time.

1906 promises to far surpass any two previous years combined as regards the demand for advertising writers and managers—and particularly for Powell graduates in preference to others trained on the mere theory plan.

This increasing demand is due to the marvelous prosperity of commercial America, and to the constant conversion of old style advertisers to modern methods.

The other day a Georgia company was willing to pay one of my students a good salary and a commission on every dollar of increased business. Another advertiser made an offer that should similarly pay a former student $10,000.00 a year, or possibly more.

While salaries ordinarily range from $1,200.00 to $5,000 00 a year, yet it may be of interest to state that the skilled advertising expert can look far beyond this. Several give their services on the percentage basis and earn as high as $20,000.00 a year and over.

The field is absolutely limitless, and the rewards for trained advertising brains were never before so princely.

Not only is the ad writer wanted in the preparation of up-to-date publication ads, but millions of dollars' worth of miscellaneous matter in shape of booklets and other business literature await his attention.

Mr. L. H. Potter who became advertistng manager of the Union, the largest clothiers of Columbus, O., on completing the Powell System, made such a remarkable showing that his father saw the advisability of purchasing the great business, a deal just consummated. Another large Columbus house asked Mr. Potter to have me send him a Powell graduate with similar skill.

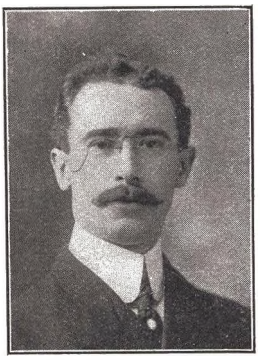
One Powell success helps others, and it is now a well-known fact that my own advertising, plus my students' efforts, are doing wonders in awakening advertisers all over the country to the importance of better service. Leading publishers, too, cordially praise me in this respect.

If more ambitious clerks, salesmen, and subordinate workers would become skilled ad writers their dissatisfaction with life would disappear. Lack of preparation for greater things is the fatal check on thousands of careers. A large company recently advertised in several cities for a skilled ad writer, and out of nearly a hundred replies received, only two had ever prepared a single ad —and not ten per cent. knew how to write a suitable letter. No wonder that the demand for trained brains multiplies.

I seek the enrollment of brainy young men and women only, and shall be glad to mail them for study my two free books—my elegant new Prospectus and "Net Results," laying bare the situation. Simply address me,

GEORGE H. POWELL, 1667 Temple Court, N. Y.

From Bookkeeper to Advertising Manager.



ROBT. MULLER, Adv. Mgr. Steinhardt Bros. & Co., New York.

Robert Muller, 506 Grand Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y., weary of decimal drudgery investigated the great possibilities of the advertising field, and then consulted eminent authority as to the best teacher. This resulted in his becoming a Powell student. He writes:

"Unsolicited I send you my photo to emphasize my appreciation of your valuable assistance. The Powell System of Advertising Instruction stands alone and it advanced me to my present position. I have reviewed several other courses, not one of which can be compared to yours. After completing the Powell System you secured me a place with one of the largest advertising agencies in America; later I resigned and became advertising manager of this concern, and my thorough training led to my appointment, although many others, not your graduates, were applicants. I gladly recommend the Powell System as the only one in existence that really teaches practical advertising."

George H. Powell
ADVERTISING AGENCY
No. 5 BEEKMAN STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y.
TELEPHONE 5763 CORTLANDT

New York November 21, 1905.

My dear Mr. Brown,

I have booked the Popular Magazine for another page for the Jan. 1906 issue and it is perhaps a good time to add that I expect to keep up my full quota of space during the coming season.

During the past fifteen months I have used twenty-seven pages for the Powell Correspondence System of Advertising Instruction, and every ad has paid a profit on the investment.

This is a record not surpassed by any other magazine; and I think, in fact, it breaks the record for such a large amount of space used.

The Popular is certainly popular-- and a puller.

Yours very sincerely,

G H Powell

GHP/M

To Mr. J. H. Brown,
Popular Magazine,
New York.

STERLING -24- SAFETY RAZORS

SHERMAN & COMPANY
FORTY ONE PARK ROW - - NEW YORK.

STERLING -12- OLD STYLE RAZORS

November 2, 1905.

Mr. J. H. Brown,

C/o Ainslee's Magazine, City.

Dear Mr. Brown:

You know we had a half page in Ainslee's for September, and, with great reluctance on the part of the writer, used a half page in the Popular for October. Under the circumstances it is only fair to you to say that on our strictly traceable advertising, the record of which we have only just completed, Ainslee's proved to be the very best of all the magazines that we used (a list of nearly twenty) and the Popular Magazine ran so close to Ainslee's that there is hardly any difference between the two publications in the cost of replies. The page we have in Ainslee's for November is exceeding this record more than twice over, and you shall have a page for the Popular for December, which is quite a distinction, by the way, as it is our intention not to use any other publications that month, owing to pressure of business.

Very truly yours,

Sherman and Company, Inc.,

P. O. Sherman

President.

CABLE ADDRESS LYON, N.Y.

LOCAL AND LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE
1509 CORTLANDT

ESTABLISHED 1843

J. M. LYON & CO.
Diamond Importers
AND MANUFACTURING
JEWELERS.

65-67-69 NASSAU STREET,
AND 10-12 JOHN STREET

FOREIGN OFFICES
4 Tulp Straat, Amsterdam, Holland
27 Holborn Viaduct, London

New York, Dec. 20, 1905.

Mr. J. H. Brown,

Ainslee's Magazine,

New York City.

Dear Mr. Brown:

During 1905 we have used thirty-seven of the leading periodicals published. We have just finished checking the results of our advertising, and you will doubtless be interested to know that THE POPULAR MAGAZINE has brought us bona fide replies cheaper than any other magazine on the list.

Your AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE stands seventh on the list and SMITH'S MAGAZINE twelfth. We are indeed very much satisfied with the results your Trio has brought us, and during 1906 we shall use half pages in the three magazines.

Very truly yours,

J. M. LYON & CO.
per D. H. Cohn
Adv. Mgr.

PRESIDENT
J. L. BLAIKIE

MANAGING DIRECTOR
L. GOLDMAN, A. I. A., F. C. A.

SECRETARY
W. B. TAYLOR, B. A., LL. B.

WHEN REFERRING TO POLICIES
PLEASE QUOTE THEIR NUMBERS

North American Life Assurance Co.

HEAD OFFICE, 112 TO 118 KING ST. WEST, TORONTO

S. G. FAULKNER.
MANAGER

PACIFIC COAST AGENCY
LUMBER EXCHANGE BUILDING

Seattle, Wash., Nov 10 05.

Editor "Popular"

Sir,

I have one great kick coming: why in thunder don't you issue the "Popular" every week? I grow thin waiting for it.

Yours in admiration.

B. D. Hurst

Genl Agt

A Chat With You

IF you glance at the opposite page, you will see the facsimile of a letter picked out at random from a big stack on the editor's desk. We don't print this letter because it is rare or a curiosity. We have letters from several thousand readers, all of whom say practically the same thing as Mr. Hurst. We print Mr. Hurst's letter, first, because it voices the thought of the majority who write to us, and, second, because we regard it as a model of brevity and force. Mr. Hurst knows how to write a letter without wasting any words, and with a directness and force that come pretty near to high literary art. He says:

> I have one great kick coming. Why in thunder don't you issue THE POPULAR *every week?* I grow thin waiting for it.
>
> Yours in admiration.

MANY others have asked us the same question as Mr. Hurst. We want to thank them for the compliment the question implies, and answer it. You all know the story of the general who should have fired a salute in honor of Napoleon, but failed to do it. It is so old that you may have forgotten it. Napoleon asked him why he did not fire the salute. The general responded that he had thirty-one reasons why. "Name one," said Napoleon. "In the first place," said the general, "we had no powder. In the second——" "That's enough," interrupted the emperor; "the first reason is sufficient." We have thirty-one reasons for not issuing THE POPULAR every week. The first reason is that *we can't.* The first reason is sufficient. We won't go into the other thirty, but will tell you why we can't.

THE POPULAR is the biggest fiction magazine in the world. It is unillustrated. It contains no long poems, no fillers of any kind. Everything in it is solid reading-matter. Every story that goes into THE POPULAR has to pass a rigid test. It must be an unusually good story—really exceptional in some way. The test is applied just as rigidly with the shortest of the short stories as in the case of serials and novels. It is a melancholy fact that the supply of the *best* fiction is limited. Exceptional stories are not written every day. If we tried to issue THE POPULAR every week we could not get enough POPULAR fiction to fill it. We could get plenty of stories, but they would not be our kind, and if we printed them, we would soon lose our individuality as THE POPULAR MAGAZINE.

EVER since the inception of the magazine we have been building up an organization to secure the best adventure fiction written anywhere in the world. We have our organization as nearly perfect now as we can hope for. No author who shows in his work that he has a story to tell worth the attention of our readers escapes our notice. When we see good stories written by an author who is not a contributor to THE POPULAR, we go after that author and get him to write for you, regardless of expense or trouble. Authors have their limitations. Sometimes they do not strike their highest note. It is our effort to keep them as close to it as possible.

THE manuscripts submitted to us by unknown authors are all read carefully. If the story is unavailable,

but shows originality and ability in the author, we get in touch with that author and do all we can to put him in the way of writing stories that will interest our readers. If it takes this effort to secure the material necessary for a monthly issue, you can imagine the impossibility of getting together a magazine like THE POPULAR every week. Bear in mind, also, that one of the rules that the editors have before them is: "Make each issue better than the last!"

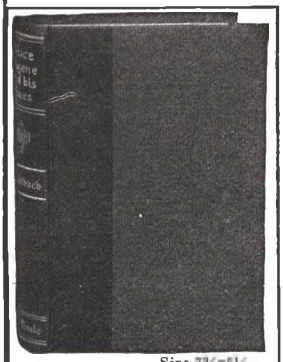
DON'T ever believe those stories you hear about magazine editors who send back stories from unknown contributors without reading them. No editor can afford to do that, for we are all looking for the new man with the new story to tell. If such editors ever existed, they retired into the asylums where they belong before we got into the business. This month's issue represents the best array of fiction we could possibly get together. And next month we will give you a magazine *costing more in money, brains, and effort than any we have ever put out.*

IT will contain a novel by Louis Joseph Vance, entitled "The Blood Yoke," the scene of which is laid in the Everglades of Florida; and a new serial by E. Phillips Oppenheim. It is the best work that Mr. Oppenheim has ever done. "The Betrayal," "The Master Mummer," and "The Mysterious Mr. Sabin" have won Mr. Oppenheim first place as a story-teller. "The Malefactor," which commences in the March issue, is stronger and more interesting than any of these. We feel justified in announcing it as the greatest novel of the year.

IMAGINE a man who has gone to jail to save a woman's good name. He has been sentenced unjustly, but he keeps silence. He goes to jail an impetuous, warm-hearted boy. He comes out of it, years later, a man in whom every vestige of human kindness is apparently extinct. He is a wealthy man when he leaves the prison doors—and he is determined to devote all his wealth and all his energies to secure revenge on the woman for whom he has suffered. Such a man is Wingrave Seton, with whose delivery from prison "The Malefactor" opens. In his own words, he is a man "without the faintest trace of feeling for his fellow men." In developing this character, Mr. Oppenheim tells a story that for sheer interest and fascination surpasses anything that has been published in years.

BESIDES the novel and the new serial, there are a number of short stories that will surely attract attention in the March POPULAR. "The Captain's Passenger," a sea yarn by T. Jenkins Hains; a story of an aeronaut, entitled "The Guy and the Guy-Line," by Richard Caton MacTavish; "The Margherita Pearls," by Cutcliffe Hyne; "Straightened Out," by Elliot Walker; and "When the Cook Fell Ill," by B. M. Bower, are four short stories that you can't afford to miss.

SAMPLE VOLUME SETS



Size 7¾x5½

18 MAGNIFICENT VOLUMES

THIS **most unusual Sample Volume Set Sale** is the greatest book bargain ever offered.

This is the opportunity of a lifetime to secure for little money on small monthly payments the finest set of books of its kind ever published.

During the past year we have upon request, sent to our customers sample volumes (to be returned) for the purpose of acquainting them with the books we are selling.

In this way we have been able to give our customers the opportunity of seeing one volume of a set of books, so that they could know just what the entire set was like in every respect.

This plan has been satisfactory to all, but of course we receive the sample volumes back.

These sample volumes are in first-class condition—in fact, just as good as new.

There is not one of our sample volumes that is more harmed than you would injure a book you borrowed from a friend and then returned it, yet they are not new goods and we cannot sell them at the regular prices.

Just now we have a special lot of 54 sample volume sets of a grand work, "The Library of Historical Romances." In fact this set of books is the standard the world over for interest and instruction.

THE **"LIBRARY OF HISTORICAL ROMANCES"** are strong vivid stories as well as good history.

No set of books published reproduce so vividly the social life of the times they describe.

"Frederick the Great and His Court" is the most remarkable romance ever issued.

"Henry the Eighth and His Court" and "Joseph the Second and His Court" are marvels for interest and instruction.

"Sans Souci" and "The Merchant of Berlin" are unrivalled in the entire domain of historical romance.

All classes are represented in these volumes as they lived and loved, thought and acted. Thus the human interest always prevails and has given this set of books enduring popularity.

Hundreds of historical characters are written about in these volumes, and their lives and actions are described in the most interesting style imaginable. In reading these romances one really feels they are a part of the time and the people they are reading about.

HERE IS OUR SAMPLE VOLUME SET OFFER

Thousands of sets of "The Library of Historical Romances," 18 volumes, are sold every year. The price is $40.00 a set, but we can offer you a complete set of 18 volumes, 17 new volumes and one sample volume, for a little more than one-third the regular price, and if you like you can pay for the books as follows: $1.00 after examination and you have found them satisfactory and $1.25 a month for 12 months.

This is a great bargain. The sets contain 17 new volumes and one sample volume that is just as good as new. If they were damaged we would not send them to you. It is our desire to please, not to offend you.

We guarantee that the sample volumes are in perfect condition. No more hurt in any way than they would be if we had sent them to you and after looking at them you had returned them to us.

Do not hesitate to send for the books. We will send them to you all delivery charges prepaid. Then you will know that what we have advertised is the truth, and we know you will appreciate this as the greatest of all book bargains.

This is a remarkable offer. Sign and mail **now** the sample volume set coupon. It costs you nothing to do so, and you can then see for yourself that these books are the biggest bargain you have ever heard of.

WE GUARANTEE these sets to be just as good as new. After examination of the books, if requested, we will accept check in full less 5 per cent. discount for cash.

A. L. FOWLE,

8 WASHINGTON PLACE,

NEW YORK, N. Y.

These Are the Titles of the Eighteen Volumes:

Napoleon and the Queen of Prussia
The Empress Josephine
Napoleon and Bluecher
Queen Hortense
Maria Antoinette and Her Son
Prince Eugene and His Times
The Daughter of an Empress
Joseph II. and His Court
Frederick the Great and His Court
Berlin and Sans-Souci
Frederick the Great and His Family
Goethe and Shiller
The Merchant of Berlin, and Maria Theresa and Her Fireman
Louise of Prussia and Her Times
Old Fritz and the New Era
Andreas Hofer
Mohammed Ali and His House
Henry VIII. and Catherine Parr

These 18 volumes contain a history of the great crises in Germany, Austria, Russia, England, Switzerland, Egypt, France, Holland, Prussia, during 200 years of startling events told in intensely interesting and romantic form.

The books are printed upon extra quality of paper from easy-to-read type, are attractively illustrated and beautifully bound. Titles and ornaments are stamped in gold on back, with gilt tops and trimmed edges. Size of the volumes is seven and three-quarters by five and one-half inches.

These 18 volumes contain 9,000 pages of the most instructive and interesting reading ever published.

SAMPLE VOLUME SET COUPON

A. L. FOWLE,
8 Washington Place, New York

Dear Sir:
Send me on delivery, charges prepaid, one set of the

Library of Historical Romances

BY MUHLBACK, in 18 volumes, size 7¾x5½ inches

bound in combination art cloths, red backs stamped in gold, with green sides. It is understood that 17 of the volumes are absolutely new and that the 18th volume is just as good as new. After examination of the books, if I decide to keep them I will send you $1 and $1.25 a month for twelve months. If I decide not to keep the books after seeing them I will return them, all charges collect.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

P. F.

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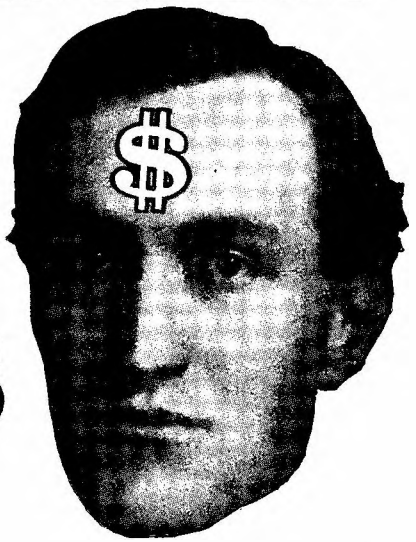


What're Your Brains Worth

DOES your head help make money for you, or are you on the tread mill of business, forced to keep step with others who exist on the pay received for machine-like work?

Every normal man is born with HIS SHARE OF BRAINS, just as surely as he is born with two eyes. The USE he makes of his brains marks the DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIM AND THE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL MEN of the world who have put themselves under our instruction for a THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF ADVERTISING.

No matter what vocation you may choose, a knowledge of advertising is an absolute requirement for you to make a success of it. Whether you expect to be a merchant, manufacturer, financier, a professional man, or a PRACTICAL ADVERTISEMENT WRITER COMMANDING FROM $25.00 TO $100.00 A WEEK, you must have, first of all, the knowledge of advertising we give by mail. Our preparation places you on an equality with men who have spent a lifetime "working-up" to their present positions. It enables you to forge rapidly ahead, because the untrained man of the "working-up" process cannot compete with the scientifically trained PAGE-DAVIS GRADUATE. This has been demonstrated time and again. Just see the way Mr. C. L. Buschman of the METAL ELASTIC MANUFACTURING COMPANY, of Idianapolis, has built up his factory through his advertising knowledge gained with us. Here is his letter:

INDIANAPOLIS, June 20th, 1905.

PAGE DAVIS COMPANY,

Gentlemen—I did not know a thing about advertising and was of the opinion it could only be done by "witty" persons or those who possessed some peculiar knowledge. I now believe any person who goes through the common schools can learn to write good advertisements. I LEARNED MORE IN SIX MONTHS WITH YOU THAN IN TEN YEARS IN BUSINESS. Thanking you for all the benefits and wishing you much success, I am, sincerely yours, C. L. BUSCHMAN.

If, like Mr. Buschman, you are interested in a business which you are anxious to develop, you will find that our advertising course will help you to push it rapidly ahead. You realize that advertising is the GREATEST BUSINESS IN THE WORLD, but perhaps you have no definite idea just how you can enter the field after learning it. Acquire the knowledge and the way will open up just as it did for J. B. Fisk, in the little town of Escanaba, Mich., who took the stand that if others could make more money by learning advertising he would do the same, even though he couldn't figure out just how he would apply this knowledge. He is now advertising manager for one of the largest establishments in Michigan.

The man who leaves his home and his business friends to go to a distant city where he believes better opportunities await him, will meet with greater success if he has a knowledge of advertising. There is George Wilson, an Englishman, who had little idea of what he should do after he found he was but one of hundreds seeking every position that opened as bookkeeper. Fortunately for him the advertising business was brought to his notice. Read how this was done:

SPOKANE, WASH., June 6th, 1905.

PAGE-DAVIS COMPANY,

Gentlemen—Just two years ago I landed on American soil, from England. Within a week after landing, I could have had a position as ADVERTISEMENT WRITER IN A DEPARTMENT STORE AT $100.00 A MONTH, but was not capable of filling it.

Determined that I would be capable some day—I took a course with you—graduated in due time—and am now holding down a better position than the one I could not accept at first. Need I say that I am enthusiastic over the PAGE-DAVIS SCHOOL? Need I say that on every possible occasion I tell my friends that the PAGE-DAVIS SCHOOL is absolutely reliable—that it fulfills to the letter every promise made?

To sum up, the PAGE-DAVIS SCHOOL transformed me from a bookkeeper with very little success ahead of me, to a practical advertisement writer with prospects unlimited. Yours sincerely, GEORGE WILSON.

We could fill POPULAR MAGAZINE with similar letters, showing how men and women in exactly your situation have forged right to the front through our thorough instruction, but it isn't necessary for you to eat a barrel of bread in order to judge the flour. We will gladly send you, free, our large prospectus about OUR SCHOOL, write you concerning YOUR OWN OPPORTUNITIES in the advertising business and give our opinion of the whole matter gratis. Write today and you'll hear from us by return mail.

PAGE-DAVIS CO.

Address either office

90 Wabash Avenue
CHICAGO

150 Nassau St.
NEW YORK

FILL IN NAME AND ADDRESS, AND SEND THIS COUPON

Page-Davis Company:—Send me, without cost, your prospectus and all other information.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State..... 2171

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. V. FEBRUARY, 1906. No. 4.

The Red Pope in the Yellow Palace

By George Bronson-Howard

Author of "The Girl of the Third Army," the "Norroy" Stories, Etc.

This is a tale of Thibet, a country actually visited by the author, who spent a number of years in the far East both as a war correspondent for one of the great London dailies and as a captain of cavalry in the Chinese army. Mr. Bronson-Howard's plot is a strikingly original one, and right skilfully has he worked it out. We think our readers will agree with us that "The Red Pope in the Yellow Palace" is a remarkable story.

FOREWORD.

TO tell of what he saw, to compel you to feel what he felt, to paint before you occurrences the like of which have never befallen a man and left him alive to tell of it, is the task that Stanford Sansome has attempted in this transcript. It is not for the editor of his work to say whether or not he has succeeded; outside of the husk and bones of minor literary corrections but one task devolves upon me. I must tell you something of the man who narrates this story of events seemingly a part of an age gone by and out of place in this sober, prosy twentieth century.

That these things came to pass there is no doubting, for Sansome has so recorded them; and one who knows him does not doubt his word. They are given to an unbelieving western public, who gabble Shakespeare's words as put into the mouth of the mad Dane, but believe them not—"There are more things on heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Horatio." Thus might he have addressed many Horatios; and thus Stanford Sansome addresses you, a public of Horatios.

For the things that you may reject with the scorn of the normal Anglo-Saxon for abnormalities came to pass in a country of which you know nothing—Thibet, the Roof of the World, into the spirit of which no Western may ever truly enter. But bear in mind that these adventures befell one of your own race, a healthy, clean-living, clean-minded American, who went through this surpassing travail and stress because he loved a woman—she, too, an Anglo-Saxon, in whose veins runs the blood of the dethroned Stuart kings—a Princess of Men.

As for him, Stanford Sansome, I can accomplish my object better in bringing his presentment before you by taking the facts of his life up to the year of these happenings—1904—from the dry statements which the "Who's Who"

book gives in its edition of that year. It tells you, if you care to look there, that James Stanford Sansome was born in 1870 in San Francisco, California, was educated at a military "prep" school in San Bernardino County, and graduated at Stanford University, after which he took an M. A. degree at Cambridge, England. He became personally attached to the staff of the newly appointed governor-general of the Soudan, after taking his post-graduate degree; and saw sharp fighting there, winning a Distinguished Service Order as a volunteer officer of "Gippies"—camel corps. Later he served his own country in the Philippines in the capacity of Second Lieutenant of the First Californias—volunteers; and was promoted to first lieutenant for bravery under fire. In 1899 he took service as an officer of the Chinese Foreign Legion and drilled soldiers for the emperor. Rendering Prince Tuan yeoman service, Sansome was made an officer of the Imperial Bodyguard. He fell foul of the dowager empress, and quitted the Chinese service to avoid possible assassination by Tsi An's henchmen. But before his resignation he had been created a Mandarin of China, fifth rank, and decorated with the order of the Seven-Clawed Dragon by the poor weakling emperor.

In 1902 he explored the upper reaches of the Niger, and in his book, "The Congo Atrocities," severely scores the greed of Leopold of Belgium for his sanction of the infamous traffic in human flesh. For his work in the Congo Free State he was made a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society of London.

The extract from the big red book ends:

Author of "The Congo Atrocities" and "Big Game of Many Lands." Clubs: Junior Army and Navy, London; Army and Navy, Washington; Bohemian Club, San Francisco. Address latter club, or "The Cliffs," Monterey, Cal.

As to his appearance I can only try to give you a faint idea. He was tall, lean and brown, with honest, straightforward eyes, and a stern but kindly mouth, shaded by a tawny mustache, clipped in the military style. He was something under six feet—an inch or less—but carried himself with such military erectness that he appeared taller. His arms were abnormally long, and his hands bony and strong.

He seemed to take his place in the world with an assured manner. It was not necessary for him to be arrogant or haughty to insist on recognizance of his position. He had the condition of things writ plainly on his face. A man to like and to know better if his pleasant reserve would permit you.

His attire was fashionably careless, as though he acceded to the conveniences of the tailors, but was rather amused by them. His brown hair was clipped short, and brushed back over his forehead. He had the art of tying his scarfs well, and his collars were close-fitting.

An air at once of being in the world of convention but not of it, a careless, kindly tolerance, were his. But behind that smile lay a strong will, betokened by the thin lips that sometimes closed tightly when he was ready to enforce his commands.

Rendering homage to none, but justice to all, resolute, sure of himself, forbearing to those weaker than he, *insouciant,* smiling in the face of danger, an erect bundle of muscle, a gentleman of the world. Helpful, generous and dependable—a something about him that made others conscious that dormant within him lay a reserve force that was a tower of strength in times of need. A woman might always trust Stanford Sansome.

So we have him at the time this story begins: this story of himself and the pale beauty whom he loved—the woman who made all these things possible.

CHAPTER I.

ASHTAR OF THE SILVER CLOUDS.

It all begins with the picture in the Paris Salon.

It is customary for writers to bewail the fact that they have not the pen

of a Shakespeare or some other man of great genius when they attempt to describe something which stirs them deeply. I shall make no apologies. Description of any sort in this instance would be inadequate. A man can but do his best.

I was first stunned, then entranced, then held by a mystic fascination. It was as though the eyes were speaking to me. The woman seemed no painted thing, but a living entity of flesh and blood, yet so far beyond what I had imagined a woman might be in the matter of beauty that the artist's genius might be likened to that of a creator of things more beautiful than those that really were. Still, there was no element of unreality about it. One instinctively felt that the girl lived and breathed, if not in the picture, then somewhere on earth.

Those careful of the consistency of art might have cavilled at the picture, for it represented the artistic conceptions of two great races—the Mongolian and the Caucasian. The background, the surroundings, the other figures were all painted as a great Chinese artist might have seen them; but the central figure—*the picture*—was plainly of the West, if she could be said to be of anywhere—this radiant child of the dawn.

She sat on a throne of gold, studded with many jewels, and draped with the furs of the polar bear, the white wolf and the seal. At her feet were other rugs and furs of a splendor imaginable only to those who have been within the palaces of Asian monarchs. A great hound lay there, an evil brute, its cruel eyes, red-rimmed, watery with desire to kill, to rend apart, its white fangs glistening in its pink jaws. A single Tartar stood on each side of the throne, chain armor over their rich silks, pointed helmets on their heads, and holding themselves stiffly erect, their right hands clutching spears. Slumbering ferocity mixed with brute devotion was their predominant expression. The background was a mosaic of gorgeous Eastern coloring, gorgeous yet not gaudy or overdone—gorgeous as only those of the East can compass it, the dignity of many bright colors.

And the woman—the Child of the Silver Dawn! There sat a queen indeed, but a queen of the Caucasians rather than a monarch over Tartar hordes. Intensely patrician was she, yet feminine withal. The arch of her nose, the curve of her lips, the proud little way in which she held her head, all proclaimed her consciousness of her divine right to rule. So the queen. The woman showed as plainly in the half petulant droop of the mouth, the trustful, almost childlike look in the violet eyes manifesting her the child-woman as yet innocent of evil, but conscious of her power to win and to hold by virtue of herself alone.

The milk-white coloring of her skin, the rose-pink of her cheek—one might go further; she was utterly charming. And then—her hair! The golden crown that she wore seemed cheap by comparison—the glory of her hair was a sufficiency. Such hair as that I had never seen—pure silver, the silver of a crescent moon, the silver against the blue of dawn. Not the white hair of old age, nor the gray of advancing years, but the silver of youth, of herself. There was a moonbeam in every thread.

Her gown was of silvery stuff, too, but a silver that paled into a colorless mass when one looked at it after the pale glory of her hair had entranced. The gown swept away from a white neck, faintly pink, and curved shoulders. Her white fingers held a scepter listlessly.

The picture was called "Ashtar." In one corner, where the artist's name or initials can be generally found, there was only a queer symbol, which I took to be Chinese. I am a fair Chinese scholar, but the character was new to me; yet I hardly deemed this strange, in view of the fact that there are several thousand characters in the language. In the catalogue the artist's name was not given.

Never, I think, have I showed infatuation in public to the extent I did at that time. My mouth open, my eyes

staring. I stood before the brass railing that kept me from actual contact with the wonderful canvas. People passed and repassed me. I heard their idle chatter in many tongues.

The usual Exhibition Day crowd was there, each person attempting to deceive the other into the opinion that to that person art was as an open book in his native tongue. In the background sullen-eyed men with long hair and cigarette-stained fingers glowered at the motley throng. Some of these had painted the pictures hung, but more of them had gotten the yellow slip, which means rejection. They had come to hear the rabble's judgment, and to add it to their grievances with many a despairing *Mon Dieu* as to the impossibility of art in an inartistic world.

Ladies from the Boulevard Haussman and elsewhere, and grisettes from Montmartre, jostled one another; cocottes from the Boul' Mich' and café-chanteuses fraternized, and threw arch glances at clean-looking English schoolboys of the upper forms over for the week under the guidance of spectacled tutors.

Lower middle-class English folk rubbed shoulders with the dwellers of Berkeley Square, not realizing their proximity to greatness; and ever and anon country folk, peasants, clattered along in their heavy shoon. Elegance and gaudery, cleanliness and dirt, virtue and vice, as well as intelligence and ignorance, were represented there.

There was one of my compatriots near by who chewed an unlighted cigar and took out his watch every few minutes with a resigned expression, while his wife shrilled out "Perfectly lovely" at everything.

But I had seen all this before my eyes fell on the picture; after that I became oblivious to all things except the marvelous woman who was painted before me. I had never had any serious thoughts concerning the sex, nothing akin to what might be defined love; but from the moment I looked into those violet eyes of the Silver Girl I knew that within me something had changed definitely and for all time.

"Captain Sansome," said some one with a queer intonation. I knew that I was being addressed, and awoke from my dream. I wheeled about. A lean, yellow hand was protruded in my direction. Following the body from the hand, my eyes encountered those of Sir Liang-Hiao, frock-coated and silk-hatted, queueless and Europeanized.

It was not hard to recall this gentleman of China. My hand grasped his instinctively, and we stared at one another. To those who know little of the Chinese all folk of that nation resemble one another, just as we, to them, are difficult to tell apart. But to the man who has lived in China the face now confronting me could be only the face of a scholar, a thinker and a nobleman.

Cheek bones so high that the face seemed an equilateral triangle in shape: eyes black, beady and supernormally intelligent; nose thin and with quivering nostrils, added to a mouth where humorous cynicism predominated, went to make up a countenance more than ordinarily interesting. His thin, yellow hand grasped mine tightly, and his mouth for the minute lost its cynical droop. He was really glad to see me, I make no doubt. We had been tolerably intimate acquaintances in the days when I was one of the emperor's bodyguard.

Since that time, information had come to my ears that China was no longer even fairly healthy for Sir Liang-Hiao. The man, in spite of his cynical mouth, was a humanitarian in the broadest sense of the word; and his influence over the weak and sensuous young emperor was one highly displeasing to that aged she-devil, the dowager empress.

Liang-Hiao was probably the most influential man of his time; so influential that a charge of conspiracy was trumped up against him, and he had only time to flee the country to avoid decapitation.

And now he was denationalized, I saw; for the removal of his hat showed me that his queue was gone, and that his head was no longer shaved in front.

His thick, black locks were closely clipped, like a Japanese; and, indeed, the man looked more like one of Nippon at that time than of his native country.

"Sansome, I am mos' happy," he said, in English. He had no accent, only an odd accentuation and a tendency to indulge in the gutturals and finer modulations of speech. "I have the picture to thank, my friend. I thank it." He turned and bowed deeply to the picture.

"I've heard all about your troubles," said I, "and I was wondering where I should see you again. You will bear me out that I warned you his imperial idiocy would not have enough backbone to stand up for you."

He grinned, showing a missing tooth. "You mean the Son-of-a-Thousand-Heavens?" he asked. "He was unfortunately confined by illness when the queen-mother decided me to be a superfluous pawn in the chess game. So I was taken off the board."

"But luckily you made the move," I said, dryly, rehashing a very ancient jest. "We dine together to-night, Lang" —the mercenaries of English extraction had Anglicized his name—"and you shall tell me all about it. But—in the meantime——" I turned to the picture —"that?" I said.

He nodded, smiling blandly, and rubbed his gloved hands over the silver head of his walking stick. "That—oh, yes!" he agreed.

"Who is the woman?" I asked, directly.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Do you desire a myth of my ancestors or my own ignorance?" he asked.

"Both."

"Then," said he, with great care and irritating deliberation, "that is the Goddess Ashtar. My own ignorance tells me that she is some one I never saw before."

"And the sign in the corner of the picture?" I asked.

He continued to polish the head of his walking stick. "That is the signet of the Grand Lama of Thibet—Dalai Lama."

Irritation overcame me. "But," said I, testily, "who painted the picture? Where did it come from? The artist's name is not in the catalogue."

"I have just interviewed some members of the hanging committee, and they refuse to disclose the name of the artist, even his nationality. I doubt if they know. In my opinion the background and lay figures were the work of some Chinese artist, while a Westerner of some sort—an Anglo-Saxon, I should say—painted in the central figure." He looked at his watch. "But, come, the doors are closing. We had best get outside, Sansome."

My companion was smiling cynically as he saw me take a backward glance at the picture. The smile faded as he took my arm, and we shouldered our way through the throng and out into the sunset-lighted boulevard. Irritation impelled me to say nothing until he had further explained himself, for I was quite sure that he would not have taken the trouble to seek out members of the hanging committee with regard to the identification of the picture unless he had some strong reason for so doing.

We strolled along, Sir Liang loquacious again, but not on the subject that interested me. He went on to say that he had been following my career, and had read my book on the Congo Free State, the which afforded him the opportunity of asking me a great many questions, which I answered perfunctorily. My lack of geniality seemed not to offend him in the least, and he chatted along, dragging the subject out to an interminable length. In front of a boulevard café I drew up and planted my stick heavily on the sidewalk.

"Let's sit down," said I, cutting short a question as to the slave trade being sanctioned by Belgium's reprobate monarch. "I will have a vermouth, *garçon*," this to the waiter. "And you, Lang?"

He duplicated my order. "Now, Lang," said I, putting my elbows on the table and staring at him directly. "I want to know about that picture."

"Picture?" he said, pleasantly. "Ah,

yes, the salon—I had forgotten. Which picture?"

My temper was gradually growing on me. "The picture of the girl on the throne—you know well enough what picture?" I returned, shortly. "Come, Lang, no hedging. Tell me."

He offered me his cigarette case open. "I can really recommend them. The khedive gave me an order on his own manufacturer when I was in Cairo." I took one, and he shut the gold dragon ornamented case and put it in his pocket, striking a vesta and offering me a light. "The picture," he said, meditatively. "Well——"

The *garçon* brought the drinks and I paid him. Sir Liang caught my expectant eye.

"It's very silly—the story of the picture," he said, with a wave of his yellow fingers. "A myth, a legend. I have no other reason for not telling you. The painting is that of the Goddess Ashtar."

"You said that once before," I reminded him. "I thought myself fairly familiar with the gods and goddesses of Buddhism and Shintoism, but Ashtar is a new one to me."

"It is a holy mystery," said Liang, gravely—then grinned.

"Confound you!" I cried, angrily.

"A holy mystery," he went on, speaking in that slow, reflective way of his. "The Goddess Ashtar is a myth, a promise. The death mortally of Lord Buddha and his ruling of the spirit following was attended by the belief that the spirit of Buddha entered into the body of each succeeding Dalai Lama. When Dalai Lama loses his physical beauty he dies, and to the music of many incantations and the beating of drums and cymbals the spirit of Buddha enters into the fresh young body of the new grand lama. No grand lama may mate with a woman. The time is not yet."

He smiled cynically, and brushed some ashes from the breast of his frock coat.

"I unfortunately have learned too much or too little to believe. I tell you the legend, that is all."

He sipped his vermouth. I listened intently. In spite of Sir Liang's imperturbable casting down of idols, I was not quite sure that the man was wholly without faith in the mysteries of which he spoke so lightly. But I have long ago given up any attempt to fathom the Celestial mind.

"It is written," continued the smiling one, "that from the silver lining of the dawn the Goddess Ashtar will be created mortally, that she may give birth to the sons of gods and men. She is to mate with Dalai Lama, who is Buddha, physically, as she now mates with him in the ethereal regions. When the time comes for her incarnation, she will be mated to Buddha, and will bear him a son; and this offspring of the twain shall be the Divine Ruler of Earth—the mortal God, who, being both God and man, will rule the world and bring happiness to it. It is a pretty story—much prettier than your Virgin Mary and her Son—and older. It may be that you have plagiarized us a little." He smiled again, urbanely, and finished his vermouth.

"And the picture?" I asked.

"The picture," returned my Chinese friend, "has written upon it that it is the mortal portrait of the Goddess Ashtar, meaning that the legend has been fulfilled and Buddha's mate has been incarnated in the flesh."

For some reason a dull, sickly pain smote me, and I was still for some little while. In a very quiet voice I asked him if he believed the legend. He smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"But the picture," I said, "is no fanciful creation. It is painted from a living model."

The Chinese spread his palms as Pontius Pilate might have done. He did not contradict the statement.

"More than that," I persisted, wondering at my own folly, "the woman is an Anglo-Saxon."

"The gods and goddesses are of no mortal race." A second later he added: "If she be Anglo-Saxon I am sorry for her."

"Sorry?" The queer, dull pain was still tormenting me.

"Yes. Those of the grand lamasery believe the legend. Believing this woman to be the incarnation of Ashtar, they would wed her to the grand lama, if they were forced to scour the earth to find her. Think, man! To them it means the regeneration of the world. They have vast wealth at their command, brains in plenty, thousands of devoted servants, craft—everything. They have painted her picture—how? If from life she is Dalai Lama's bride now. If otherwise——"

He began to button his coat with infinite care.

"If otherwise?" I asked, almost breathlessly.

"She is yet to wed Dalai Lama. But wed him she will—nothing can save her from that. Forget the Goddess Ashtar, or Miss Whoever-She-May-Be. If she lives, she is destined for Buddha, and no man can save her from it."

"Don't be so sure of that," I said, slowly.

He surveyed me, beginning with my boots and ending at my silk hat. "You mean yourself," he said, oddly. "Well—you—you may *try*. But I hope you will not try."

For some time we sat silent in the gathering twilight, the lights on the Arc de Triomphe glittering out of the glistening half-fog like so many eyes of hydra-headed monsters. A barrel organ struck up the "Marseillaise."

"Liang," said I, earnestly, "if that woman painted there lives, she'll be no victim of a barbarous superstition. If I cross her path—and cross it I hope I may—she'll have my protection whether she wants it or not; and if she becomes the mate of the grand lama, it will only be after I've cashed in my checks."

He stretched out his hand. "By the graves of my immortal ancestors," said he, the half-laugh veiling some real feeling, "I think you will do something!" His voice changed to one that had in it something of mournful prediction. "But you cannot prevail against the grand lamasery. Banish all thoughts of the woman."

"I can't," I returned, helplessly.

And neither could I. For this is her story, the story of the Goddess Ashtar, as he called her; but whom I know by another name sweeter by far, for it is my right to call her that—and this is her story which I am about to tell you.

CHAPTER II.

THE GIRL OF THE PICTURE.

Sometimes, when I think of it, it seems to me that the almost incredible story which I have set myself to tell is sadly out of tune with one of the characters in it—the character who first made it possible for me to be thrown into a position which gave me the right to entangle myself in the affairs of another. I speak of Daisy La Salle, who was a queer bundle of to-day and yesterday. In appearance she was so excessively modern that to bring her into a story like this seems an anachronism; but Daisy's modernity was only a shell. She had a mediæval spirit within her well-groomed, twentieth-century appearance.

Daisy's father had accumulated much money on the Chicago Board of Trade and had died, leaving it all to Daisy; and this gave that young lady an opportunity to become internationally famous for her freaks and philanthropy. She had won the favor of metropolitan London by the introduction of the buck-and-wing dance into the sacred drawing rooms of Cadogan and Berkeley Squares, not to mention Downing Street; had gone lion shooting in Africa; and had made a sally up the Niger River in her yacht on a relief expedition to find me—whom she had never seen. She found me coming back, much to her disappointment; but we afterward became very good friends.

This young lady from Chicago went in for everything to prove her superiority to mankind; and had, but recently, won the singles in the International Tennis Tournament. She rode unmanageable horses and drove stallions. Her golf was a thing to admire respectfully. She had absolutely no regard for conventions; and a great contempt for

wife hunters. I think she liked me because, knowing her character as I did by reputation, I took my fellow-man's revenge by treating her as a naughty little child. My friends have told me that this is my general attitude toward women, and, if so, I can only plead that up to the time this story opens I had spent very little of my life in their company. But it appears that Miss La Salle did not resent my attitude toward her, for she was far more gracious to me than to men who paid her humble devotion.

She was a little sprite of a thing—chubby, plump, and with an infantile smile, but a most comprehensive knowledge of human nature; and yet, in spite of this, she was prone to the most outrageous theories and enthusiasms in defense of certain things rejected by other people. She had been, at one time, the money supply of the spiritualists of the United States, until the harpies became too insistent and imposed glaringly upon her, whereupon she threw up spiritualism and went in for theosophy and "fake" Mahatmas.

Pretty she was, and would have been prettier had she not gone in so strongly for mannishness in her attire, and in her manner. She was addicted to shirt-waist blouses, men's collars and four-in-hands; sensible walking boots and Panama and felt hats. Her manner to men was that *camaraderie* that exists between good club fellows.

But enough of her many qualities—good, bad or indifferent—I have said that she had a mediæval mind. She had. She read fiction of bygone days with great avidity, and was a believer in the divine rights of kings. Only three classes of men of the present day won her enthusiasm—noblemen, soldiers and war correspondents. She longed to explore strange countries and have adventures like unto which she read about.

I liked her; liked her immensely, and therefore was glad to see her when, after riding over to the Hotel Del Monte one morning, I came across her in the foyer.

This was some four months after I had seen the picture in the Paris Salon—four months that I had been haunted by the girl on the throne. My obsession I do not seek to explain; sooner or later you will see a reason for it that will tell the story better than I can do by giving you a transcript of my mental maunderings. I was living at Monterey at the time, where I had a cottage near the beach, and was putting in the time riding, shooting and finishing up a book I was writing about my service in the Chinese Army. Sir Liang-Hiao was with me, having quitted Paris at my earnest invitation, and I found him a great aid in the compilation of my book.

The Del Monte was crowded at the time, as it generally is in the spring of the year, when Easterners flock to California. The automobile races were to be pulled off in a few days; and the motor enthusiasts had come down from San Francisco.

The little lady from Chicago in her customary *bon camarade* fashion came upon me from behind, and tapped me on the back. "The great explorer, or I'm a sinner!" said she, very gayly.

We shook hands very gravely. "A very pretty sinner," said I.

"I'm not pretty," she exclaimed, with a toss of her head. "You are very feeble in your flattery, explorer. Wait until you see my Daimler motor car. And wait until you see me run it. That will open your eyes, my friend. You won't call me a pretty sinner then——"

"You invented the word for yourself; I the qualifying adjective to which I still cling. I wonder if the chairs on the porch are strong enough to sit on," I added, artfully.

She shook her head again. "Very weak," said she. "Remark and chairs included. Let's go down to the clubhouse. I pine for a claret lemonade—oh! I have something very, very interesting to tell you, old chap."

She lisped just a trifle, which trait alone would have made her indelibly feminine; and only made the mannish mannerisms fetching.

We left the foyer and the veranda to stroll down the well-kept path, shaded

by great trees, along which the "club-house" was situate. Daisy La Salle rattled on merrily about the people she had been meeting since I saw her the last time, and the unconventional experiences she had made for herself to play heroine in. Finally, with some iced stuff before us, she became even more communicative.

"I have a friend," said she, in a thrilling whisper; "the most beautiful thing you ever saw."

Used as I was to Daisy's rhapsodies, I did not take the statement at its par value.

"She *is* the most beautiful thing," she reiterated, irefully, noting the unbelieving look in my eye. "I'm not like most women—cats!—who never praise any woman who is really pretty. But this girl is the most lovely—and it was so funny how I met her! She is just twenty-one. Her name is Stuart—Mountjoy Stuart. Her father was the famous Colonel Stuart—De Greville Mountjoy Stuart. That's her name, too—Mountjoy Stuart. Isn't it a perfectly *lovely* name? But her father, you've heard of him—oh, you must have!"

"I have most certainly heard of him," I responded. "He's a member of the Royal Geographical Society, along with yours humbly—or, rather, he *was* a member. He's dead, isn't he?"

"Oh, yes, he's dead. You know he went into the interior of China on some mission. He was going to Thibet, I think. Isn't that thrilling, though? And one of the members of his party—his Chinese servant—got back and told the people in Shanghai that when they got into the country—Thibet, I think—the natives set on them and killed his master and the rest of the party. Isn't that perfectly awful? But he got away, this servant did. That was five years ago. He was the same man who went down in the pygmy country in Africa—and did all sorts of things—of course you've heard of him?"

She seemed to have forgotten that I had answered in the affirmative. As a matter of fact, anyone interested in the opening up of new countries knows the name of De Greville Mountjoy Stuart quite well. He attained his colonelcy by service in the French Foreign Legion in Algiers, and was afterward noted for his daring sallies into savage lands.

"Well, that was five years ago," rattled on Miss Loquacity. "And Mountjoy—I call her Joy, you know—was in a convent then. She was terribly cut up about her father, because he was the only one she had in the world—she's the *dearest* thing; indeed she is. We met on the Channel boat going over from Calais to Dover, and when I saw how lovely and sweet she was, I just *wouldn't* let her stay in England. She was going to live there, you know, with some old fifth or sixth cousin—but I wouldn't let her. You see, she was kept in the convent until she was twenty-one, and then she came into her father's estate. At the convent school where she was—it was in De Neuilly—do you know the place?—they wanted her to be a nun. But I guess she wasn't going to be such a little fool. The nuns wanted her father's money for the church, that's what they wanted."

She broke off suddenly, staring straight before her, an expression of something akin to fright on her face—so unusual an expression for Miss La Salle that I instinctively turned my head and followed the direction of her gaze. All that met my eyes was the well-groomed figure of a man in an English walking coat, a spray of flowers in his buttonhole, and a stick in his hand. Yet Miss La Salle's look was not to be misinterpreted, and I examined him more carefully. He passed a point where the sunlight fell full on his face, and his yellow skin was made apparent, along with his physiognomy, which was unmistakably Mongolian. As I looked, he turned into another path, and was lost to sight.

"Did you see him?" asked Daisy La Salle, in a hoarse whisper. Vaguely conscious that something was wrong I did not answer her for a moment.

"The Chinaman—you saw him?" she

demanded. Her tone was just a trifle afraid.

"I saw him," I responded, gravely. "A rather well-dressed, exceedingly Westernized specimen of the Celestial kingdom. I know many of his kind—exiles from China for political reasons. A Chinese noble, I should fancy."

"He's followed us—from England," said Miss La Salle.

Here, indeed, was something interesting. Anything Chinese arouses my interest at once, for I had lived among them long enough to realize that I knew nothing about them.

I laughed. The best way to get the truth from a woman is to ridicule her statements. She flushed, angrily.

"Why should he follow you, Daisy?" I asked. She had insisted once before that I should not call her Miss La Salle. "Unless, of course—oh, yes!" I smiled again, rather broadly. "After all, I appreciate his good taste, and withdraw the question," I finished.

"I think you are perfectly *hateful!*" she burst out. "He didn't follow *me.*" This with fine scorn. "It was Mountjoy—Miss Stuart—and he's been doing it for years. It's awful, Stanny; it's awful."

I made no comment, but prepared myself to listen.

"To think of that poor girl with that shadow over her all the time—for four years. Every time she went out with the sisters of the convent that horrid Chinaman was always waiting around somewhere and smiling to himself in that horrid way—just like he was waiting for a nice dinner to get ready—as though he smelled the cooking. That's the way he looked at Mountjoy—that horrid *beast* of a Chinaman!"

"I don't understand," I commented. Here plainly was something well worth looking into, and in entire accord with the nature of the Chinese.

"You don't understand—of course not!" she cried, taking a fresh breath. "She went to school at De Neuilly in France—I told you that once. It was a convent school, and her father put her there just before he went off on that last trip of his—to find some new country or something. And then, about four years ago, she saw this Chinaman standing by the road when the sisters and the convent girls went out for a walk. Every day he was that way when they went out for a walk—every day for four years—and he always looked at her—at Mountjoy—never paid the slightest attention to anyone else—didn't seem to see them at all. Always had his eyes on her—and when she looked at him he would smile at her—and if she looked around after they had passed him, she would see him still standing there, looking straight at her—at the back of her head. She always knew he was looking at her. She couldn't help herself."

The whole thing would have seemed absurd to anyone who knew nothing of the denizens of the Celestial kingdom; but as described it was just such a mysterious affair as one might expect from those of infinite patience, who can wait years, decades, lives, to consummate their ends. Plainly the whole thing meant something that went somewhat deeper than the average affairs of every day. I was beginning to take a deep interest in Miss Mountjoy Stuart.

"Daisy," said I, "the thing sounds serious."

"Serious!" she cried. "Serious! Well, I should think it was serious! Why, that poor child will wake up in the middle of the night, and run to me and catch my arm—just shaking. Oh, it's perfectly *awful.* She thinks that he has been standing over her and looking at her while she's been sleeping——"

"That's nightmare," said I.

"But there's the man himself!" she insisted. "Every day for four years he was always waiting when she came out for a walk. She told the sisters about it, and they found that he had taken a little château half a mile from the convent. There he lived alone, except for his Chinese servant. They said he was a very worthy man and a good Catholic—he had a long talk with the parish priest, telling how he had been converted by a Jesuit missionary out in China. They thought he was

simply fine at Neuilly, and you couldn't say a word against him."

How like the politic, crafty sons of a Thousand Heavens!

"Mountjoy says she's dreamed about him and dreamed about him. When she left Neuilly to go to England this man was on the same train, the same boat—he was on the boat when I met her. While we were at the Carlton, he was there, too—when we went to Claridge's, so did he. He took a stall near our box at the Gayety, a table near us at the Savoy—he was always around. He never said a word—but he was always watching, watching. You couldn't look at him but what you found him staring at you—you know that peculiar feeling when you feel that some one's staring at you, don't you? Well, that's the way. And Joy has that even when he isn't around."

"What does he want?" I asked, knowing quite well that she would reply that she did not know. I was right. She did, and shuddered as she made the statement.

"So he's followed us here. He was on the *Campania* when we crossed the pond—and now he's here. We've got a little cottage on the hotel grounds—and he's stopping at the hotel. Isn't he perfectly *hateful?*"

"He seems to take a conscientious interest in your welfare," said I. "But haven't you any idea of his reasons? Can't you tell me who he is?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "The name he uses—not that it's his real name, but the name he signs on hotel registers—is John Moon—of course no one would have such a ridiculous name as that, not even a Chinaman. And—oh, yes!" She seemed struck by a sudden idea, and stretched out her hand, eagerly. "I've noticed, whenever he meets a Chinese, how awfully polite they are to him—they bow so low that you think they're going to kiss the earth in front of him."

"Kotow," I observed.

"And he just passes them as though they don't exist at all—doesn't pay the slightest attention to them. I don't know what makes them do it."

"Has he any Chinese letters on him?" I asked. "Sleeve buttons, pins, rings, or like that?" I added, explanatorily.

She meditated. "Why, yes, he wears some sort of a queer gold scarf-pin—I suppose it is a Chinese letter—and a ring, too."

"Then," said I, "if I catch sight of that pin I may be able to tell you something about him. You know about my experiences in China with the Imperial Clan—I read, write and speak the Mandarin tongue indifferently well."

She clasped her hands, and looked at me gratefully. Then suddenly exclaimed:

"There she is! Joy—Miss Stuart!"

I turned, and saw a girl passing along the path as though in search of some one. She wore a walking skirt of white duck and a long Louis XIV. coat of the same material, while her face was shaded by a white garden hat, over which was draped a white silk veil.

"I'll run and fetch her up here."

"No, I'll come along," said I.

Daisy La Salle left me like a shot and went down the steps and after the girl. I followed more leisurely, my eyes fixed on the figure ahead.

Daisy had caught and stopped her by now, and they stood together in the path. The girl threw one fleeting look at me, and I knew that Daisy had mentioned my name. I came up and took off my felt hat, holding it in my left hand along with my riding crop.

"Miss Stuart, let me present Captain Sansome," said Daisy, with the assured air of bringing together two very desirable people.

The girl turned, and I saw her face. A glint of sunlight darted through the interlaced boughs and fell slantwise across her countenance, lighting up the hair of *silver*.

There she was. My dreams had come true. The violet eyes, the rose blush of her cheek, the queenly poise of her head, the sweet girlishness of her mouth, the soft light from the eyes innocent of evil—and the pale glory of the marvelous silver hair.

Ashtar stood before me—the radiant

child of the silver dawn—the girl of the picture.

Dazed, I took the outstretched hand in the white glove, holding the slender fingers almost reverently.

CHAPTER III.

FROM THE OTHER LAND.

What I said was no doubt unintelligible. It was as though one dreaming had awaked and lived in his waking hours the dream—consecutively. Her face, her radiant face, that had been with me, sleeping and waking, ever since I had been transformed into another person by my first look into the painted eyes of the living woman, was now before me in the flesh. Perhaps I believed for the moment that it was but a chimera, a fata Morgana, called into existence by my rambling fancy, turning over thoughts of Chinese mystery and counter plots.

My eyes sought hers, and my gaze was fastened to them. My neck seemed stiffened into immobility, and I found, too, that for the minute I had lost control of my eyes—that I might not turn them away. Under my direct scrutiny she looked down, her long eyelashes sweeping her cheek. The consciousness of the seeming rudeness of my stare became apparent.

"Who was it painted your picture?" I asked, blurting out the uppermost topic of my mind.

When she spoke it was like the caressing notes of song birds—low, soft, clear-toned. "My picture!" she repeated, opening her violet eyes very wide.

"Yes," I replied, stupidly. Words seemed to have become scarce and difficult of articulation.

"No one has ever painted my picture," she returned—then a white-gloved hand shaded her brows, as if in thought. "Yes, yes," she said. "Father had a miniature of mine. I do not remember the artist's name. Father called him Raymond; but that was his christened name. He painted my miniature for father to take away with him—he was far too good."

"I might almost be an artist myself with the inspiration of your face," I said.

"You value beauty so much, then," she returned. "Everyone tells me that I am beautiful, but the nuns said that a beautiful mind was more to be desired than a beautiful face. And my mind, my character, is not beautiful—so they have said!"

"You won't find men caring much for a beautiful mind, ninny," broke in Miss La Salle. I had almost forgotten her existence for the moment. "Haven't I told you that scores of times?"

"Then that is not really and truly *love*," returned the girl, seriously. I had not long to discover that she lacked any sense of humor. Life for her was one long, graceful sweep, the little head held so high that the incongruities, the nastiness, the pettiness—all that goes to make up the ludicrous side was not for her to see.

"Love!" sniffed Daisy La Salle. "The kind of love you fancy is all pish-tush, Joy. Absolute rot."

A strange gleam came into the violet eyes, and the nostrils quivered. "I forbid you to speak to me like that," cried the Silver Girl, her slender little form drawing up to an imperious height, the curves of her mouth vanishing. For the moment she was intensely regal, and cold fury gleamed in her eyes. She made no question of her right to command. She commanded.

Daisy La Salle shrank back from her gaze, dropping her eyes and surveying the ground. For the moment she seemed afraid of personal hurt.

"I am sorry, Joy," she said. "You know I didn't mean——"

And immediately the regal poise was lost, and the girl melted into a tender mass of femininity. "You dear thing!" and her arms went about Daisy's neck in a trice, regardless of my presence and the curious stare of passers-by.

It was all over in a moment, like an April shower. The Silver Girl was now looking at me shyly from her violet eyes. "I've shown you my character al-

most immediately," she said, with pretty repentance, brushing back a strand of her glorious hair. "I was so rude, wasn't I? I'm really not a bit nice—and you mustn't say so—please."

The "please" was imperious; it lacked altogether the intonation of an entreaty, savoring rather of a command. I bowed, but refused to pledge myself to the impossible.

Daisy linked her arm within the girl's and patted her hand affectionately. "Well, we must be off now—so many things, you know, Stanny. They're going to unpack that beastly Daimler from the station, and I'm quite sure they'll do something wrong—or be careless—or hurt something—and I can't afford to lose the race——" She waited for a moment, evidently expecting me to challenge her hopes of victory, but some little wisdom had always been mine. She smiled brightly, and put her disengaged hand on my shoulder.

"Come to dinner to-night. We've got the dearest little Jap cook, and he serves such lovely salads. The hotel manager got him for us—will you come?" Then, "Oh, dear!" disconsolately. "Who else shall I invite? I know so many men around here, but they're perfectly horrid and formal, or else fresh and nasty." She puckered her lips.

"Well," said I, with deliberation, "I have a friend staying over with me who's most decidedly interesting—he's a nobleman——"

"Ah!" Daisy liked the grandeur and sweep of the prefixes of the ennobled.

"And was banished from his country—had to run for his life—charged with conspiracy." I paused. The effect was decidedly inspiriting. "It was all bosh, though," I added.

Disappointment shone in her eyes. I am quite sure she would have preferred him to be a conspirator. "Well, you bring him, too," she said. "Don't forget now."

She turned to go away, but a wave of my hand detained her. "I had an idea, however, that you disliked Chinese. He is a Chinese nobleman, you know. He and I were together at the emperor's court."

The Silver Girl's eyes dilated and her fingers clutched her friend's arm.

"A Chinese!" said Daisy, in perplexity.

"My best friend," I added, convincingly. "Sir Liang-Hiao."

Her eyes sought the Silver Girl's. "You don't mind, do you, dear?"

"I shall be glad to see any friend of Captain Sansome's," said the girl, but the words carried no conviction to me. It seemed that the glance she threw at me had in it a wealth of reproach. Daisy, however, saw only the obvious.

"Well, then, it's settled," said she, with a distinct air of relief. "Come along, you darling. By-by, Stanny."

They passed up the path, and were hid from view by a great magnolia bush.

My insistence on the invitation of Sir Liang had been made for other reasons than that he was my friend. It is true that he was, so far as East and West may ever meet on common ground. He had come, at my request, to spend six months with me at my Monterey cottage, and we got along famously together.

To me he was the careless, almost debonair philosopher, wit and devil-may-care soldier of China—a ready cynicism, which lacked any element of personality or ill-feeling, a quaint wit, a disbelief in all things of the morrow, but a cheerful acceptance of the pleasures of the day. He himself was writing a book, but he laughingly refused to give me any idea of its intent, saying that it was but his personal journal, and he was ashamed to disclose his evil nature even to me.

"Sometimes," he had said, "I am even afraid to confess it to myself. One does not like to believe himself wholly worthless."

Despite the laughter in his voice, I was at moments filled with a vague unquiet, when, looking up from work or reading, I saw his intensely black, beady eyes on me.

A man of many men was he—a character so far beyond me that I cannot hope to make him stand out from the printed page a living, breathing entity. For it is not given for one of the Occident to get into the heart of an Oriental and drag it out for the inspection of the world. He can never fully understand.

. . . . . .

My reason for wishing to have him a dinner guest at the La Salle cottage was that he might have leisure to study the case of the Silver Girl. Since the time that we had both discussed the question of the picture in front of the boulevard café he had refused to speak further regarding the Goddess Ashtar.

"It is not well that you should think of old myths—if you do they may become real to you," he said. And to move Liang from his purpose was, as the Celestial proverb goes, like unto "drawing from the goat the wherewithal to sustain the cubs of the elephant"—which is their synonym for the impossible.

What he should have to say when we were closeted together after leaving the La Salle cottage—ah! perhaps even the ready mandarin would be nonplused—and——

I looked up, to see the Chinese in the English walking suit pass me. For the moment our eyes met, and my gaze went to his scarf. A single Chinese character in chased gold met my eyes. As I stared he passed on.

The character of the scarf pin had not been difficult for me to read. I had met members of his infernal order before. They had handicaped me in my work, thrown untold obstacles in my way, and in the end brought about that condition of affairs which compelled me to take my choice between mysterious assassination or resignation from my post in attendance to the emperor. This position had been gained me for services rendered one of the royal princes, and this prince was my friend—so that openly even the Dowager She-Devil preferred to leave me in peace, officially, for this prince, by another wife of the former emperor, had too strong a following at his back to encourage him to acts of rebellion.

This man, who had just passed, was one of the so-called "Soldiers of God"—the quasi-military, wholly religious body, which is at the back of the faith of Buddha. The Soldiers of God, officered by mandarins and the sons of mandarins, mysterious as the white wings of night, deadly as the hemlock itself, were the instigators of the Boxer troubles, their hope being that the church of Buddha shall rule China as it rules Thibet, to the abolition of Shintoism, Taoism, and all other religions dissimilar to their own faith. They saw in the foreign missionaries too dangerous a body to their hopes—not that they taught a better religion, but because they gave the people, the coolies, light in their darkness of crude superstitions, which have been the hold of the lamas on the ignorant Celestials for ages.

But enough of the Soldiers of God. This man was one of them, no doubt an official of the order, an official of high rank.

As these thoughts were running riot in my brain, I followed the man. The fact that one of the Soldiers of God had been constantly in attendance to the Silver Girl was something not to be lightly dismissed. All thoughts of personal desire fled from my mind in connection with him when I realized what he was. This was a matter that went deeper into the hidden things than the attraction of man by woman.

I confess to a cold chill when I thought of the sinister order in connection with My Lady of Brightness. Full well I remembered the whole crew, and their chief, Arif the Persian, Grand Envoy of Buddha to the Court of a Thousand-Heavens—Arif, the fair-skinned representative of Dalai Lama, whom even the Dowager She-Devil feared; the tall Persian, who had brought about my downfall, as well as that of other foreign mercenaries, at the court. There was to be no alien influence but his own—the influence of the grand lamasery. Inscrutable, pitiless, with a face of carved marble, his

cold, sinister beauty came back to me, and I wiped some beads of perspiration from my brow.

The Chinese ahead of me turned into the road running in front of the hotel, and I followed him. From his waistcoat pocket he took a watch, at which he glanced, then quickened his steps toward the bus, which was standing before the veranda. A look at my own chronometer showed me that a train was due from San Francisco. Could my mysterious watcher be expecting some one? If so—whom?

He got into the omnibus, and so did I. My first close-distance glance showed me that I had been led into a mistake by his elastic step, so far as to give him credit for youth; now I saw that his skin was creased in many places into myriads of tiny lines and wrinkles. Under his eyes were little puffy places. His yellow chin was pointed, and his upper lip short.

He had closed his eyes when the bus started, and I had my opportunity to look him over. His clothes were from an English shop, and looked well. His hands were in tan gloves, so that I had no chance to note the ring of which Daisy had spoken.

He was evidently a man of years; nearly fifty at the least; and his face told two things, the scholar and the zealot. But the face lacked strength. I should not have deemed him an especially dangerous person.

The bus pulled up, and he opened his eyes with a start. With great common sense my gaze was directed in another direction. Out of the tail of my eye I saw that he glanced at me cursorily and with little interest. He left the conveyance and walked out on the platform. I followed, as did the rest of the bus occupants.

The train was a trifle late; and I paced up and down the platform, occasionally looking over toward the Chinese, who was smoking a cigar and sitting on a truck, his arms folded and his eyes fixed on the woods opposite. The other guests about the station chattered noisily among themselves, and good-bys were said by some friends of people going down to Angeles.

Out of the distance the rumble of the train came, and with the roll of increasing thunder it bore down upon us, then checked itself to a standstill, like a balky horse, wheezing, blowing and indignant. Baggage men threw trunks and luggage out to ready station hands; and prospective hotel guests poured out of the Pullman cars.

My Chinese had drawn away from his truck, and was examining the outcoming travelers with enough interest for me to be quite sure that he expected some one. Suddenly he started forward and his hat came off. A gigantic figure towered over him. I heard the rumble of a voice, and the hat went on again, the big one clutching his hand.

I moved closer. The new arrival was several inches over six feet, and though slim was muscular. He was clad in blue serge, a long sack coat and wide trousers. A low-browed sailor hat sat incongruously on masses of crisp black hair.

He turned to wave his hand toward some luggage; and the thing that I had most feared had come to pass. I saw the cold white skin, so white that it was the pallor of the dead, out of which two great black eyes, seemingly without pupils, gleamed with somber light. A long, straight nose, a pointed chin, a gash of a mouth——

That face was unforgetable. It was Arif the Persian, unchanged save for his European clothes and short hair.

Arif the Persian! I stood, transfixed, utterly unconscious of the life about me, and the fear of the unseen tugged at the marrow of my soul.

I remembered the legend of Ashtar—here was the emissary of Buddha, the man who held even the She-Devil in thrall.

Arif the Persian!

TO BE CONTINUED.

The Dutch Ghost

By T. Jenkins Hains

Author of "The Black Barque," "The Wind-jammers," Etc.

No writer of sea tales has won greater favor with the American reading public than has T. Jenkins Hains, and no reader of "The Popular Magazine" will wonder why after he has read this and other stories by Mr. Hains which we shall publish during the coming twelvemonth

WE sat in the shadow of the great mainsail. It was the dog-watch, and the mate who had the stores in charge came out and joined us, stretching himself upon the coamings of the main hatch. Mr. Slade was in no humorous mood, for the crew were unanimous that the stores were bad and that the little they received was worse than the articles called for. They had made "Dutchy," an American-born Teuton, act as spokesman for the delegation of six who had gone aft to interview the skipper in regard to getting better "whack."

After the "old man" had exhausted all the oaths in his vocabulary, without any visible effect upon the sailor, he had turned the matter over to the mate to settle, and Slade had his work cut out for him.

"You fellers don't know when you have a good thing," said the mate, addressing the watch at large. "What's the good of kicking at grub good as ourn? We give the best we got, an' there ain't nothing doin' in the after cabin; we will eat alike."

"Well, we don't get no butter, an' we don't get no sugar," said Dutchy.

"There's several things you don't get. forra'ds. But I tell you what you will get," said Slade.

"What?" asked Dutchy, and shock-headed Jones sidled up to hear.

"Well, you'll get your neck broke if you bother me much more—and I'll do the breaking," said the mate.

"Bah! I don't not fear my neck. What do I care about my neck if I no get something to eat?" said Dutchy. "Why not break it now? Die I will, but I not starve—no."

Fear found no place in the hearts of that crew of South Sea traders. We well knew it, and it was no use to bluff them with threats of violence. Slade realized he could not put the crew in irons, for there would be no one to run the little ship. There were only six men forward, two mates aft, and the old man and the Kanaka cook. These were all the hands. Anyhow, Slade, to do him credit, seldom, or, I might say, never, resorted to a brutal fracas in order to establish authority. He was a good mate and knew his business, and his business was to keep the men going in spite of the devil—and bad grub.

We were in mid-ocean, about two thousand miles from any land whatever, and we had to get the vessel home. The little bark had done well, and we all had pretty big shares coming to us. It was this feeling that we were comparatively rich, and starving, which caused the outbreak. All expenses had been cut to a minimum, for the old man was a close trader, and while he had done well he saved every cent he could. The silence was broken by Jones speaking forth.

"Why not die, anyhow, Dutchy? If we die the old man can't run the ship,

and if we starve we die, anyway—only suffer more than by going over the side."

"Right, right," commented the Dutchman. "I t'ink I die, anyways—I yump on de rail overboard—will you die, too, Jonsey?"

Jones scratched his bullet head thoughtfully.

"You go first, Dutch."

"I will do dat; und I vill haunt dis ship," said Dutchy, and he moved away from the vicinity of the mate, as though his presence contaminated him.

Slade apparently thought he had settled the matter. He stretched out on the hatchway and lit his pipe. The other men smoked up and made no further comment, for they were all of one mind, and very sullen. There was a strong suspicion among them that the old man and ourselves, the mates, were getting better "whack" aft—getting an allowance of butter and sugar, the former article consisting of tinned grease which had been shipped in San Francisco about a year previously. Also, we were getting a full allowance of coffee.

To a certain extent their surmises were correct, but it was not for the after guard to enlighten them too carefully. We were getting a little better stuff, for the old man had kept a certain amount of his private stores—which he had paid for himself—for just such an emergency; and he had, of course, invited us to partake of his bounty. There was hardly enough to serve for all hands. Besides, it was his own property and was not on the ship's bill. The salt beef was good and plenty, also the pork. There was molasses, and there was flour, and there was beans. Coffee the crew had, though it was made out of roasted wheat; but it was good enough; better than many "windjammers" used in long voyages. So we had easy consciences and hoped for the best.

Slade, with all his common sense, was of a deeply superstitious nature. He believed implicitly in "signs." He had spent many hours at night upon a ship's deck and in the tropics where the sounds of the sea are fraught with meaning. The tropic moon cast sharp, moving shadows upon the deck planks while we smoked, and the far-off murmur of the sea, blending with the tinkle of the sidewash as the vessel plowed along slowly, made the night weird. Sometimes a bos'n bird, frightened from its perch on the royal yard by the flapping of the swaying canvas, would let forth a scream which sounded lonely over the sea.

Dutchy's threat worried Jones a bit, for he spoke forth again.

"I knowed a ship what was haunted by a sailor who died aboard," said he.

"How?" asked the man next him.

"Well, whenever the old man would come on deck something seemed to say: 'Head her sou'west b' west, sou'west b' west.' An' after a while he done it for a whole watch."

"And then what happened?"

"Why, he kept on headin' away, and headin' away until he piled her high an' dry on a coral bank—an' she's there yet."

The tale was not quite convincing, but it had its effect. Slade swore that they were a pack of fools. "Did airy one of you ever see a ghost?" he asked.

All hands swore they had at different times.

"Don't you believe in a hereafter, Mr. Slade?" inquired a sailor very respectfully.

"Of course I do, but what has that to do with it?"

"I dunno," said the sailor meekly; "only it seems that if the soul lives on we might come to some bad through it."

"Well, you fergit it, see!" said the mate sharply, showing he had been more affected than he wished to admit.

The night wore on and the bells struck off. I went below and slept until the mid-watch, when I turned out for the watch from twelve till four. The moon was high overhead and very bright as I came on deck, and everything spoke of the quiet tropic night, with a steady trade moving us along about five knots.

The voices of the men talking in low

tones were distinct to my ears clear aft to the wheel. I peered into the binnacle, as was my custom, to get the course for certain, besides having the man repeat it to me. Then I walked to the break of the poop and conned the canvas.

The weather maintopsail brace needed setting up a bit, so I called the watch to sway in the slack. This necessitated taking the man off lookout upon the forecastle head, and as he started aft I saw him hesitate a moment. The next instant there was a heavy splash alongside, and he bawled out: "Man overboard!"

It was the old dreaded cry that sounds so sinister in the dead of night, and it needed no repetition. It brought the watch, which had just gone below, scurrying on deck. I sprang to the rail to see if I could glimpse the unfortunate fellow as he came to the surface in the side-wash. A hat looking like the one Dutchy had worn floated past, a dark object showed dimly beneath the surface—and that was all. Instantly the cry came from forward:

"It's Dutchy, sir—he's gone overboard."

Slade was on deck and beside me by the time I had the wheel over and the bark slatting up into the breeze. The old man came stumbling up the companionway, bawling for us to get a boat overboard.

Jones let go a circular life-buoy, dropping it into the wake, and then all hands, including the cook, came rushing aft to see if they could do anything.

In a few minutes, which seemed like hours, we had a small boat over the side and four of us were rowing fast astern. The long, heaving swells of the ocean seemed to take on dark shapes again and again, and I, who stood forward, was about to call out several times that I had him, only to find the dark shadows melt again and again into foam. We rowed for a mile or more and found nothing, not even the hat. Then we pulled slowly back to the ship, all silent and thoughtful, wondering at the audacity of the little fellow who would rather die than suffer inconvenience in his diet.

Slade peered over the rail as we came alongside.

"Did you get him?" he asked.

"No, he's gone," was the answer, and I could see the effort the mate made to hide his feelings.

Some one murmured "Poor devil!" and then the old man ordered us to get the small boat on deck again, which we did, and afterward kept the ship off on her course.

That watch was a long one for me. The whole affair was so sinister and the loss of the man felt so keenly that I lay awake after I had gone below.

The morning dawned. The missing Dutchman was absent from breakfast, and we had to turn the Kanaka cook to, to take his place, for we were so short-handed it was necessary to have at least three men on watch at a time. The cook was well hated forward, for he was an instrument of the old man's; so the fact that he must do double duty appealed quite pleasantly to the humor of the men, and even seemed to offset the sorrow caused by their shipmate's death.

Whenever any especially hard duty was called for they held back and insisted that the Kanaka should have first place, as befitted so important a personage as a cook.

Joe did not appear to relish this honor, but he was one against all hands and he did the extra work in spite of his grumbling. With the labor about decks and cooking he grew quite thin and disgusted, and the more he grumbled the better the men liked it.

"For, you see," said a sailor, "he could easy get us some of the after 'whack' if he would only steal it. I got no use for a nigger who won't steal when he gets a chance—it ain't natural."

For a few nights after the loss of our man affairs went along as usual except that I noticed that Slade was very cross and nervous after midnight. We attributed this to the warm weather and work of getting the ship in prime condition, for it is on the homeward run that a vessel fits up handsomely, painting and scraping and doing things that

are befitting a yacht, so that by the time she runs into the variables and out of good weather she is looking fine and fit to enter her home port as an example of her master's seamanship.

I noticed that the grumbling forward had stopped, and that while Joe had grown thinner daily the others seemed actually to wax fatter at once. The provisions were the same, apparently, but the men ate with relish and worked hard.

"I don't know what the trouble is," said Slade to me on the fifth night, "but there is something wrong aboard this ship."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Well, it's like this. Every time I go on watch I see that Dutchman go over the side. Last night Jones was on the forecastle head and I saw the Dutchman jump over the rail as plainly as I see you now. I asked Jones if he saw anything, but he said no. There is something wrong—but don't, for Heaven's sake, let the men know I think so."

The next morning the old man came to breakfast as usual, but failed to speak to Slade as he sat down. I could see him through the cabin skylight, and he looked sour.

"You seem to eat a lot for a thin man," said the captain, after a long silence.

"What's the matter, sir?" asked Slade.

"Oh, nothing, but I seen hogs eat afore—but never seen one to beat you."

The mate looked hard at him. Then he wiped his mouth on the back of his hand and reached for his cap.

"Goin' on deck?" asked the skipper sourly.

"I am, sir," said Slade.

"Come here a minute," said the old man.

The mate came slowly toward him. When he reached a distance of about half a fathom he stopped, and the old man looked quizzically at his pockets. Then he suddenly reached out and felt the mate's coat, running his hand all over him.

"May I ask you what this is for, sir?" said Slade respectfully.

"No, you mayn't," snapped the skipper, and he resumed his breakfast.

Slade looked worried, but came on deck without another word. The next meal we had no coffee, no sugar, no butter—only dry ship's bread, like the men had forward, and roasted wheat juice to wash down the salt junk.

"Mr. Slade," said the old man as he came on deck that morning, "you will kindly hand over the keys of the storeroom to me. I will look out for the stores hereafter."

The mate handed the keys over without comment. The man at the wheel seemed to be straining his eyes at the lubber's mark in the binnacle, but had a vague and somewhat satisfied look pass over his face while doing so. He was wearing some of Dutchy's clothes which had been divided among his watch after the custom aboard ship at the death of a messmate.

"What do you think of the old man?" asked the mate when the affair was settled.

"Seems to be a bit ugly about something," I answered.

"Do you think he believes I steal his grub?"

"Well, it does look sort of queer, don't it?" I answered.

That day it was calm and we rigged a staging over the side to paint her to the water-line, for the bark was pretty well set up everywhere, and the salt streaks on her planking showed gray and sea-washed, making altogether an old-looking vessel out of a comparatively new ship. The black side paint, with the newly tarred lanyards above it, and the fresh tarred hemp shrouds, would make her as fit as a yacht.

She was of the old type, with hemp rigging, steel not having come into vogue at that date, but we took some pride in her, for all that, and all hands were apparently anxious that she should look well, feeling the interest that all good seamen feel in their ship that has been their home for a year or more.

I had big Jake with me, and also Jones at the further end of the staging.

We lowered away until our feet were more than ankle deep in the sea when the bark rolled toward us, and we slathered on the paint in fine style, intending to get the whole side done while the calm lasted.

Suddenly Jake stopped work and gazed down into the depths. I followed the direction of his gaze and saw a shadow deep down in the clear sea.

"It's a shark," said he, "and he's been following us ever since Dutchy went over. It means that there's another one to go—he wouldn't follow if he wasn't sure of it."

Jones smiled a little sheepishly and scratched his bullet head.

"One gone is enough," said he; "it makes too much work for the rest, and I won't stand for it—no, sir, I won't stand for it."

"Well, I'm tired of work—and I'm thinking of goin' where Dutchy went," said Jake.

At the same time I noticed he drew his feet up—for we had done so already—not feeling that the occasion called for a test of the brute's hunger. The shark rose slowly to a depth of about a fathom beneath the surface, and then stopped and looked up at us out of a little steady eye.

"Dutchy is in him," commented Jake, squirting a stream of tobacco juice at the fish, "and he's well off. I'm tired of slaving, an' workin', an' workin', an' eatin' nothing but salt beef—without no butter—or no sugar. What's the use, anyway?"

"You'll live on like a man," said Jones, "an' you won't start any foolishness. I'll tell Sam an' Pete and we'll see about it."

"You take your brush and get to work," I commented. "You're as fat as butter, and healthy, and what more do you want? We're having good weather and making good time across, and your share of the trading is over a thousand dollars. Think of the fun you'll have when you hit the town: a good steady drunk for a couple of months with all the pretty girls of 'Frisco to choose from. What's the matter with you, anyway?"

Jake obeyed sullenly, and remained quiet all the watch. When Slade came on deck we reported the shark.

"It's a bad sign," said the mate, nervously, "it's a bad sign. Catch him? Would you catch him? Not for a farm would I touch a line to that fellow, and I won't stand to see anyone else do it, either. No, sir, let the Dutchman be. He's all right where he is."

When I had a chance I took a half pound of chlorid of mercury, the kind used aboard vessels to cover certain metal work, and splitting a chunk of salt pork, placed the chlorid within the gash. I waited until the shark came close alongside, then dropped the bait overboard. In less than two seconds the brute had swallowed it.

"Now," I said, "the fellow won't follow us very far, and even if he does he won't be able to bite very hard, for, if I know anything about medicine, his teeth will be loose in his head before long, and he'll be what is called salivated."

Day after day passed and nothing happened to disturb the serenity of the voyage. Jake never made good his threat of suicide, for the men forward dissuaded him. Especially did Jones hold forth against it, as Joe the Kanaka cook was in his watch and the colored man was not doing all that should be expected from an able seaman.

One night Slade came to me. "I don't want to appear like a fool," said he, "but the fact is I have seen that Dutchman's ghost twice since you killed that shark. I wish you hadn't done it. Twice I saw the fellow come up from somewhere—the hatches are all closed and sealed—and go over the side like he did the night he was lost."

"Imagination," I protested. "You've a soft spot for the poor fellow, and it does you credit, Slade, but you've seen nothing. Better have a drink when you go below."

"I've been thinking that drink is just the trouble. Feel my pulse."

I felt it, and a steadier throb never jumped through a seaman's arm.

"It's no use to fool with that nonsense," I said.

"Well, the old man is going to put into Honolulu. Says he has got to get something decent to eat if he loses the ship for it, and all the time he has those stores aft in the lazaretto, saving them for something."

"Is he really going in there?" I asked.

"Yes, he said so to-day—the course is nor'-nor'east; that's straight for Pearl Harbor. We ain't more than two hundred miles away now."

"Well, I for one won't be sorry to get ashore for a few days," I answered.

"Poor Dutchy, he had a sweetheart there, Hulalo they called her, and a right smart girl she was, too."

"Yes, big Jake took a fancy to her himself the last voyage. I suppose he will fill the Dutchman's place all right, although those girls are mighty faithful to those fellows who have been good to them."

We had been down to salt junk for more than a week now, and the prospect of getting ashore again was pleasant. It would not do to tell the men, but somehow they found it out the day before we made harbor. To deny them all shore leave would invite mutiny, so when we dropped the hook they all came aft in a body, and asked permission to go ashore for a day and a night.

Slade drew lots, and Jones and the Kanaka cook were to remain aboard with the after guard. The rest went off in one of the many boats which always come out to a newly arrived ship.

The next day, about an hour after sundown, the liberty men came drifting back. Some had traces of debauch written plainly upon their faces, but big Jake came in a small canoe with the girl, Hulalo, and he was clean-shaved and handsome.

In another canoe the girl's father and mother paddled, while following them came a score of fruit boats, laden with delicacies, which make a sailor's mouth water after a long siege of salt junk. A lantern burned at the gangway, and shed a fitful light upon the main deck. The heat was intense, and Slade had the covers of the fore hatch removed, to let in air below.

There was no moon now, and Jake took his sweetheart to the forecastle head to whisper the old, old story. The old man sat aft and smoked a villainous cigar, while Slade and I loafed about the poop, buying a bunch of fruit now and then from the bumboat men and women.

While we loafed about we became aware of a noisy fracas forward. Then a woman's scream smote the air. This was followed by the hoarse oaths of big Jake, coupled with the guttural grunts of a Dutchman.

Making our way to the forecastle head we saw a splendid bout taking place between two men. Jake swung first right and left at a short man's head, and the stocky little fellow bored in through the strokes, and punched with a vigor born of good nutrition and plenty of rest. It was Dutchy. There was no mistake. He was making the fight of his life.

A ring of dusky men and women formed about the contestants and the men of the crew. Slade was there, gazing in amazement; but a particularly good pass from the stocky little man called forth his enthusiasm.

"Go in, you damned ghost!" he yelled. "Hit him in the wind."

"I hit where I t'ink best," yelled the ghost in return; and he upper-cut the big sailor painfully.

"Soak him good an' plenty," yelled Jones to Jake; "he's had a cinch for a month, and needs some work."

"Yes, kill him; kill him for me," yelled the cook. "Kill him, Mr. Jake, an' I never forget it. He make me do his work—I fix him after you get done, an' I sure kill him if you don't."

"I 'tend to you next—you——" cried the ghost, but he was cut short by a swing which landed upon his hard head and jolted him severely.

It was all over the deck. Up and down they strove, hitting and punching, swinging, and even butting their heads together in the clinches.

No one seemed to have an idea of stopping the row. It appealed to all natures alike.

But Jake was powerful, and the work

he had done put him to an advantage. The ghost was puffing and blowing. Jake took his head under his arm and proceeded to hammer him at will.

"You no kill my dear Dutch," screamed Hulalo, forcing her way through the press. "You no can kill my dear man."

She flung herself upon the sailors and protected the Dutchman's head from further injury. Then we came to our senses, and stepped in to separate them.

Fifteen minutes later, when the signs of the fracas were obliterated, we marched the ghost aft to interview the old man.

"He took my dear girl, my love," sniffled Dutchy, as we came into the august presence.

"Took your what?" roared the skipper.

"He took my love away from me—my Hulalo—I marry her some day—when my *vrow* dies—did Yake; he take her, he try to take her from me."

"You scoundrel! I thought you were dead," bawled the skipper.

"No, I not dead—I cannot stand that—I would stayed dead but for dat. I no stand seein' my Hulalo sittin' in dat Yake's lap. No, I not dead py von dam sight. *Nein.*"

"Well, what did you do with my stores? What did you make believe you were lost for, you thief? I'll put you in irons for your behavior," said the old man, red in the face.

"I care not von leedle dam for your irons—an' you know ut. I ate de good 'whack,' und I give it to de men—dey all vas in de game wid me. Dat Yake was de leader mit it. He wanted to get me oudt de way so he take my Hulalo. I pay you for de grub—what is left is in de forepeak—I hid ut dere. Dat Yake he want to die, too, to get avay from de work. Jonsey he no let him die. He mad because he no die, too, an' shirk de work. I pay you ut all pack—but dat Yake he not take my Hulalo. *Nein.*"

The skipper looked at the man and swore in many fluent ways. Then he thought of his account-book, the shares of the men in the trading. Dutchy had a great deal of money due him. It would be well to add fifty per cent discount for the trouble he had caused.

"You can take him forward, Mr. Slade," he said.

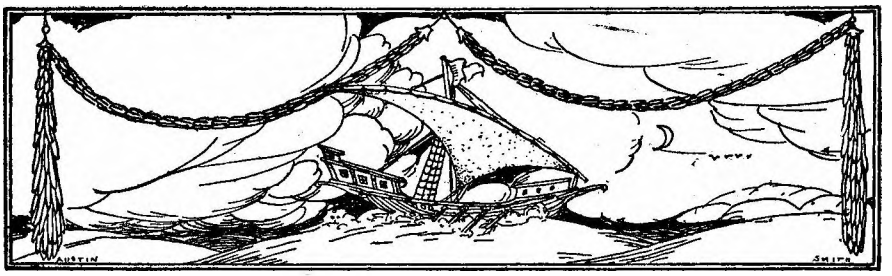
In the deepening gloom of the tropic evening two figures were seen sitting upon the forecastle rail, and one of them had a short, stout arm about the other's waist, while a flow of broken English, Dutch and Kanaka floated over the water. An old man and an old woman sat in their bumboat holding on to the fore channels long after the other boats had gone ashore, and they waited patiently for their daughter.

I met Slade under the break of the poop.

"How's your pulse?" I asked softly.

He made a vicious pass at me with a pineapple, but missed, the fruit smashing against the rail. Then he smiled.

"Come below; it's on me, and it's good rum this time—but keep your head shut or there'll be murder aboard before we get to 'Frisco."



A Prisoner of the Mind

By James K. Egerton

Mr. Egerton is a writer new to "Popular Magazine" readers, but we venture to predict that he will soon become a great favorite with them. In "A Prisoner of the Mind" he gives us a story with a decidedly novel theme. What this theme is we shall leave the reader to find out for himself, and we assure him that he will find it well worth his while to investigate.

(*A Complete Story*)

"IT is all very well to frequent Dago table d'hôtes, wear your trousers fringed at the bottom and send your linen to the Chinaman only semi-occasionally," said Tommy Williams, as he complacently surveyed his own carefully creased trousers and trim patent leather shoes, which were extended in front of my open fire. "That is, it's all very well for those chaps who are content to shiver in a garret studio, painting for the future reputation during the day, and to spend their evenings at alleged Bohemian restaurants, glorifying their own work, criticising the pictures of their betters, and poisoning their stomachs with spaghetti and red ink. I may be lacking in the temperament which makes for greatness in art—but none of that for your Uncle Thomas."

I looked over from my desk, where I was struggling to expand a news item which was worth a short paragraph into a three-column sensation for the *Sunday Howler,* and wondered how Tom, who usually spent every daylight hour at painting, and most of his evenings over black and white work, happened to be taking life so easily.

"Perhaps my name as an artist will never be written on the tablets of fame, but I am living my youth in comfort, and what I want is money—lots of it—to enjoy the good things which it procures while I live, and I'll let the other fellows paint the pictures which will bring thousands—fifty years after they are dead from exposure and insufficient nourishment," he continued, as he leaned over and poked the fire. "When Tommy W. can get a hundred plunks for an evening's work designing a catalogue cover, he is willing to sign his name to it, even if it isn't high art, for that hundred is mighty comforting, and 'Art for Art's sake' can be the other fellow's motto. Mine is 'Pictures for the scads,' and when I go to the office of the firm which wants a design I find that good clothes and an appearance of prosperity get me into the *sanctum sanctorum;* while a dreamy-eyed, crumpled-looking artist of twice my ability is told to 'come again' by a sassy office boy, until his sensitive soul is crushed."

I knew that Tommy's theory of life had justified itself in practice, for he occupied one of the best studios in a modern building, and denied himself none of the luxuries of dress and good living which require a liberal expenditure.

Talent he undoubtedly possessed, and his work was undeniably clever, but it

was his practical business sense and lack of the eccentricity which so often accompanies genius which gave it market value and made him one of the most agreeable of companions during the brief respites which he allowed himself for social intercourse.

But the task before me was pressing and distasteful, and just because I was doing it solely for the money there was in it his timely discourse jarred on my nerves.

"Why in thunder don't you practice what you preach and keep busy, then, and let a man work who has to?" I asked a little irritably.

"Don't let your beastly temper lead you into bad English," he replied, unruffled by my outburst. "I know that the *Howler* stands for it, but it is a bad habit. Put your troubles away from you and come out to eat a farewell dinner with me, for I am off to gay Paree by to-morrow's steamer for two years of work at Art with the upper case A."

"And this on top of your dissertation on the purely mercenary view which you take of your profession!" I exclaimed, jeeringly.

"My proposed trip is a cold business proposition," he answered, his equanimity undisturbed. "I figure that in two years of study under the best masters I can get the points which it would take me a lifetime to dig out for myself, and that the prestige of foreign study and the increased intrinsic value of my pictures will double the prices I get now. I shan't be carried away by fads, and, although I may keep my eye on the main chance and cater to popular taste to get my pictures off my studio walls and into the homes of millionaires, they will always be the best of the kind that I am capable of painting. You are eminently practical yourself, for you follow the popular demand and do good sensational work for a sheet like the *Howler,* because it pays well, while you might be living in a hall bedroom and producing literary gems for the *Moon* on a pittance."

The next two years were full ones for me, for doing special work for the *Howler* meant being in the middle of whatever excitement offered, and I spent one of the years on a tropical island, accumulating malaria and watching a large foreign army try to keep a handful of insurgents from getting out of one brush patch and into another, and the better part of the next year on a press dispatch boat, tumbling about in the seas which the trade wind kicks up, watching for another invading army to come and drive the first one home. But the world was at peace again, and I was employing my inventive genius for the *Howler,* creating sensations to justify its customary glaring headlines, when I received Tommy's card with an urgent invitation to call penciled on it.

Remembering his former gorgeousness, I was surprised when I read the new address, for I knew the ramshackle old building which it indicated, having investigated and written up a murder which occurred there a few months previously. It was in an obscure neighborhood, the ground floor occupied by stores, the upper story by artists who did without modern conveniences for the sake of the low rent, while the tenants of the offices on the intervening floors were of the class who do not seek newspaper notoriety in their peculiar business ventures.

The change in Tommy's appearance when he opened the door, after I had passed through the narrow, badly lighted halls and climbed the rickety stairs to his new abode, was as great as a difference between his old and new surroundings; for, in place of the smooth-shaven, well-groomed and conventionally dressed young fellow whom I had dined with two years before, I saw a double for Mephisto.

His black hair was long, and the pointed black mustache and imperial lengthened the effect of his thin face and high forehead, while they made his naturally white skin paler by contrast. Before his foreign experience he would have jeered at anyone clothed in the raiment which adorned him, for it was theatrical in the extreme.

"Behold a grand transformation and the result of two years in the Latin

Quarter!" he exclaimed, laughing and turning himself slowly about so that I could get a comprehensive view.

The wide-skirted frock coat, cut in and fastened by a single button at the waist, *à la Française,* with the front flaring open to show a gorgeous low-cut waistcoat and a silk tie fastened in a loose bow with flowing ends, black trousers cut so closely that they fitted like tights and pointed patent leather shoes made him, together with his hirsute adornments, a perfect type of the boulevardier of the student quarter.

"And two years of Art, with the big A, has accomplished this!" I exclaimed, as the full effect dawned upon me.

"This, in itself, is the *dernier cri* in Art," he answered, laughing as he surveyed himself in a mirror. "Let me start right off by assuring you that I am not crazy and that this get-up is part of a business proposition, for Tommy W. still retains the same ideas of his profession and its relation to the outer world of business as when he left. Likewise, this location, while it is not especially attractive, is part of one grand scheme."

"I can imagine pleasanter places to live in, for you will probably have ghosts here," I replied, walking over to the couch and kicking up a small rug which lay on the floor in front of it. A dark stain remained in the flooring in spite of the sandpapering and scrubbing which had been employed to remove it.

"So you know about that affair, do you?" he asked, nodding at the spot.

"More than most; I worked it up for the *Howler,*" I answered, replacing the rug. "But I am surprised that you rented this horrible place, if you knew of it."

"Oh, I am not afraid of ghosts; I'm looking for 'em," he said, indifferently, as he lighted a cigarette. "I took this room entirely on account of the murder, but I don't want you to remind anyone whom you meet here about it. Nothing is remembered more than thirty days in New York, and it is part of my plan to have the occupants of this apartment ignorant of its history."

"Rather a shabby trick to play on a guest, if this is to be your spare bedchamber," I commented, and he looked at me sharply.

"No one with an easy conscience will be disturbed by it," he said, significantly. "I took this room purely for experimental purposes, and I shall be glad to hear a detailed account of what you found in your investigations when we have an opportunity. I read your stuff, of course, but it was not convincing, and I had an idea that your opinions did not entirely coincide with those of the police. It struck me that you had suspicions which you did not quite care to put in print."

"You are a mind reader, Tommy," I answered, laughing to hide the surprise which his remark caused me, for, as a matter of fact, he had hit the mark squarely, and, although I had suspicions, they were too vague and unsupported by evidence to allow me to publish them. Tommy nodded his head wisely.

"I thought as much, knowing something about police methods and the average amount of intelligence which can be hired for the salary of a detective sergeant. I suppose that, having locked a man up, they are satisfied to let it go at that, but I know that *you* were not satisfied, and I shall proceed to pump you later. First, I want to show you my plant. As you suggested, this is my spare chamber, or, rather, experimental laboratory, but I have another one which is to be used for producing the proper primary mental impression. I let you see my get-up first as a minor shock, but if you will admit that I may have a method in my madness I will let you into all of the mysteries."

I assured him that I believed in his absolute sanity, and he unlocked a door in the corner, which, from previous investigations I remembered led into a large closet, and motioned to me to follow him. He closed the door behind us, leaving us in darkness. Then the back wall seemed to melt away, revealing a weird and yet beautiful apartment.

The furnishings, bric-à-brac and strange lighting would have been grotesque had they been gathered and ar-

ranged in ignorance, but every detail had been carried out by an adept hand under a master's eye, and the general effect was entirely harmonious.

The illumination was so dim that at first the room seemed almost in darkness, but as I glanced around I appreciated the care which had been given to the details of the lighting which came entirely through the many-hued glasses of curiously shaped lamps and hanging lanterns.

An exquisite statuette of white marble was the brightest spot, receiving the light through a faint amber shade which gave the marble the appearance of antique ivory as it stood against a ruby-colored curtain; while the grotesque features of a number of masks which hung on the wall were softened by a dim red radiance.

I turned wonderingly to Tommy, who stood just in front of the place where we had entered, smiling at my amazement, and he pressed a button which turned on a cluster of electric lights in each corner of the room.

"I wanted to give you the general effect, but it would have been better to let you in by the official entrance," he said, laughing. "You are the only one to whom I shall confide the secret of this entrance, and, by the way, now that you know the secret, see if you can discover the mechanism."

I carefully examined the portion of the paneled wall through which we had passed, but to all outward appearance the panels were the same as on the adjoining sides, and a systematic tapping with my knuckles disclosed no difference in the sounds.

"Don't waste time over it," he remarked, as I started to make a more careful examination. "A lot of water has run under the bridge since the last time I saw you, and I have much to tell and much to hear. First of all, give me the details of this murder case as far as you know them, and then I will explain the whys and wherefores of this plant."

He snapped out the electric lights and led the way to a corner of the room where stood a large Arab tent, its beautifully embroidered side curtains looped back with heavy cords of gold-tasseled silk, showing a perfectly appointed tray for the making and serving of Turkish coffee, surrounded by piles of luxurious cushions arranged as divans.

"Now, fire away at the story, and I'll do likewise at the coffee," he said, working a small bellows which caused the smoldering charcoal in a brazier to glow red under the copper coffeepot.

The soft light from a lamp suspended in the tent fell over him, and as the red from the charcoal fire was reflected on his face, the picture of a mediæval necromancer brewing a mysterious potion was so strong that it needed the recollection of the recent electric illumination to convince me that I had not been transported back through a thousand years of time.

A mummy standing in the corner peered out with unseeing eyes from the semidarkness; a green bronze statue of Salammbo in the coils of a huge python seemed to be coming to life in the flickering light of a slowly swinging lamp, and strange and uncanny faces stared from the frames on the wall, until I realized that Tommy had succeeded in his scheme of planning a room which would arouse the imagination of its occupants. My own voice sounded strangely to me as I told my story, but I saw that Tommy was listening attentively, uninfluenced by the surroundings.

To me, who had reported so many sensational crimes as a matter of newspaper routine, it was a commonplace murder story; for the people concerned were in no way prominent, and even the well-known methods of the *Howler*, which published the stories about the beautiful model, etc., etc., under flaring headlines, was unable to keep up the interest in it for more than three days before it was crowded into obscurity by another sensation.

The victim, Georgie Lascelles, had been a successful model some four years earlier, when she appeared in the studios from no one knew where, but possessed of a face and figure which made her name a welcome addition to

every artist's model book. She had worked hard and seriously at her posing, and for a couple of years she had her time well filled, but one artist after another lost track of her, until her name became only a tradition under the skylights. Occasionally one of her old friends would run across her and regretfully note the careless dress, the pallid complexion and heavy eyes with their contracted pupils, which told the story of her addiction to morphine.

Early one morning an artist named Lingard had appeared on the street with pale face and only half clothed, and appealed to a policeman, who was near the building, telling him, in a trembling voice and scarcely intelligible words, that a woman had killed herself in his studio. Detectives, doctors, the coroner and many reporters, myself included in the latter category, were soon on the scene of the tragedy, and the usual inquiry was started.

The body of the girl, Georgie Lascelles, was lying on a couch in a corner of the studio, her head hanging over the edge, a large pool of blood which came from a deep gash in her throat staining the floor. Strangely enough, a nearly completed picture on the easel showed a woman lying on a couch, with a man bending over her, the point of a sword which he held in his hand resting on a spot on the throat of the woman which exactly corresponded with the location of the wound which had killed the girl. The likeness of the woman to the dead girl was striking—but it was the face of the girl at her best, before the drug habit had commenced its ravages. The man with the sword was depicted as dressed in an Eastern costume with turban and baggy trousers, and a glance around the studio showed that the same costume was on the lay figure, which was posed in exactly the position, while the sword which should have been in its wooden hand lay blood-stained on the floor.

Lingard told a straightforward story; he had known the girl before he went abroad to study, she had posed for him repeatedly, and soon after his return he ran across her on the street and asked her to come to his studio. He was surprised at the change in her appearance and manner, but she made no secret of the habit which had become fastened on her, and told him that she was absolutely penniless and had just been ordered to vacate the room she was occupying for nonpayment of rent. He was not in a position to offer her much pecuniary assistance, but out of pity and for the sake of old times he had let her occupy a corner of his studio which was curtained off to form a dressing room for models, and she had posed for the picture which was nearly finished, the position being an easy one which she had no difficulty in maintaining.

He had left her in the studio the night before when he went to attend a reunion of an old art class, where there had been a supper, and he returned home very late and rather under the influence of the strong punch which had been served. He made considerable noise in climbing the steep stairs to the small loftlike platform where he slept, but apparently did not disturb Georgie, as he heard nothing from her. He was awakened early in the morning by the bright light from the skylight, which he had neglected to screen, and coming down for a drink of water, saw that the curtains about her couch were drawn back, and was horrified to find the girl dead. He disturbed nothing before rushing out to summon help.

No one had access to his studio; he had let himself in with his pass-key and locked the door before retiring. He had not noticed whether the curtains around the couch were drawn or not when he came in, and he had heard no unusual noise during the night. Examination of the body showed that the girl had been dead several hours, probably from about the time Lingard acknowledged having returned home, and the doctors declared that the thrust could not have been self-inflicted.

The sword on the floor fitted the wound exactly, but it had been driven in with such force that it had severed one of the vertebræ and come out at the back of the neck. It was the unanimous decision of the doctors that it

would have been impossible for the girl to have driven the blade through; and as death, from the nature of the wound, must have been instantaneous, she could not possibly have withdrawn it.

Lingard's story, up to the time of his return, was corroborated, but in a building of the character of the one in which the murder occurred no record of the comings and goings of the tenants or their visitors was kept, and a hundred people might have entered or left without attracting attention.

On the other hand, the studio had but one entrance and the door was secured by a new Yale lock, which Lingard had put on. One key was found in the girl's hand bag, together with a few letters and several empty morphine phials; one he had on his own key ring, which had not been out of his possession; and the third was safely locked up in his desk.

There was no direct proof against Lingard, but there was not the slightest clew which led to a suspicion of anyone else, and as circumstantial evidence pointed to him, he was sent to the Tombs, to be forgotten by the generous public until his trial should arouse a passing interest.

This, in brief, was the story which I told to Tommy as he brewed the coffee; and he nodded his head when I finished.

"That's all right, as far as it goes, but I want to know your own theory," he said, as he poured the steaming concoction into delicate porcelain cups. "Of course, you don't believe Lingard guilty?"

"I believe no man guilty on circumstantial evidence, unless every link in the chain will bear the strongest tests," I replied, evasively, but Tommy pinned me down.

"The delicacy with which you handled the case and left out all that you knew, and which I knew you knew, about Georgie's previous history is commendable in one who has been under the corrupting influence of the *Howler* for so long, but this is just between ourselves, and I want you to be frank with me. You know how much I was indebted to the girl's faithful posing for my success with my prize picture, and you know that I fully appreciated and acknowledged it. Lingard has been a close friend of mine from my earliest student days, and when he left Paris ahead of me I commissioned him to look up a studio for me. I know him for a kind chap, who wouldn't hurt a fly, and I have his whole story of his efforts to help Georgie, which he told me in the Tombs. He was trying to get her to give up morphine, and gave her every assistance possible. There was nothing of the sentimental between them, for Lingard is a chap with strange ideals regarding women for an artist, and I know that his very slender resources have been strained more than once in helping a lame dog over a stile. His influence was always for good, and he was an impractical dreamer, but a fine, straight fellow."

"Rather an oddity among men of your profession," I answered, ruffled a little by his reference to the influence of the *Howler*. That was an aggravating thing about Tommy; he spoke so bluntly and usually hit the weak point in one's opinion of oneself. "If you had been forced to listen to one-half of the dirty tittle-tattle of the studios which has offended my ears and sense of decency while I have been searching for something in Georgie's past which might show a motive for her murder, you would know your own tribe better."

"I know it, right down to the ground," he said, calmly, as he pushed his cigarette case toward me. "It takes all kinds of people to make a world, and any profession numbers blacklegs in its ranks. Possibly it is their manner of life which influences them, but for one reason or another I know that there are a great many artists who are a backbiting, scandal-monging lot, and that studio gossip is worse than that of a country sewing circle. I knew the worst that there was to Georgie before she commenced the drug taking, and it wasn't very bad, but I dare say you did not find many rags left to cover her reputation. Let's have what you gathered, and we will winnow out the wheat from the chaff."

"First, let's go over the things which

we both know, and I imagine that will pretty well cover Georgie's New York life up to the time you left," I answered, and Tommy nodded approvingly. "We'll spare no one's name from the list until we are satisfied that by no possibility could he have been guilty, so we can start with Jarvis."

"Dirty little beast, but hardly capable of murder, I should say," commented Tommy. "I knew the history of Georgie's trouble with him—she told it to me herself, and circumstances corroborated her side of it—and it was his fault from start to finish. He treated her very badly."

"That was my opinion at the time, and I have had no reason to change it from what I have learned recently, and human nature being what it is, it made him doubly resentful, which furnishes a possible motive. Mind you, I do not say a probable one, for it seems a small thing to incite a capital crime, but he has never ceased whining about his wrongs and saying that she ruined his chances for the Silcomb prize by refusing to pose when his picture was nearly completed. There was nothing too mean for him to say about her, and he tried to get her barred from every studio in New York."

"His angelic temper wasn't improved when I got that prize with a picture painted from her," interrupted Tommy, grinning at the recollection of his triumph.

"That added to his resentment, and there was no question about his hatred," I went on. "Well, he was at the art class reunion that night, and he and Lingard left together. He hasn't been put through a course of 'sprouts' by the police, but he told me that he walked part of the way home with Lingard."

"I can't believe that he has the courage to commit murder," said Tommy, thoughtfully; "but he is closely enough associated with this one to make him worthy of consideration, so his name goes on. How about Reginald Crossway?"

"Also considered by me," I answered. "He is a man of quite a different stamp; quiet, forceful and so reserved that his disposition is almost melancholy."

"He was always disposed that way, but Georgie gave him a facer which intensified it," said Tommy. "He was awfully in love with her and treated her squarely, and I always told Georgie that she acted badly, but she maintained that she had the woman's privilege of changing her mind, and that when she found that she did not love him she did him the greatest kindness in refusing to marry him—to his eternal unhappiness."

"That as it may be," I replied, "but he continued to keep track of her and sent her money when he knew that she needed it. I have found out that she visited him in his studio a week before the murder, and that there was an awful row which ended in the destruction of a painting and such a rumpus that the janitor went up to request them to make less noise."

"I can see that you have been hot on the trail, and I wonder if you are trying to shield anyone," remarked Tommy, looking at me suspiciously. "I can't believe that you would miss an obvious fact, and your investigations up to this point should have revealed a woman who was more or less interested in Lingard, Jarvis and Crossway."

I took out my notebook and read over a list which contained the name of everyone whom I remembered to have seen with Georgie.

"There is only one woman on the list," I answered, "and her name is placed on the side of the impossibilities. It is Miss Martell."

"Eleanor Martell; precisely the one, and, although I do not consider her as a suspect, her line of fate runs closely through the whole affair," said Tommy, seriously. "Of course, you must realize that all of the men would try to keep her name out of it, especially to conceal it from a reporter for a yellow journal; but Lingard told me all about it, or, rather, supplied details to a story which I knew in a general way, and you understand that I am not talking for publication."

I winced a little, for I knew that Tommy was expressing the sentiment of the better class of people in the community about us poor unfortunates who wore the yoke of a sensational paper.

"I think that is a totally unnecessary remark," I said, a little stiffly. "Do you think I would violate a confidence for the sake of a story?"

"Naturally not, or I shouldn't be confiding in you," replied Tommy, in a matter-of-fact tone. "But I have a hazy recollection of copying precepts about the effects of evil communications and the disastrous results of handling pitch; and your professional associations are rotten. I spoke only as a precautionary measure." I knew that Tommy always said exactly what was in his mind or else kept silent, so I let the matter pass.

"You remember that Eleanor made a quick dash into an artistic career and had the sense to get out when she found she hadn't enough talent to warrant it?" he asked, and I nodded my head.

"Of course, it was only a fad with her, for she has a large fortune; but she associated with our crowd long enough to get to know some of us pretty well. She turned Jarvis down hard when he tried to provide for a comfortable old age by annexing her hand and fortune, but he kept on bothering her until she practically refused to receive him. She had an intimate acquaintance with Crossway—I think that he liked her better than any woman he ever knew, with the exception of Georgie—and, strange to say, she ended with falling in love with Lingard who, while we were all in Paris last winter, popped the question, and was accepted."

I gave a whistle of astonishment that neither the police nor the press had discovered a fact which might have such an important bearing on the case. I had only considered her case because three years before she had become associated with the artistic crowd by taking a studio and attempting to develop a talent which the enthusiastic comments of admiring friends over some very amateurish water colors had led her to believe that she possessed.

She had taken advantage of the unconventionality which prevails in studio land to escape from the trammels and restrictions of her social world, but, being blessed with an unusual amount of practical common sense, she quickly saw her mistake and gave up the idea of rivaling Madame LeBrun and Rosa Bonheur.

Since then I had known of her only through the society columns of the papers, for employment which necessitated my working from noon until two or three in the morning precluded any social life for me.

"Wasn't it rather a peculiar proceeding for Lingard to take Georgie into his studio, under the circumstances?" I asked, incredulously.

"That's the view which Eleanor's father and brother take of it," answered Tommy, grinning. "You know Lingard well enough to believe, as I do, that, as a matter of fact, there was no more actual impropriety in it than if he had given shelter to a homeless dog. It was just one of the things which he did through his very simplicity and lack of worldly knowledge, and in view of the results it was most unfortunate, but it can't be helped now, and the question before the house is, what are we going to do about it?"

"First tell me, what has the lady done about it?" I asked.

"Behaved in a purely feminine manner," answered Tommy, laughing. "Declared everything off, much to the satisfaction of the family, who opposed the match from the beginning; refused to receive any communication concerning him until her curiosity, pity or love—I don't know which—induced her to grant me an interview on his behalf. I needn't go into details, but I managed to convince her that it was all right, with the result that it needed stern parental authority joined to my earnest entreaty to prevent her from going right down to the Tombs to throw herself in his arms."

"It's a blessed good thing she didn't!" I exclaimed, thinking of the double-leaded headlines which would have heralded the visit of the society

girl to the accused man. "What is the present situation?"

"Just about what you would expect. Lingard happier since the assurance of her faith in him has been restored; Eleanor, who is a good sort, putting a brave face on it and anxious to proclaim their engagement to the world, and an artist and a newspaper man putting their heads together to reunite the fond lovers by finding the murderer of Georgie Lascelle."

"Which means that we had better get back to our list," I said, smiling at Tommy's confident tone. "This introduction of a live woman in the case only makes it the more complicated. We were considering Reginald Crossway."

"He has the courage to do anything, so down he goes; although I would stake my life on his innocence," said Tommy, as he scribbled "R. C." on a piece of paper.

And so, for another hour, we threshed out Georgie's past as it had been interwoven with the lives of men we knew, with the net result that we had a list of six names, all of them men who had been more or less intimately associated with her during her career as a model, and each of them possible because he was in New York at the time of the murder.

"That's a formidable array; but Georgie was a beautiful woman, and men fell in love with her as easily as they slip on an icy pavement," said Tommy, as he looked the list over. "She didn't care a hang for any of 'em except Reggie Crossway—I think she was in love with him for a time—and she would have been far better satisfied if they had all treated her purely on a business basis. I think the little girl was half crazy toward the end, for her business was enough to make her so. She had started the morphine before I left, and I tried to warn her, but it was no use—she said she couldn't go on without it."

"I don't see how she could pose under its influence," I said.

"For a short time, yes; it acted as a stimulant at first. She was nervous and high strung—that's what made her such a corking model—and she worked so seriously that it took it out of her tremendously. I wonder if you have any conception of what posing means?"

"Only as I remember occasional torture by photographers," I answered, smiling, but Tommy was in a serious vein.

"It takes approximately three hours to go by train from New York to Albany," he continued. "During that time you eat in the dining car, read the papers and look at your watch a hundred times, to see if you are not nearing your destination. There is a constant change of scene from the car windows; you can assume any position you please, and still the time is irksome. Well, it is the time which a model poses twice a day, morning and afternoon, with possibly a couple of hours in the evening. Twenty-five minutes' posing, five minutes' rest; twenty-five minutes more, five minutes' rest, and so on all day. The posing is absolutely still, although the position may denote action, the eyes fixed continuously on one spot, the limbs and body rigid, and usually the same facial expression, which may be laughing, crying, or any other distortion. Just think what it means, day after day. You're a good, husky specimen, but let me pose you in the average standing position, and I'll wager you'll topple over before the first rest period comes."

"Very probably," I replied. "But what bearing has this dissertation on model's hardships on this particular case?"

"Simply to show you how Georgie came to morphine. She was a tremendous worker—put every ounce of her energy into the posing for a pitiful remuneration—fifty cents an hour is the regular price for good and bad alike—so you can see that she needed some stimulant. The odor of liquor would have been apparent on her breath, and a girl needs to walk circumspectly in studio life to avoid scandal, so she resorted to opium. It's a pity that the first dose didn't kill her."

"Granted; but will you explain, now that you have pumped me dry, the

meaning of all this mysterious plant?" Tommy laughed as he glanced proudly around at the furnishings.

"Don't think that I have come into a fortune or that I have spent all I have on this truck," he answered. "Things are cheap in Paris, if one knows the Rue de Provence and watches opportunities, and I expect to sell most of these things at a large profit. I am going in for mural decoration, by the way, and it will give me a chance to supply backgrounds for what I have to sell. This scheme has been in my mind for some time, and the solving of this murder mystery is only a distraction. Do you know anything of hypnotism?"

"Tommy, your mind jumps about like a nimble flea," I answered, laughing. "I don't see the relation between hypnotism and mural decoration or the artistic junk which you have gathered together. All I know about hypnotism I have learned by observing public exhibitions, where it struck me a few individuals made particularly idiotic fools of themselves."

"That's mere piffle, when it isn't arrant fraud," he said, shrugging his shoulders contemptuously. "I mean the real, scientific thing, which the French medical men are working over and investigating. I became interested in it in Paris, and made quite a study of it, and, although I don't claim to be a past master of the art, I have been able to do some wonderful things."

"Will you tell me how the practical Tommy, who has always preached the strenuous chase of the elusive dollar, wandered off into a fanciful bypath of psychology, when he was supposed to be working hard at his own profession?"

"Fanciful bypath nothing!" he exclaimed. "If my theories are correct, and I am convinced that they are, it is the broad and easy path to an immense fortune—but of that later. I got into it in a queer way and quite by accident. I used to frequent a little café in Paris which had a large Italian patronage, because I wanted to increase my knowledge of that language. After going there for a time, I noticed that I was not welcomed by the other guests, with whom I had played dominoes and piquet, and they used to draw away from me and mutter to each other when I came in, until I thought that I must have stumbled into a Mafia resort and been mistaken for a police spy. I happened to mention it to a young Italian medical student, and he laughed and explained to me that they were a superstitious lot, who thought I possessed the *jettatura,* or evil eye, as two of them whom I had talked to had become ill. Incidentally he mentioned hypnotism, which he was studying at the Charité clinic, and invited me to go there with him. I saw enough to interest me, and followed it up, making experiments in my own studio, and I found that I could do as much, if not more, than the French professors."

"All of this is interesting but irrelevant," I interrupted, taking out my watch. "I thought that we were going to talk over this murder case, and that this plant was to help in the solution of the mystery, but, instead of listening to an explanation of your apparent madness, I am forced to follow you into the vagaries of hypnotism."

"That by way of preface only," answered Tommy, rising, and going to an antique carved buffet, from which he produced glasses and bottles. "I was just getting to the explanation when you interrupted me, but I will mix you a highball to help you possess your soul in patience until I have finished."

He poured out two generous drinks, and I resigned myself to letting him tell his story in his own way.

"I pondered over the reason of my success until I concluded that it was due to some peculiarity in my appearance, probably the same thing which had attracted the notice of the dagoes and made them suspicious," he continued, after taking a sip of the whisky. "'Therefore,' thinks I, 'if the peculiarity is exaggerated, I should get even better results;' and that accounts for my Mephistophelian get-up. Let me tell you right here, that I hit it right, and my mesmeric power was increased at least fifty per cent. 'If the change

in my appearance could do so much,' thinks I again, 'perhaps a proper stage setting would improve things still more.' So I experimented in a mild way along these same lines in my Paris studio. Result, an increase of another fifty per cent., giving altogether a doubling of my powers at a trifling expense."

"Ever practical, even in absurdity," I answered, laughing, but something in the expression of Tommy's eyes froze the laugh in my throat, and he looked at me fixedly.

"I want you to keep quiet and not interrupt me again until I tell you that you may speak," he said, in a low, firm voice, and, for some reason which I could not understand, the words in which I intended to tell him that he was making a qualified fool of himself would not form on my lips. I tried to raise my hand, but it seemed to be attached, like a nail to a powerful magnet, to the cushions on which I was reclining.

"Sorry to have to waste my psychic force on you," said Tommy, with a derisive grin, "but it is the quickest way to convince the skeptical. As I was saying before I found it necessary to reduce you to submission, I obtained some very remarkable results, for instance, with my models. Those who were susceptible I could place in the required pose, and, by getting their minds under my will control, make them maintain it for hours. And, strangest thing of all, they were less fatigued when I released them than they would be at the end of an ordinary twenty-five-minute period.

"Of course, professional models are ideal subjects, for those who pose well form a habit which is closely allied to auto-hypnosis, which makes it possible for them to hold a position and to fall back into it automatically after a rest period. Be patient, old chap. I know what is passing in your mind—that is part of my power—and I feel that you would like to punch my head, but you can't do it, and I assure you that I am not wasting your time."

There was no question about it; Tommy had me, and it made me rebellious to think that I was helpless, and that my brain was an open book to him, for, after the first shock of finding myself helpless, the thought had come to me that I should take an insane delight in disfiguring the features of the satanic face before me, and he had instantly read what was in my mind.

"It would take too long to tell you all of the queer things I have found out; but, in a nutshell, here is my plan of utilizing my power in this particular case," he continued seriously. "I shall invite here, one by one, the men whose names are on our list; not to enter as you did, for there is no known communication between the two buildings which join at the back but have entrances on different streets. I have rented both studios, and the communicating door is my work.

"By carefully pacing the distance, I found that the two were only divided by a thin wall, which is against the building laws—a fact which I am keeping up my sleeve to hold over the owners if they discover and object to the liberties I have taken with their properties. The man whom we are putting through the hypnotic third degree will have no idea that he is in the immediate vicinity of the scene of the murder, and, if he be the guilty one, will not be on his guard. Any man who is not fighting against me I can get under mesmeric influence to a greater or less degree; and then, if it is necessary, we can introduce him quietly into the adjoining chamber and make him repeat any scene which he has enacted there.

"It is fortunate for our purposes that every man on our list is an artist, for they are a sensitive lot, usually most easily influenced by surroundings and suggestion, and possessed of a certain feminine quality which makes them easy marks for the operator. With you, for instance, I have gone about as far as I could, and as you are rebellious, I could probably not keep you in this condition much longer, so I shall just order you to sleep a half minute and then to awaken with no feeling of resentment, but with a clear recollection of every

word I have spoken. Sleep now, for thirty seconds!"

I saw that Tommy's long, slim hands made a rapid pass in front of my face before everything became dark, and consciousness left me. The next thing I knew I was sitting bolt upright, looking at his smiling face. All desire to punch it had passed away; and only a slight feeling of uneasiness that anyone's will could, even to such a slight degree, subjugate my own, remained.

"Your methods may be theatrical and your plans appear visionary, but you have certainly given me a demonstration of your powers which is most convincingly practical," I said, rubbing my eyes, which seemed a little heavy with sleep. "Perhaps you may have success here, but I fail to see where you are to make your proposed fortune out of your powers."

"Sufficient unto the day, etc.," he answered, laughing. "You are, as yet, only at the very threshold of understanding the possibilities of hypnotism. I have three objects in explaining things to you, and convincing you through this case that I am not an idle dreamer. First, to prove the innocence of that poor devil, Lingard, who is eating his heart out in prison; second, to discover the real murderer and avenge the death of poor Georgie Lascelles, who was a particular pal of mine; and, thirdly and lastly, to convince you so thoroughly of the practical side of this business, that you will help me in my next venture—to your own great profit."

"Newspaper work, even for the *Howler,* is not so remunerative that you will have much trouble in enticing me into an adventure which promises profit," I answered. "There is a professional pride in helping you in this one, too, even if it is only for glory; for if we succeed, it will be a tremendous scoop."

"The results, yes; but not a word as to methods," said Tommy, hastily. "I know that I can trust you for that. I will not tell you about my future plans, but some of my hypnotic methods will be used, and it will be amusing to see if your journalistic instincts will lead you to make anything of a forecast. Here is a leading hint; now see if you can follow it."

He walked over and turned on the electric light again, and my interest, now thoroughly aroused, caused me to follow every one of his motions with my eyes.

"The light will permit you to examine my museum," he said, as he took a curious implement from the wall and handed it to me.

It was a keen-edged piece of steel about two feet long, the sharp edge slanting and the back of the knife heavily weighted with lead. I had never seen anything like it before, and I examined it closely; but a feeling of repulsion, which I could not explain, prompted me to return it quickly to the shelf from which he had taken it.

"That innocent looking little piece of steel and lead did yeoman service for *Liberté, égalité, fraternité,*" he said, watching me narrowly. "But I see that it influences you unpleasantly, although you are ignorant of its history. It is a guillotine knife. which lopped off many a noble head during the Terror."

"A pleasant object to live with," I exclaimed, wiping my hands vigorously on my handkerchief. "Have you many such delightful souvenirs?"

"Lots of 'em," replied Tommy, cheerfully. "They are the tools of my trade. I accidentally made a curious discovery—that, given a particularly sensitive subject, the touch of an inanimate object which has been associated with stirring events transports the subjective mind back to those events when the subject is under my hypnotic influence. At the same time, I am able to see the visions and hear the sounds which are visible and audible to the subject, through the sympathy which exists between us. For example, I have seen cart after cart unloaded at the foot of the scaffold, and that knife do its appointed work, when in reality it was lying across the knees of a subject who was in a deep hypnotic sleep."

"I am glad you did not try it on me when you had me under your thumb," I said, with a shudder of disgust. "I

have seen a squad of insurgents shot against a wall, a row of Chinamen sheared of their heads by the executioner, and several men hanged and electrocuted; but it was in my day's work, and I wasn't doing it for pleasure."

"Ah, but this isn't for pleasure; it's a test," replied Tommy, seriously. "That knife would influence almost anyone, for its associations are so terrible that it must produce an impression. So with that German executioner's sword in the corner and the thumbscrews hanging on the wall. I have had to awaken the subject because I was unable to stand the sight and sounds of the events brought back to us, but the trances are not all unpleasant."

He unlocked a cabinet and brought out a dainty fan painted by Watteau.

"I have attended a fête at Versailles, given by Louis XIV., through the medium of this," he said, handling it affectionately. "Of course, it has not as powerful an influence as a more tragic article, but think of the possibilities of solving the great mysteries of history which this system offers! This fan, I should judge from what little I have read of the intrigues of the court, belonged to one of the ladies favored by the king, and some day I shall follow up the clews which it gives me."

"Tommy, I expect to see you giving up art and taking to historical research or a private detective agency; that is, if you are not burned for a witch," I said, shaking my head, but Tommy laughed.

"No. I shall always stick to my painting, though it would be pleasant to do a little detective work for my own satisfaction and not as a means of livelihood. But now we both have work to do, and you must get home and to bed."

"And to sleep, if your Turkish coffee and your exciting evening will permit," I said, looking around for my hat and coat.

"Shall I command you to slumber sweetly?" he asked, looking at me fixedly; but I raised my hand in protest.

"No, never again, save to relieve you from pain," he added, quickly. There was a troubled look on his face. "You are the only one who knows what I am doing with this thing, and it is a relief to me to have you know it. It frightens me, the power of it, when I think what it might be in the hands of a wicked, unscrupulous man, and the temptations which will come in my way. You must never yield to it again—I command you now not to—but come here tomorrow night, and we will study together the pitiful soul of Jarvis."

II.

I don't know whether it was the effect of the Turkish coffee or the stimulation of the exciting evening I had passed, but the milk wagons were rattling over the pavements and the gray light of dawn was glimmering through the cracks of my shuttered windows before sleep came to me.

The morning brought its duties, and a loud banging on my door announced the arrival of an office messenger, who delivered a hasty scrawl from the city editor, ordering me to take charge of the working up of a story which ordinarily would have been of great interest to me.

It was the famous "Case of the Headless Woman," which kept the New York police force on tiptoe for many a day, and nearly doubled the circulation of the sensational evening papers; but, with the memory of what Tommy had told me occupying my mind, it seemed tame and did not appeal to me; and it was due solely to the faithful work of the men who were associated with me that the *Howler* at last claimed the glory of solving the mystery, although, as is the way of the world, the credit was given to me.

Tommy invited Jarvis and me to dinner at a small restaurant near his studio, and during the meal he kept up a rattling volley of small talk concerning his experiences in the French studios, which gave me ample opportunity to observe my fellow guest.

His face was not an agreeable one;

the pale blue eyes were too close together, and the small mouth, drooping at the corners, together with the weak, receding chin, gave the impression of ill nature and indecision. His dress was of the studied artistic variety, but so carefully planned in its apparent carelessness that it plainly revealed the vanity of the man. He had taken full advantage of the license in eccentricity which his profession is supposed to bestow; and his clothes, except in the vicinity of Washington Square, would have attracted the attention which his personality did not warrant.

He had little that was good to say of any fellow artist whose name was mentioned in our conversation, and no man's methods or results escaped his carping and malicious criticism; but Tommy was good nature itself, and his handling of the conversation was a marvel of tact and diplomacy.

No reference was made to the tragedy which had ended the life of the girl whom Jarvis had so bitterly hated, and when the fruit had been served and Tommy invited us to adjourn to his new studio for coffee, there was nothing about the entrance to suggest our proximity to Lingard's rooms. It was on a well lighted and busy thoroughfare, while the older building faced a side street, which was dark and nearly deserted at night, and the well-kept and well-lighted hallways of the one were in marked contrast to the dirt and darkness of the other.

Jarvis cast envious eyes about the studio, whose furnishings were so expensive and elaborate that they spoke eloquently of its owner's success, and Tommy gave him every opportunity to examine the curious objects on the wall and in the cabinets while he brewed the coffee over the charcoal in the brass brazier. I could see from the expression on Jarvis' face, even in the dim light, that his soul was filled with envy, malice and all uncharitableness, but he tried to appear indifferent as he sat down with us on the cushions in the Arab tent when Tommy announced that the coffee was ready.

"I can't say that I care much for this affectation of the weird in a studio," he commented, as Tommy passed him his cup. "I suppose that it impresses the women, though, and that's what you're after, but I prefer the simpler and more conventional style."

If I had not been so interested in the test which I knew Tommy was preparing to make I should have laughed outright, for Jarvis was noted for working the "studio tea" to the utmost limit, and his own workroom was filled with junk which Tommy, who never tried to do business through his social acquaintance, would not have given house room.

"I suppose it might, but I never have 'em here except on business," he answered, good-naturedly. "This style suits me, though. It is an inspiration to good work to be surrounded by beautiful things, and pretty nearly every article here has associations which stimulate the imagination."

"I don't find that I need that in my business," said Jarvis in a tone which irritated me by its self-complacency. "In fact, I am cursed with too much imagination, and I can't keep it from showing in my work."

Again the absurdity of Jarvis struck me, for his painting was nothing if not literal; and the imaginative quality was absolutely lacking in it. But a subtle change in Tommy's manner and tone attracted my attention, and I realized that things were about to happen. He had straightened up, and his voice was low and serious as he looked intently at Jarvis.

"That is because there is such a demand for your stuff that you are overworked and don't take time to rest," he answered; and Jarvis settled back easily, soothed and flattered by the imputation. "You should get more sleep, Jarvis. And think how these surroundings would induce it. Look at that mummy, and think of the darkness and quiet of the royal tomb in which she slumbered so many hundreds of years. Sleep, Jarvis; that is what you need that you may turn out the masterpieces of which you are capable. Deep sleep, dreamless sleep; sleep

which brings refreshment, sleep which drowns worry, sleep which banishes sorrow, sleep which brings oblivion; sleep, sleep, sleep."

Tommy had leaned over until he was very close to Jarvis, and he used his hands rapidly, as if emphasizing his remarks with gestures, but I saw that in reality he was making carefully studied passes, and there was just enough emphasis on the oft-repeated word "sleep" to make it stand out distinctly like a high light in a dark picture. His voice was soothing, and Jarvis was pleased by the flattery, so that he readily came under Tommy's influence, and by the time the discourse on sleep was ended, he was stretched out on the divan in a deep slumber. With a motion as quick and noiseless as a cat, Tommy was beside him, and placed the tips of his fingers lightly on the closed eyelids.

"Sleep, Jarvis, until I command you to waken," he said, in a firm voice, and, after looking at him for a moment, he turned to me with a laugh.

"Let's have the electric light, old chap; the whole place could come tumbling about his ears now and it would not awaken him. What a puny thing it is!" he said, looking at the sleeping man contemptuously as the light flooded the room. "It seems a pity to waste power on him, for one good punch in the jaw would bring him to his knees to whimper out all he knows, which can't be much, for he hasn't the courage of a mouse. Get up, Jarvis, and sit on the stool in front of the easel."

Jarvis obeyed instantly without opening his eyes, and it amazed me to see that he mechanically avoided the pieces of furniture which were between the tent and the stool.

"He is seeing through my eyes now, as I shall presently see through his," said Tommy, who seemed to know the thought passing through my mind. "I could make him walk a chalk line from here to Central Park with his eyes closed, or hit a mark with a pistol. The man is absolutely in my power now, and I will give you a demonstration which will interest you. Jarvis will not speak, but the scenes which I will recall to his mind will be transformed to mine, and I will repeat his incidental remarks for your edification."

He placed himself fairly in front of Jarvis and laid his hands on his temples, while I sat in a chair on the model throne and watched them closely.

"Jarvis, you are in your studio, painting your picture for the Silcomb competition," he said, quietly. "It is pretty well along, but just at a critical point, and Georgie Lascelles is posing for it. Now, I want you to live over again the events of the last afternoon she posed; think the same thoughts and repeat your very words through me, without speaking aloud."

The brow of the sleeping man wrinkled, as if he were in deep thought, and as Tommy stepped back, I was startled by the change in his appearance, for his face had assumed a startling resemblance to that of Jarvis. It seemed incredible that there should be the slightest likeness between the two faces which were so dissimilar in coloring, features and outline, but it was undoubtedly there, and when Tommy spoke it was in the thin, high-pitched voice which was peculiar to Jarvis.

Of course, it was a monologue so far as I was concerned, but my imagination could almost supply Georgie's part in the conversation, and Tommy's imitation was so perfect that I could have sworn, if I had not ocular proof to the contrary, that it was Jarvis who was speaking.

It revealed the very innermost workings of a small, contemptible mind, and Tommy's methods in laying it bare were as pitiless as the surgeon's scalpel.

Georgie had apparently mentioned the picture which Tommy was painting from her for the competition, and hatred and envy were plainly expressed in Jarvis' comments as he abused Tommy's personality, his methods and his work. And then, like the development of a hideous growth, I saw the formation of his dirty scheme to ruin the chances of his most dangerous competitor by influencing the model, never for a moment taking into consideration the

possibility of her refusal, and how fatal it would be to his own chances if she considered herself insulted by his advances.

He was of the class who hold women lightly, and so vain and sure of his powers that he could not understand the one who stood before him, and whose fidelity to her work offered him the one chance to win the coveted prize.

I had known Georgie Lascelles, for at the time she was at the height of her popularity as a model I was well acquainted with the studio world through my intimacy with Tommy, and I could picture her as she rose in her dignity to squelch the offensive little worm who had dared to insult her.

She was honest and absolutely faithful to those who employed her, taking as much interest in each picture as the men who painted from her; and I had heard many artists, vain and self-centered though they were, acknowledge that her posing had much to do with the success of their pictures.

Tommy's mimicry was perfect, and when the time came that I judged Georgie departed in her wrath, leaving Jarvis alone in his discomfiture, my last shred of compunction for prying into the privacy of a man's thoughts disappeared as I listened to the violent but impotent curses and threats which poured from Tommy's lips in the voice of Jarvis.

He would ruin her reputation; he would drive her out of the business, and make her name a byword in the studios until no reputable artist would dare to employ her; he would make her crawl on her knees to him for mercy.

Had I not known how futile had been his efforts, and how Tommy's success in winning the prize and his championship of the girl had made all of Jarvis' plans of vengeance come to naught, I should have been tempted to waken the sleeper to give him the thrashing he deserved.

The violence gradually lessened and became whimpering complaint, and when the scene came to an end Tommy, with such an expression of disgust as I had never seen on the face of a man, walked to the buffet and took a long drink.

"I needed something to take the taste out of my mouth," he said, as he stood before the little cur and looked at him with loathing. "It is about what I expected, for it is substantially what Georgie told me, but it was worse for you to listen to than for me to see, for I had the compensation of hearing and seeing Georgie; and oh, man alive, you should have seen her as she faced him!

"She said little, but her look as she drew on her gloves and raised her eyes slowly from the tips of his toes to the top of his head was a sight worth seeing and more eloquent than any words ever spoken. You remember that little trick of throwing her head back and looking at anyone who annoyed her with half-closed eyes; well, she used it on him to perfection.

"'I thought that I was posing for an artist and a gentleman, but I see that you are neither the one nor the other,' she said, and swept out of the studio."

"I guessed it was about that," I answered, as I followed Tommy's example at the buffet. "This study of a naked soul is about as revolting as the work of the dissecting room."

"When it happens to be a leprous one like this, yes," he answered, shrugging his shoulders. "It is worse than I thought it would be, and I have a presentiment that there is worse to come; but not in the thing we are looking for. A whelp like this can bark and whine and snap at one's heels, but he would never have the sand to spring for the throat. Are you sufficiently refreshed to see the next act?"

I looked at Jarvis, who maintained the same position, his face absolutely impassive, and nodded assent, and Tommy walked over and placed his hands on his forehead.

"Jarvis, you will, through me, tell of what happened every time you saw Georgie Lascelles from the day you have just described until the day of her death," he said. Again his face took on the strange resemblance to that of

the sleeping man before him and Jarvis' voice came from his lips.

The previous confession had revolted both of us and aroused a strong desire in our minds to administer a well-merited chastisement to the man who had unconsciously revealed the almost inconceivable baseness of his thoughts under Tommy's strange influence; and both Tommy and I, after he had finished, would have crushed him with less compunction than we should have felt in stepping on a worm.

He had seen her several times, and he stood convicted by his own utterances of having vented all the malice of his venomous soul in aiding her along the downward path of the morphine eater. Jarvis was notoriously stingy, but he had even gone to the extent of loosening his purse strings to aid her in obtaining the drug upon which she had become so dependent, and he gloated over each successive step which she had taken on the way to the gutter.

The last time that he acknowledged having seen her was some ten days before her death, when she told him that Lingard was taking care of her and trying to restore her to her old self, but Jarvis had ridiculed the possibility of her reform and given her morphine as he told her of the terrible suffering which she would have to undergo to be cured of her longing for the drug.

The strain was beginning to tell on Tommy, and before the narration was fairly finished he threw himself on a divan and covered his face with his hands. It was a good five minutes before he spoke, and when he uncovered his face I saw that it was the color of chalk, while his hands were so tightly clenched that the finger nails cut into the palms.

"You were fortunate in not seeing Georgie as I saw her this time," he said, keeping his face turned from Jarvis, as if he feared to be tempted beyond his power to resist. "Lingard's description of her was harrowing enough, but he saw her while he was trying to inspire hope and confidence, and this brute brought out all that was weakest and most pitiful in her. It was hard for me to believe that she was the same girl who always brought so much life and cheer into my studio in the old days, and I almost regretted the power which made it possible for me to see, through Jarvis' eyes, the wreck she had become."

His words brought back to me the memory of Georgie's face as her body lay on the couch, the marks of suffering softened by the kindly hand of death, but the countenance so changed that, at first, I had not recognized her as the girl who had been the life and the center of gayety of many a jolly studio party and Bohemian supper.

A little shiver passed over me at the uncanniness of the power to see the faces recalled to the memory of the sleeping man which Tommy undoubtedly possessed, and his own face was not good to look upon as he turned again to Jarvis.

"Get up, Jarvis, and follow me," he commanded, savagely, and his subject obeyed automatically, standing quietly while Tommy slid a piece of the molding strip to one side and set working the mechanism which caused a portion of the apparently solid wall to slide back, admitting him to the closet.

I followed them into Lingard's studio, which was arranged exactly as on the night of the murder, for Tommy had simply taken over the lease and kept all of the furniture and trappings which the police had not carried away for evidence.

"Open your eyes, Jarvis; look around and tell me when you were in this room last," said Tommy, and the sleeping man slowly obeyed and looked about, giving no sign of recognition, while Tommy and I moved closer to him, every muscle tense with excitement and anticipation.

Jarvis looked at everything, from the fatal couch to the narrow stairway which led to Lingard's sleeping place, and shook his head.

"I never saw this place before," he said, slowly, without Tommy's interpretation, and he was apparently trying hard to recognize the surroundings. He saw the easel with Lingard's uncom-

pleted picture upon it, and, walking over to it, he raised the cloth; an unpardonable liberty in a strange studio.

"Lingard's work," he muttered; "and that she-devil posed for it!"

An expression of hatred passed over his face and his voice almost rose to a scream as he cursed her, for Lingard had idealized the face, painting largely from his memory of what it had been at its best, and the sight of it irritated Jarvis.

Tommy, who was watching him as a cat would a mouse, gave a little exclamation and stepped quickly between him and the picture, making rapid passes over his face. Jarvis again closed his eyes and seemed to become oblivious to everything about him.

"The ruling passion strong—not in death, but in suspended consciousness," said Tommy, when he was convinced that the hypnosis was complete. "The jig is about up with him for to-night, for the sight of Georgie's likeness almost roused him from his trance and from under my control, as a strong external stimulus is apt to do. I don't think that we are on the right trail, but I shall have another session with him, for the instinct of self-preservation may have been strong enough to make him cautious, even in a trance, the first time he is thrown into it. I have been rather stirred up by my emotions to-night and not at my best, but the next time he will be weaker and I shall be stronger in our relative positions, for each time he yields my control becomes more complete."

He made a few more passes over Jarvis' face, to make the trance more profound, and then turned to me with a grim smile.

"I vowed to myself when I found what great control this strange hypnotic power gave me over the minds of those whom I influenced that I would never use it to anyone's discomfort for the sake of satisfying a personal grudge, but for this once I shall disregard that promise. I can see that you want to break every bone in his miserable body as soon as he awakens, so, perhaps, I am saving him from bodily harm by consigning him to a mental purgatory. I promise you that his punishment will be worse than any physical pain which you could inflict upon him."

So great was my faith in Tommy's ability that I simply nodded assent and watched his further proceedings with the greatest interest and curiosity. He placed his hands flat on Jarvis' forehead, and, closing his eyes, he brought his face close to that of the sleeping man, speaking slowly and distinctly, as if wishing every word to sink into the brain of the subject.

"Jarvis, you have acted like a malignant devil to Georgie Lascelles and tried to ruin her on earth and damn her to all eternity. Your malice and enmity dogged her because she would not be a party to your dirty plotting to injure me, and you attempted to murder her soul as brutally as her body was murdered. In payment for your rascality I am giving you a valuable gift, Jarvis; something which you have gone through life without, but which will always be with you. It is called conscience, and because you have acted so badly it brings a companion with it which is called remorse. They shall be your constant associates, Jarvis, sleeping and waking, and lest you forget the face of your victim she shall constantly appear to you in two forms, hand in hand: as she was when she told you that you were a cur in your own studio, and as she became before she met her death, driven to the gutter by you and others of your kind when real men were stretching out their hands to help her up. All of this I give to you, Jarvis, and now you will sleep for ten minutes longer, and then awaken with no recollection of what has passed, but with every word of this command burned indelibly upon your memory."

When Jarvis was again stretched out under the tent in the position he had taken when he was first put into the hypnotic state, Tommy sat down opposite him and gave a sigh of relief.

"Of course you will keep your hands off him when he awakens," he said to me. "I haven't any particular reason

nor desire to protect him, but I look upon all that we have learned as under the seal of professional confidence, unless we become satisfied of the man's guilt, and the gentle little dose I have prepared for him will be quite sufficient. I shall have another go at him, after sleeplessness and worry have worn him down a bit, for there was a manifest feeling of opposition which puzzled me, after we got into the other room. Perhaps, if he is guilty, the instinct of self-preservation may have stimulated him to be cautious and to try to mislead us; and it may have been only the association of the room, for such a recent tragedy must leave an atmosphere. In the meantime we will experiment with some of the others on the list, for the days and nights are long to Lingard, and I——"

He was interrupted by a shriek from Jarvis, who jumped to his feet—his eyes staring in horror at something which was not visible to us.

"Georgie!" he yelled. "No, no! I didn't—— I can't stand it!" The sight of Tommy, who had risen from the couch and was listening intently, recalled him to his senses, and he tried to stammer out an explanation.

"I—I fell asleep, I guess, and I have had a nightmare—or something. This is a grewsome place of yours, Williams, and you were speaking of tombs or some such ghastly things when I dozed off. I feel played out, and I guess I'll toddle along home."

Tommy looked at me significantly as Jarvis picked up his coat and hat, and I felt assured that the Nemesis which he had summoned was at work as I saw his victim look furtively over his shoulder as he left the studio.

III.

The investigation of the "Case of the Headless Woman" occupied my time very fully for the next couple of days, but I found leisure to run into the studio each afternoon to inquire if Tommy had anything to report. He gave a negative shake of his head and went on with his painting, for while he might spend the hours of darkness in psychological research and experimentation, he still had his income in mind, and devoted the hours of daylight to his profession.

He was working at the picture of a dancing faun, which was to be one of a group for a decorative panel for a new theater; and, remembering his discourse on models, I watched the young man who was posing for him curiously as he maintained the difficult position absolutely without moving.

"I thought perhaps I should have to try my hocus-pocus on Jake when I gave him a heart-breaking pose like that," said Tommy, laughing and nodding toward the man who was posing, "but he is too old a hand at the business to require it, and I think that he could hold a position if he had to stand on his head. There are two classes of good models: the very intelligent and high-strung, who, like the thoroughbred they are, have the courage to keep the pose in spite of the physical discomfort; and the stolid lunkheads who don't know enough to realize that they are uncomfortable. Our old friend, whose ending we are so concerned about, belonged to one class, and this boy is a shining example of the other."

I watched the model's face closely to see if Tommy's remarks caused any change in it, but he stood as if he were carved from wood or marble, and there was not the slightest indication in his expression that he had heard what the artist said.

"You couldn't feaze Jake with anything less than a dynamite bomb," said Tommy, who since he had hypnotized me had an uncomfortable faculty of knowing what was passing through my mind. "He has been allowing his classic profile to be transferred to canvas or modeling clay at fifty cents per hour, day in and day out, for the past five years to my certain knowledge. He isn't one of the kind that goes to pieces from nervous strain. You can rest now, Jake." The model sat down for his five minutes of relaxation, stretching himself wearily, and Tommy led me under the tent, where we were out of earshot.

"I don't suppose that imbecile would understand what we are talking about, but you know how studio gossip carries," he said, as we sat down. "There is nothing much to say, anyway, for I have been unable to get Reggie Crossway to make an appointment with me. It is hard to even get a sight of him, for he keeps himself locked up in his studio and won't answer the bell unless he is sure that it is some one whom he wants to see. I wrote to him twice; posted one letter and sent the other by messenger, and when I finally got in myself, because I happened to strike his place when he had come to the door to take in some groceries, I noticed both of my epistles lying on his table with a lot of others, all of them unopened. He was civil enough, for he is a good deal of a Chesterfield, but I could not pin him down to a definite date to come here. Now, I suggest that you go up to see Eleanor Martell and try to get her to influence him to walk into the spider's web."

"That's more in your line, Tommy," I protested. "She probably wouldn't receive me."

"And I'm positive that her respected father would receive me too warmly to make it comfortable," replied Tommy, laughing. "I am decidedly *persona non grata* since I butted in to induce Eleanor to pardon Lingard. You'll have to chance it, old chap, and then drop in here later on. That little saphead, Willie Hodge, is coming here to-night, so you had better come in on your way home. I don't expect to get much out of him, for, except a distorted idea of his powers as a lady-killer, there is not much in his brain. You may remember that he spread some particularly disagreeable stories about Georgie, and then suddenly could not be induced to mention her name, and I want to find out the cause of it. That's the only reason I put him on the list. How is your mystery coming on?"

I explained that we had a promising clew; a couple of boys had seen a package, which might contain a woman's head, dropped off a pier in the North River by two suspicious-looking men, and that the *Howler* was employing a full corps of photographers to take pictures of all the relatives of the boys, while the headlines of the next issue, with capitals in red ink, would read:

TWO BOYS HAVE ASSERTED THAT

THE MISSING HEAD

WILL BE

FOUND IN THE HUDSON

I watched Jake, the model, resume his pose while I was putting on my overcoat, and marveled at the absolute accuracy with which he took it up, and as I walked down the stairs swinging my cane I thought of the long ride on the elevated to the office and realized that I should have taken it and be comfortably at work before the model's next rest period came.

Eleanor Martell showed very plainly the effects of the strain she had been laboring under when I called upon her that evening. She was a handsome girl, and I made up my mind that Lingard was not so much to be pitied as the world supposed, for it would be worth going to prison for a time to find that she cared enough to forgive all for the sake of her love.

I had sent a note to the house, telling her that I would call at Tommy's request, and she looked at me anxiously as she waited for me to explain the object of my visit.

"First, let me assure you that I have not come in my capacity of a reporter," I said, trying to reassure her, but she shook her head impatiently.

"Don't think that I fear publicity!" she exclaimed. "So far as I am personally concerned, I wish to announce my engagement to Mr. Lingard, to show all the world my belief, not only in his innocence of the crime, but in the absolute honesty of his motive in caring for Georgie Lascelles. You can understand that any doubt about that would be as hard for me to bear as a question of his guilt on the criminal charge. I am yielding to the wishes of my family to the extent that I do not

let the fact of our engagement be known, but I trust that you believe that I have not the slightest doubt of his innocence."

"It is his innocence which Mr. Williams and I are trying to establish before the world by discovering the guilty person, and that is the reason of this visit," I said, hastily. "We are carrying on an investigation entirely aside from the police, and we have run across an obstacle which we wish you to help us to remove."

"Oh, tell me all about it!" she exclaimed, eagerly. "Of course you can count upon any assistance which I can give you."

"I can't go into details about our methods," I answered, guardedly. "We are using our own way, or, rather, Mr. Williams' way, of examining everyone whom we have the slightest cause to suspect, and it is necessary for us to get them, one by one, to Mr. Williams' studio. We haven't the police power to take them there summarily; in fact, we don't wish to excite their suspicions by referring in any way to the crime."

"But I don't see how I can be of any assistance to you if I don't know what you are doing," she said, with a touch of disappointment in her tone. "Believe me, you can trust to my discretion."

"We do, absolutely, or I should not tell you even so much as I have, but you can render us the very greatest assistance by persuading Reginald Crossway to come to——"

"Oh, no, no!" she exclaimed. "You can't suspect him of such a crime. You must not—he is incapable of it."

Perhaps I am naturally of a suspicious nature; perhaps the intimate acquaintance with the seamy side of life which I have made in my profession has developed suspicion in me, but, in any case, her agitation at the mention of another man's name as being under suspicion made me doubt her absolute sincerity.

"When there is the slightest possibility that a man may be guilty, we must consider him as under suspicion until we are through with him," I replied. "Frankly, I share your opinion of Crossway, but his past is so interwoven with Georgie's that, even though we were assured of his innocence, he might be able to give us valuable information which would put us on the right track."

"Why not go to him and ask him about what you wish to know, then? He is not running away, and I don't see why it is necessary to bring him to the studio."

"I can't tell you why it is necessary for him to come to us; but, believe me, it is absolutely necessary. And, aside from that, he has almost barricaded himself in his studio, so that it is difficult to get at him."

"Probably that is one reason why you suspect him," she answered, a little scornfully. "He was as blameless of all harm as Mr. Lingard himself, but the evil-minded are led to suspect evil of others when none exists. Let me show you a letter I received from him just after the crime, and perhaps it will convince you that you wrong him."

She swept from the room, leaving me to reflect on the old axiom that to the pure all things are pure, and to wonder if my associations had developed a pruriency of my own mind which made me suspicious of everything and everybody, including the young woman who had just left the room.

"Read that and see if it does not make you ashamed of yourself for having suspected him," she said, as she entered the room holding out a letter.

It was a simple, manly epistle, characteristic of all that I believed Reginald Crossway to be, expressing his great regret at the trouble which Lingard had gotten into through trying to aid Georgie Lascelles and assuring Miss Martell of his belief in Lingard's innocence. He offered any assistance which it might be in his power to render, and spoke tenderly of the dead girl.

"This letter makes it extremely simple for you to meet our wishes," I said, as I handed it back to her. "He offers his assistance, and that is exactly what we wish to obtain. Will you write to him and ask him to come to the studio?"

"To be insulted by even a suggestion

that he may be guilty of murder? Certainly not," she answered, defiantly. "The name of one good and honest gentleman has been smirched by this horrible affair, and I shall not become a party to dragging another innocent one into it."

"I have assured you that I, too, believe in his innocence, and if we are correct in our belief he has nothing to fear from an investigation," I replied. "There is nothing public about it, and he will not know what we are up to, but it may mean liberty to Lingard. Mr. Williams tells me that you have never visited the Tombs; if you had you would know how much that means."

"Will you give me your word that he will not be humiliated or made uncomfortable in any way if I do what you ask?" she asked, her resolution apparently shaken by the thought of Lingard's imprisonment.

I left the house with Miss Martell's promise that she would try to deliver Crossway into our hands the following evening, and congratulating myself that I had told her nothing of Tommy's methods, as I did not trust her discretion and should have feared that he would come on his guard.

I found Tommy sitting cross-legged on the cushions in the tent, entertaining Willie Hodge, who sat opposite him, a picture of weak indecision as he tried to make up his mind whether he would take Benedictine or curaçao. Tommy nodded a greeting and gave a grunt of satisfaction when I told him that my mission had been successful, while Willie looked at my dress-shirt bosom and then at his own gorgeously colored waistcoat discontentedly.

"I didn't know whether to dress or not when I received Williams' invitation for dinner to-night," he said, apologetically. "I thought of calling him up to ask, but then I wasn't sure whether or not he had a telephone. Of course, when I am going to a formal dinner it is easy enough, but these questions of dress at informal things are very perplexing."

"Ah, but look at the result; it is worth all the mental effort, for surely Solomon in all his glory would have looked like a diminished thirty cents in comparison!" exclaimed Tommy, admiringly, and Willie, comforted by the tribute, looked himself over complacently.

The diminutive of William, which had been bestowed upon him, seemed to fit him perfectly, for by no stretch of the imagination could one conceive of his being called by the rough nickname of Bill or the vulgar one of Billy, and his work, which consisted principally of making dainty pastel heads or ivory miniatures of any woman whom he could inveigle into his studio, was characteristic of the man.

"I do give a good deal of attention to those little details," he answered. "It takes me quite a half hour in the morning to decide what I shall wear, and I always try to dress in harmony with the weather. One really can't wear the same sort of clothes on a gray day that one would wear under a blue sky, but it is so difficult to decide what the weather may turn out to be that I find it most perplexing. Doesn't it bother you, Williams?"

"I can't say that I devote much thought to it—in the morning," answered Tommy, as he rose to his feet, and I noticed a twinkle in his eye which told me that he was getting ready for business. "You see, I am always sleepy in the morning, Willie, and I should think after your great mental effort in deciding such an intricate problem you would find it difficult to get sleep enough to repair the wear and tear on your thinking machinery. You ought to get more sleep, Willie, so just start in now and sleep until I wake you up."

He made one pass over the face, and Willie's eyes immediately closed under the stronger man's suggestion.

"Whew! Let's have the light!" exclaimed Tommy. "Willie-boy can stay by-by peacefully while you tell me about your call."

I told him, word for word, of my conversation with Miss Martell.

"Don't be suspicious of her," he said, gravely, when I had finished. "She is

loyalty itself, and she is fond of Reggie Crossway, as everyone is who knows him. He and I were the only ones, outside of her immediate family, whom she informed of her engagement to Lingard, and I think that she would be just as careful to protect me if she thought anyone had designs upon my happiness. I envy you your evening," he continued, looking ruefully at the sleeping Willie. "I was tempted to put him to sleep before you came, to quiet his foolish tongue. God made it; therefore let it pass as a man, but he has about as much mentality as a tailor's dummy. I absolutely refuse to have what he calls his mind impressed upon mine—he must talk with his own lips and answer my questions. They say that wisdom comes from the mouths of babes and sucklings, so we may get pearls of price from under Willie's budding mustache."

He sat down opposite the sleeper and stroked his eyelids for a moment.

"Now, Willie, to begin with, where did you get that scarf pin?" he asked, and Willie promptly gave the name and address of a well-known pawnbroker, at which Tommy smiled.

"And the cuff links?"

"My mother gave them to me for Christmas."

"Likewise the locket?"

"No, that was a birthday gift from my sister."

Tommy turned to me grinning and shook his head.

"Just think of having to sit all through dinner and listen to this little liar's romances of the ladies who gave him these things. Of course, they were all of them well known and prominent socially, although he couldn't mention names, and he even asked my advice as to whether he should give up his career as a Don Juan and settle down to quiet married life with the heiress, elope with the wife of the eminent financier, or consent to let the leader of the social world get a divorce for his sake. He was in his usual undecided state, even about the ladies of his imagination. This seems puerile to you, I imagine, but it serves to give you a demonstration of the power of hypnotism to lay bare a man's soul, even to the extent of making him ridiculous and proving him to be an unmitigated liar."

I nodded assent, and Tommy turned again to the sleeper.

"Willie, you knew Georgie Lascelles, didn't you?"

In spite of the hypnotic trance, he gave a little start, and it seemed to me that his silly face took on a look of apprehension, and Tommy quickly placed his hands on his forehead.

"I wonder if the little idiot knows anything about the murder?" he said, looking at me with a puzzled expression. "The mention of Georgie's name made him pretty nearly give me the slip, but I had so little respect for him that I didn't exert much power in putting him to sleep. I'll make sure of it this time." He stroked Willie's forehead slowly, muttering the word "sleep" over and over again.

"Now, Willie, how about Georgie Lascelles?" he asked, when he was confident that his subject was absolutely under his control.

"It wasn't true, what I said about her—I lied about it," came the reply, slowly and hesitatingly, as if the indecision which characterized him while awake had been carried with him into trance land.

"Most probably—but what was it you said which was not true?"

"Why—why, that time when she broke off with Crossway, I just happened to say that it was on my account—because she was in love with me," he stammered.

"And because she was a beautiful woman, you thought that it would be to your credit to appear to have her scalp hanging at your belt; is that it?" asked Tommy, pitilessly.

"Y-e-s; that's about it, I suppose," answered Willie.

"Why didn't you stick to your story, then, when you had such a brilliant idea?"

"Because he said he would do it again and do it publicly, so I was afraid," replied Willie, in a trembling voice.

"Who is 'he' and what did he do which made you afraid?" asked Tommy, as he made a few rapid passes with his hands.

"Why—that—that brute Crossway. He came to my studio and gave me an awful talking to, and then he spanked me with the back of a hairbrush; just as if I had been a baby," whimpered Willie; and Tommy and I both exploded with laughter.

"I don't think this is a dangerous criminal," said Tommy. "The last five minutes repay me for a tiresome evening, but it isn't fair to go any further with this little fool. If I heard anything else as funny I should be tempted to violate professional confidence."

He told Willie to sleep for ten minutes, and then to awaken naturally, and we stood together in front of the buffet.

"It's been more of a strain than you imagine to keep that idiot under my thumb," he said, after he had taken a pull at his highball. "A strong mind puts up a fight, but when I once get it, it is all over with, while a fool like Willie hasn't enough mind to conquer, and I have to watch him every minute. This is the first gleam of humor we have had in the affair, but even this is suggestive, for it brings Crossway to us again. He seems to have had a hand in pretty nearly everything concerning Georgie, but I hope that we can eliminate him from the final scene."

"His connection seems to have been of the helpful and protective variety," I answered, smiling at the memory of the confession which we had just listened to. "Corporal punishment isn't pleasant to watch ordinarily, but I should like to have seen that."

"I never credited Crossway with a sense of humor before," said Tommy. "I shall take an added interest in the investigation of to-morrow night."

Willie stretched himself and yawned, and then jumped up with a bewildered expression on his face.

"Bless my soul! I must have fallen asleep!" he exclaimed, looking at his watch. "I shall be late for my appointment. Did I fall asleep, Williams?"

"You certainly did, my boy," replied Tommy, gravely. "More than that—you talked in your sleep—which is indiscreet when a man has so many confidential and delicate matters on hand."

"I trust that I mentioned no names," he said, quickly, trying to look embarrassed, and Tommy reassured him, to his evident disappointment.

"I fear that I am very late—and one should never keep a lady waiting. I wonder if I had better take a cab or the elevated; I don't know which would be the quicker," he said, as he stood irresolutely in the doorway, after he had said good-night.

"Willie, if you want my unprejudiced opinion, having, of course, the natural anxiety of the lady in mind, I should say that it didn't make a damn bit of difference," said Tommy, wearily, as he gently pushed him out and closed the door.

IV.

"I feel that I owe you an apology, Williams, for not looking you up sooner to welcome you back to New York," said Reginald Crossway, as he sat down with us under the Arab tent the next evening, for Eleanor Martell, although we did not know what arguments she had used, had kept her promise and induced him to come. "You must believe that it was from no lack of good will, but I have seen but little of my kind lately; in fact, Miss Martell tells me that I am getting hipped on the subject of solitude, and it was upon her command that I crawled out of my shell to-night."

I watched him closely as Tommy assured him that he doubly appreciated the honor of his visit, because he knew how rarely such favors were bestowed, and I made up my mind that he was to face a foeman worthy of his steel.

Every line of Crossway's handsome, smooth-shaven face gave indication of strength of character, and the straight line of the lips above the square, well-set chin denoted a resoluteness of will which would not be easily overcome.

He was not more than thirty years of age, but the gray was strongly marked

in the thick dark hair about his temples, and that, together with the little traces of crow's-feet about his eyes, suggested that his thirty years had not been without their period of storm and stress.

His manner was perfect, leaving nothing to be desired in the way of cordiality, but underneath the conventional ease which permitted of small talk and the discussion of matters of general interest, I was conscious that there was a barrier which it would be difficult to cross to get at his real personality.

He was a man with many acquaintances, few friends, and, so far as I knew, no intimates; but it was entirely because he preferred not to admit people to his friendship. Persistent attempts had been made to lionize him, for his work was superlatively good and always received serious consideration at the exhibitions; but he held aloof from the society of the fashionables, as he did from the social life of the artistic coterie, and comparatively few people had ever seen the inside of his studio.

The few people who knew him at all well felt that his love for Georgie Lascelles was the greatest thing which had ever entered his life, and when she announced that their engagement was broken off he had shut himself away from them, and Eleanor Martell was the only woman with whom he kept up even a semblance of intimacy.

Tommy gave him coffee, and I could see that he was watching him as a fencer watches a skillful adversary, looking for the opportunity to get under the guard which Crossway's habitual reserve made almost impregnable. A half hour had passed without the slightest opening, when Tommy gradually and quite naturally brought the conversation around to things Japanese, a large sale of art objects of that country being then in progress at the art galleries.

"I can't say that I care much for the general run of porcelains and cloisonné which they offer," he remarked, when Crossway mentioned the tremendous prices which had been realized. "My taste runs more to surrounding myself with things which have some personal interest, as you may imagine from the jumble of my wall decorations."

He unlocked a cabinet and brought out a square box of black lacquer ornamented with gold figures and characters in high relief. Holding it carefully on his knees, he untied the silken cords which fastened it.

"Now, here is something which most people would pass by without a second look, and yet, it was for centuries one of the most prized possessions of a great Japanese family," he continued, holding up a spherical piece of crystal about the size of a large orange, its surface polished to the smoothness of a mirror, and not a flaw nor a speck to be detected in its whole substance. "There was a superstition connected with it, a sort of fetish worship, and each succeeding head of the family would consult it as the Romans consulted the oracle, gazing into its depths for hours, believing that he could read future events in its changing colors."

Crossway seemed very much interested in the globe, and put his hand out to take it, but Tommy drew it back.

"No, this is a more or less sacred object, and to appreciate it you must look at it in a certain way and after due preparation," he said, laughing. "First of all, you must make yourself perfectly comfortable, so that you will be entirely at ease for the long contemplation of its mysteries."

He drew an easy-chair in front of a small table, on which he placed the crystal ball, the soft light from a lamp behind it making it glow as if it were on fire.

"Now, place your face as close as possible to it and look directly at the center," he said, and Crossway laughingly obeyed.

"That's right," said Tommy, as he stepped behind him and gave me a warning look. "Keep your eyes fixed on the one spot, and in a few minutes you will see a play of colors which your palette does not contain."

Crossway followed the directions to the letter, and Tommy, his face set and

stern, stood behind him making rapid passes over his head. Gradually the expression on Crossway's face changed, and I noticed that Tommy's hands were moving more slowly, until finally he uttered the one word, "sleep," and gently closed his victim's eyelids with the tips of his fingers.

"*Habet!*" he exclaimed, as he threw himself back on the cushions and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. "That crystal is my trump card, and I have been obliged to use it but twice before, but if I couldn't have gotten him to help me by more than half hypnotizing himself, there would have been nothing doing. There is this satisfaction about it; that when I once get a man of his character, I have got him for good and all, and he is more helpless in my hands than either Jarvis or Willie; but, my boy, it takes it out of your Uncle Thomas to land him."

He sat quietly, lost in thought for a few minutes before he spoke again.

"I like Reggie Crossway," he said, looking gravely at the sleeping man. "In fact, I like him so well that I hesitate to break through the wall of reserve with which he has surrounded himself; but I know that I can trust you as absolutely as I can myself to respect his forced confidence, unless we find it necessary to use the information which we obtain to aid the criminal authorities."

Crossway answered the questions which Tommy put to him clearly and concisely, for Tommy adopted with him the methods he had used with Willie Hodge. He told of his love for Georgie and his terrible disappointment when she had refused to carry out her promise to marry him, and freely confessed that it was the cause of his having secluded himself from the world.

Remembering the fiendish malignity with which Jarvis had encouraged the girl in her use of morphine, it was a relief to hear the manly regrets which Crossway expressed that he had been unable to protect her from such a vice. His simple recital of how he had unobtrusively kept track of her and extended aid through others raised my opinion of him so greatly that I dreaded for him what Tommy's further questioning might bring out.

It appeared that for three months before her death Georgie had appealed to him constantly for money, which he had resolutely refused to give her, for the purchase of morphine, while he contrived to pay the rent of her room and saw that sufficient things were sent to her to eat. The use of the drug had demoralized her until she had lost all sense of pride, and she even became abusive when her demands were refused; until he cut off her supplies, trusting that absolute want might induce her to go to a sanitarium for treatment.

And then came the account of their last meeting, the visit to the studio which had culminated in such a violent scene that it attracted outside attention, and I leaned forward that I might not miss a word.

"She came to abuse me; as if I had not already suffered enough at her hands," he said, slowly, in answer to Tommy's questions. "I knew that she was hardly responsible for her words or actions, but when she told me that she had found shelter with a good man —that she was living in Lingard's studio—I felt an almost irresistible desire to strangle her that she might do no further harm in the world.

"I knew Georgie Lascelles as no one else knew her; I appreciated the beauty of her character as other men admired the beauty of her face, before the horrible drug habit distorted and disfigured both, and I appealed to her, trying to rouse her old self. I had received a note from Miss Martell that morning, telling me of her engagement to Lingard, and that she would soon return to New York, and I knew that she would never be able to understand the situation if she learned of Georgie's living in Lingard's studio.

"I offered Georgie every opportunity and inducement to leave it, but the drug had raised a devil of mischief in her brain, and she only laughed at me. As a last resort I showed her a portrait of Miss Martell which I had painted for

myself when I was fool enough to believe that, perhaps, old wounds might be healed and a new interest come into my life.

"No one else had ever seen it, and when I showed it to Georgie and told her that she might cause endless misery to both Lingard and the beautiful woman whom the portrait represented instead of moving her to compassion it aroused jealousy and rage, and before I could prevent it she seized a palette knife and destroyed the canvas."

He stopped abruptly and Tommy and I looked at each other in astonishment, but Tommy quickly made a pass over the sleeper's face.

"And then—what happened?" he asked, quietly, and Crossway sighed as he answered:

"I forgot, for a moment, that I was a man and she a woman, for she had maliciously destroyed my most cherished possession, and I hardly knew what I was doing. I seized her roughly—so roughly that she screamed—as I upbraided her for what she had done and threatened her."

"Threatened her with what?" asked Tommy, eagerly.

"With everything I could think of—with arrest, with bodily harm, with death itself, if she did not consent to leave Lingard's studio."

"And then?"

"Her screams had alarmed the other tenants, and the janitor came in to find out what was the matter, which gave her a chance to escape from me," answered Crossway, and my heart sank as I felt that the man for whom I had so much sympathy was building up a case against himself by his own admissions.

Tommy apparently shared my belief, for his face was deathly pale and he crossed quickly to the corner and slid back the false wall without making any comment.

I remembered the sympathy I had experienced for a young army officer to whose duty as provost marshal it fell to execute a man when I was acting as a war correspondent. It was something which had to be done, and no matter how unpleasant the duty, he was there to do it. Something in Tommy's manner and voice as he told Crossway to follow him into the next room reminded me of the young officer, and I followed them as I had followed the other procession, hoping, as I had done before, that there might be a reprieve at the last moment.

Crossway did not wait to be questioned when he entered Lingard's studio; his eyes were closed, but there was a look of distress on his face, and he muttered Georgie's name over and over while Tommy, his eyes staring and his face ghastly white, moved close to him.

"Open your eyes and look about you;" he commanded, as Crossway ceased his muttering, and when he obeyed he uttered a shriek which must have been heard throughout the building.

"Georgie!" he shouted. "Georgie! My God! Has it come to this?" and with one spring he was beside the couch and his fist shot out, catching the lay figure between the eyes and sending it crashing into the corner.

"Help me to get him back into the studio," cried Tommy, as he sprang on his back and pinioned his arms. Between us we managed to get him through the closet and slide the false wall back into place before we fell in a struggling heap on the floor, Crossway swearing and trying to get away from us.

"Wake up, Crossway," shouted Tommy, in his ear. "What's the matter with you, old chap?—you must be having a nightmare." We loosened our hold and he sat on the floor, staring about with an air of utter bewilderment.

"Good heavens! What a horrible dream!" he exclaimed, as he passed his hand over his forehead. "How did it happen? When did I fall asleep?"

"You have had quite a nap," answered Tommy, panting from his exertions but trying to force a laugh. "You are a strenuous sleeper, and if we hadn't restrained you I tremble to think what might have happened to my bric-à-brac. Your hand seems to be the only thing which is damaged, though."

"I don't understand it all; I never did such a thing before," said Crossway, looking at his hand which he had bruised against the wooden face of the mannikin. "The last thing I remember, until I found myself struggling on the floor with you, I was looking at that Japanese crystal."

"That's when you dropped asleep," answered Tommy, brazenly. "We didn't want to disturb you, but I should like to know what you dreamed about which made you kick up such a row?"

Crossway immediately pulled himself together, and the wall of reserve which habitually separated him from his fellows became very apparent.

"Ghosts—something horrible which I would rather not talk about," he said, with a laugh, which did not ring true, as he looked about him uneasily. We made no effort to detain him when he rose to go, and as the door closed behind him, Tommy breathed a sigh of relief.

"Well, what do you make of it?" I asked, when I was sure our visitor was out of hearing.

"What can I make of it, except one thing, which was pretty evident?" he answered. "There is no way out of it; every action pointed to guilt, and if the slightest corroborating evidence is worked up, he has convicted himself by his own words. If the police had heard his admissions to-night, he would need a strong alibi to save his neck."

"Fortunately they didn't, and they will know nothing of it if I can help it," I answered, decidedly. "There is no question about your possessing a wonderful power, but isn't there a grave chance of error, owing to the control you exercise over the minds of those you influence? I saw Jarvis on the street to-day, so I realize what suggestion can do, for he looks like a wreck as the result of the hoodoo which you put on him. Isn't it possible that the same power of suggestion working unconsciously from your mind to that of the subject should raise a vision of what you believe to have happened on the night of the murder?"

"It may be possible, of course," answered Tommy, shaking his head doubtfully. "But I fail to see how you can apply that theory to fit Crossway's actions to-night. Do you think that I willed him, even unconsciously, to strike the lay figure?"

"No, but your mind was fixed on a scene of violence, and certainly the thought of George Lascelles was there, and the idea may have been distorted in the transference," I argued, but Tommy shook his head.

"That is not possible—at least, within my knowledge of hypnotism. I don't claim to know all about the art, but my impression is that the surroundings of the room influenced him as soon as he entered, and that when he saw he was on the scene of the murder he hit the first figure in sight with an idea of making his escape. It was a lucky thing for us that he selected that wooden head. We have got to think the whole thing out and figure out a working hypothesis before we do any more experimenting. I want to patch all the circumstances together, for Eleanor Martell seems to be coming into it in a way which I cannot understand, and, altogether, it is getting more complicated every——"

A persistent ringing at the bell interrupted him, and when he went to the door he admitted one of my fellow reporters, who was working on our case under my direction. He brought such important news concerning it that I had to hurry to a far corner of the town and leave Tommy to his own reflections.

V.

"The Case of the Headless Woman" was a mystery no longer; the people who were responsible for reducing the poor lady to that pitiful condition were safely caged in the Tombs, and after a night of exciting adventure and a morning of steady writing, I handed my last bit of copy to the city editor and started uptown.

In spite of having been thirty-six hours without sleep, my interest in our private investigations led me to call at Tommy's studio on my way home, and

I found him busily engaged in painting from the same model who had, if anything, a more difficult pose than the previous one. Tommy looked haggard, and I concluded that his night had been as sleepless as mine, without the compensation of adventure.

"Congratulate me; my mystery is solved, and I am accorded an undue amount of credit at the office, which will probably mean an increase in salary," I said, as I dropped into a chair and watched the face of the model, who gave no indication of being aware of my entrance. Tommy acknowledged my news only with a grunt, and painted steadily on.

"Have you reached any conclusions as a result of your investigations of last night?" I asked, realizing that he was too preoccupied with his own problem to give thought to anything else.

"No, I haven't," he answered, irritably. "I am as much at sea as ever, but I shall have that chap here for another session if I have to chloroform him. I haven't been able to sleep, and I am making an awful mess of this picture, because I can't keep my mind on my work."

I made due allowance for the nervous irritability which lack of sleep brings to a man who is accustomed to regular and unbroken rest, but I was surprised when a ring at the bell caused him to rip out an oath.

"See who it is, will you, and tell 'em to go to blazes!" he exclaimed. "I have troubles of my own and I don't want to be bothered."

I complied with the first part of the request, but when I recognized in the visitors Detective Sergeant Quilkin and an assistant district attorney, named Bohner, I admitted them, my heart sinking as I feared that Tommy had been indiscreet enough to send for them. Bohner quickly reassured me when he stated their errand.

"We understand that you have rented Lingard's studio and we want to get into it to take some measurements," he said to Tommy; and Quilkin eyed me with considerable disfavor.

"So you're buttin' in on this case, too, young feller, are you?" he said, sourly. "Anyone would think there was no police in New York to find out things from the way youse newspaper boys write."

"Wait until you read the *Howler* in the morning and see what a send off I give to the bravery displayed by one Quilkin in arresting the murderers," I answered, laughing, for I knew that he had seen our evening "wuxtry," which, of course, claimed all the credit for discovering them.

It mollified him, for he really deserved praise for his bravery, if not for his sagacity, for I had seen him, single-handed, arrest two desperate men in the midst of their own friends that same morning and get them safely started on the route for the electric chair.

"Well, there ain't nothin' doin' for youse in this case," he said, as we walked around the corner. "It's been a cinch from the start, but I don't see why the guy wasn't wise enough to make his get-away, for he could have had a good twenty-four hours."

"He probably realized that old sleuth Quilkin would get on his trail, so he came down without waiting to be shot at," I answered, and the detective visibly swelled with pride.

"There ain't many gets away from us," he said, confidently, and I laughed to myself as I recalled the very obvious clews which they had overlooked, but which the reporters had followed to a successful conclusion in the last mystery.

The studio was just as we had left it the night before, and the lay figure was in a heap in the corner.

Quilkin accurately pointed out the position which the girl's body had occupied, and Tommy straightened up the figure and put it in the original position.

Bohner took a tape from his pocket and carefully measured the distances of the different objects from each other and noted them on a rough sketch. He had brought the sword with him, and he placed it in the hand of the lay figure, which was still draped in the Eastern costume, and adjusted it in the

position he judged the murderer must have stood, moving it from place to place.

"I don't want to say anything which may lead to the conviction of Lingard, whom I believe to be absolutely innocent, but the facts can hurt no one but a guilty man," said Tommy, as he uncovered the picture. "Here is something which may offer a suggestion." Bohner looked at the unfinished picture curiously.

"That, I take it, is a portrait of the murdered girl, but who posed for the male figure?" he asked.

"The dummy, here, I imagine," answered Tommy, placing his hand on the lay figure. "You see, the face is not painted in yet; only the draperies, and they can be painted from a mannikin."

"That must have been about the position which the murderer took, anyway, and it is a curious coincidence that the girl should have been killed with the same weapon which is shown there and the wound should have been in exactly the spot at which the sword pointed. The artist should have painted in his own face, while he was about it."

"You believe him guilty, then?" asked Tommy, and the lawyer laughed.

"No man is guilty until the jury has rendered its verdict," he said. "Frankly, I have had stronger cases than this one against Lingard, but we may discover other evidence before the trial."

"I hope that it will be favorable to him, then," said Tommy, as Bohner climbed up to look at Lingard's sleeping quarters, and Quilkin smiled in a superior way.

"We've got the guy dead to rights, in my opinion," he said, confidently, and Tommy looked at him as if he would like to kick him, not understanding the satisfaction which a police officer feels in getting a conviction.

I thought of the jeopardy in which Crossway's liberty would be placed had the police heard the admissions which he had made the night before, and, wondering if he would be able to prove an alibi, tried to remember what I could prove as to my own movements on the night of the murder.

I recollected being called out early to report it, but for the life of me I could not recall how I had spent the evening, and knowing the solitary life which Crossway led, I realized how hard it would be for him to deny an accusation.

The officials were leisurely in their examination of the premises, and more than an hour passed before the heavy tread of Quilkin's police boots died away on the stairway, and I turned to Tommy and asked him what his next move was to be.

"I don't want to complicate things any more by getting hold of the other men whom we have considered until we have definitely eliminated Jarvis and Crossway," he replied. "Both of them have given us more evidence of a motive than exists against Lingard, and yet they are at liberty while that poor devil is in the Tombs. They can't both of them be guilty, and every step which we take makes the whole matter seem more involved, and I have got to get hold of something more definite to work on."

"And Miss Martell; have you considered what her influence may have been in the case?" I asked.

"You can't expect me to question her as I have the others," answered Tommy, defiantly. "Suspicion that she may know anything of it is so vague that I won't even consider it. This much I will admit: that her protection or the hope of winning her away from Lingard may have been the motive of the crime; but not that she has any guilty knowledge of it, either before or after its commission."

"In that case we come right back to Reggie Crossway, but we must consider everyone and everything which may have a possible connection with the crime," I answered, positively. "Mind you, I am not asserting that she knows of it, but here is a possible hypothesis, and you must acknowledge that it may be correct, although I am as loath as you are to believe that Reggie Crossway is the guilty man. Knowing what little I do of feminine human nature, I am not at all satisfied with her be-

havior at the time of my interview. She asserts that she is positive of Lingard's innocence, although he is the only man against whom there is a scintilla of evidence. Granted that it may be because she loves him that she has the belief, it is almost incredible that any woman would forgive Georgie's presence here unless she had listened to the lover's explanations and protestations of innocence. As I understood it, she has not seen Lingard since his arrest."

"But she had all of his explanations and protestations, delivered through me," answered Tommy. "You must remember that it is easier to convince an innocent girl than a skeptical man of the world of the absence of evil."

"And it is also easy for a woman to make a pretense of believing a thing because she wishes the world to believe it. We, both of us, against our inclinations, gravely suspect Reginald Crossway, of whom we know she is very fond, and who has admitted that he was in love with her. Now, suppose that he tried to save her by removing Georgie, and then found that he had only made matters worse and involved the man she loved in a terrible scandal, because in a fit of passion he had killed the girl who would not listen to his arguments. Impelled by his generosity to exculpate Lingard in her eyes, he confesses his crime to her, and she, reading the real motive, although he may never have told her of his love, tries to shield him——"

"And lets the man whom she loves linger in prison under this terrible accusation?" interrupted Tommy, scornfully. "I am afraid that such a theory is too unnatural to be worthy of consideration."

"Hold on a minute; remember that we are dealing with a woman, and that she would not reason in a way which we can entirely understand," I persisted. "She knows that the case against Lingard is a very weak one, which will probably go to pieces under the defense of a skillful lawyer at the trial, and in any case, there is always the possibility of denouncing the real culprit if it becomes necessary, but until then she keeps quiet to spare the man who loves her hopelessly, trusting to repay Lingard for his suffering by her unshaken faith, and a lifetime of devotion. When we get after Crossway she holds out against us, although she knows that we are working for Lingard's liberty, and she persists until she fears that her obstinacy will increase our suspicions. She yields finally, after exacting a promise which she believes will protect him."

"I suppose that men have been hanged on theories like that, when evidence could be distorted to support them," answered Tommy, shaking his head. "I might consider it if I did not know Eleanor Martell so well; but, knowing her, it is as incredible to me as your suggestion that I might have influenced Jarvis and Crossway unconsciously and impressed my suspicions on them to make them act as they did in this room. But we are, at least, getting down to definite theories, so let's go back into the other room where we can talk in greater comfort." He passed into the closet and pushed back the false wall, but stopped in the opening with an exclamation of surprise.

"Well, of all the fools I ever knew, Jake is the biggest, and that's saying a good deal," he said, and looking over his shoulder I saw the model standing under the skylight in the strained position in which we had left him more than an hour before. "I suppose that he would stand that way all night if I should happen to fall asleep over my painting and forgot to—hello! a typical case of auto-hypnosis."

He walked quickly over to Jake, and I was close at his heels as he stopped in front of him and peered into his eyes, which gave no evidence of seeing him, although they were wide open and staring straight into Tommy's. He closed them gently with his fingers, and, placing his hands on his forehead, commanded him to sleep.

"You have had a demonstration of what I told you of the auto-hypnosis of models, and I don't believe he would have wakened for hours unless some

one pronounced the customary word which an artist uses to tell a model of the end of a period. I didn't think that Jake had brain enough to be hypnotized by anyone, least of all by himself," he said, turning to me with a smile. "Now, I will give you a demonstration which will prove that your other theory is incorrect, for I suppose you will admit that Jake is such a fool that he could be made to do anything by a stronger mind."

"I grant that, if such control is ever possible," I answered.

"Then we will take it for granted that he knows nothing of the details of the tragedy, and I will take him into the other room, where you can see whether unconscious suggestion on my part will make him act suspiciously."

Jake followed him mechanically through the opening which we had neglected to close, and when Tommy gave him the familiar command to open his eyes and look around, he obeyed without manifesting the slightest surprise at his changed surroundings.

"Now, Jake, I want you to do just what comes into your head to do, if you ever have an idea which is not suggested by others," said Tommy, quietly, and the model walked over, moved the lay figure out of the way and prepared to dress himself in the draperies which he removed from it, while Tommy and I watched him silently.

The lawyer had forgotten to take with him the sword, and Jake picked it up and assumed the exact pose which was shown in the picture, the weapon pointing to where the throat of his fellow model had been on the couch. Tommy turned to me and shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess you're right," he acknowledged. "I had it in my mind that Jake, as a model, would feel perfectly at home when he recognized studio surroundings, but it puzzles me to know how he catches that pose so exactly, unless that is also under a suggestion conveyed unconsciously from me."

"Suppose you ask him," I answered, satisfied that my theory was correct, and inclined to be sarcastic in my victory. "You have said that wisdom may come from the mouths of babes and sucklings; try what you can get from a fool, and, perhaps, it will make us suspect another innocent man."

"Stranger things have happened," replied Tommy, calmly, still confident of the power of hypnotism. "Jake, how do you happen to take that pose?"

"It is the same as before; the same position I have taken every day," replied the model, and Tommy suddenly developed a new interest in the proceedings.

"Did you pose for Mr. Lingard?" he asked, sharply.

"Sure; many days, me and Georgie," came the answer.

"But your face is not in the picture; surely he must have painted it in so many sittings," said Tommy, and a look of cunning came to the model's eyes.

"He did paint it in, and it looked just like me, but I painted it out that night, so that people wouldn't see," he answered; and Tommy walked over and examined it and gave an exclamation of surprise.

"By Jove! he's telling the truth; those brush marks were never made by an artist. Now how about your theory?" he asked, turning to me, triumphantly. "I surely never suggested that, for I was fool enough not to have seen it."

"And now you are fool enough not to see and follow a lead," I answered, hastily, grasping his arm so hard that he gave a little exclamation of pain. "Get after him, man alive; find out all he knows." My loss of sleep was forgotten, and every faculty was alert as I saw the opportunity which Tommy was missing. He had been so intent on proving his theory to be correct, that he had, for a moment, lost track of the main question which he was investigating, but he was quick to see his mistake.

"Did you know Miss Lascelles well?" he asked, sharply.

"Georgie? Sure; me and her posed together many a time, and we used to hit the pipe together, too."

"Where? In this studio?"

"No fear; the smell would have given us away, but we used to take dope when old Lingard wasn't looking. It was me that gave it to her that night, too."

"What night? Tell me everything," said Tommy, eagerly, and I came closer, that I might not miss a syllable.

"Why, it was this way. Old Lingard he told Georgie that she shouldn't take the dope, but you know that is all foolishness; she must take it—just the same as me. So I give it to her every time when we rest from the pose, and then I take some, so that when I stand there I don't remember how tired I am. I just think how pretty Georgie looks, and what would happen supposing I should go to sleep and let the sword go into her throat. I think of that all the time, until I get to thinking how much whiter her skin would look if the sword would cut her and the blood would come. I get to think of that all day, and one afternoon Georgie tells me that old Lingard is going out at night and for me to come and bring her more dope."

Jake prattled on like a child telling of some ordinary occurrence, and Tommy kept his eyes fixed on his, evidently exerting every bit of his strength to keep the model under his control.

"So that night I came here and brought Georgie some dope, and we both took plenty, until a little devil came and whispered to me that I should take the sword and make her neck all white and red. So I says to Georgie that we shall pretend that old Lingard is there and we are posing for him, and she laughs and takes the pose with me. The little devil he whispered to me to hurry, and then I stuck the sword in her throat. Georgie just moved once and lay still, and then I got scared. I thought maybe they would know who done it if they saw my picture, so I took a brush and painted it out before I went home."

There was a knock on the door and a simultaneous ring of Tommy's bell as Jake finished speaking, and Tommy motioned to me to answer the latter, while he went to the door of the room we were in without removing his gaze from the model.

"Bring in anyone who is there," he called after me. "We need every witness we can get, but tell 'em to keep quiet."

Reginald Crossway stood before me when I opened the door, and, placing a finger on my lips, I motioned for him to follow me. Bohner and Quilkin were in Lingard's studio when we reached it, having returned for the sword which the lawyer had forgotten, and which formed an important piece of evidence. Crossway gave a little start as he looked around the place and raised his eyebrows inquiringly as he turned to me, but Tommy told us all to remain silent, and then ordered the model to repeat his story.

Jake was apparently unconscious of the arrival of the larger audience, and, at any rate, undisturbed by it, and he repeated, word for word, the story he had told to us. We all listened attentively, and, as Jake again reached the terrible conclusion, Quilkin stepped up to him and slipped a pair of handcuffs over his wrists. The model appeared utterly oblivious as the sword dropped from his hand and clattered to the floor, and Reginald Crossway was the first to speak.

"I came here to apologize for having created a disturbance last night, but from what I see here I know that I had no dream, but that you gentlemen were conducting a test with me. Under the circumstances, it is I who should receive the apology, and I will forgive you only upon one condition: that you allow me to carry this good news to a young lady, who will be made most happy by it."

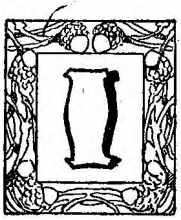
"I have no desire to deprive you of that privilege," said Tommy, extending his hand to him. "I have an equally agreeable mission: to carry the news of this confession to a prisoner whom it will make a free man."

"Nor I, for I have work to do," I added, thinking regretfully of my comfortable bed. "The *Howler* will have the solution of two mysteries in the same issue, for I must lose another night's sleep in carrying the news to the general public."

The Haps and Mishaps of a Night

By Albert Bruce Tripp

The saying of a famous old French man of letters, that "great actions are not so often the result of great design as of chance," seems peculiarly applicable to Mr. Tripp's exceedingly well told story



AM a dissembler. Not one by deliberate intention, perhaps; but, nevertheless, such I surely am. A dissembler is one who seems to be what he is not; and although this impression may exist through no design of his own, yet to correct it he utters not a word, concealing what he really is. Avowedly, I am he.

My friends—they who have urged that the singular adventure in which recently I was a chief mover justly merits an authentic detailing from my own pen, and those, also, who are familiar with the incidents as they have already been set forth—will regard my averment at the very outset of this narrative as nothing less than astounding.

And well they may.

For I find myself the cynosure of many admiring eyes. With undisguised approval all Hillwell looks upon me as the man who rendered an inestimable service not only to my own community, but also, in a measure, to the country at large. Newspapers far and wide have contained glowing accounts of my "extraordinary achievement." One mirror of passing events which now lies before me hails me as:

> The one remarkable man, the preserver of the civic weal, a defender of law and right, at the thought of whom the powers that prey, at the mention of whose name all marauders who prowl by night, tremble.

But it was not so much what was accomplished, as my manner, my personal valor in accomplishing the thing, to which I owe my fame. Another newspaper—one of national standing—contains this bit of sentiment:

> It is the cool decision, the striking cleverness and the daring of the deed that one marvels at.

I am pointed out in the street, particularly by a certain sort who behold in me a very paragon of audacity and fearlessness.

"There he goes, Jimmie!" I heard an unkempt urchin exclaim excitedly to his companion of the box and brush, and then scornfully: "Humph! an' you ain't even seen him before! Nick Carter ain't nowhere alongside of him when it comes to doin' up crooks."

And the two devourers of the five-penny dreadful stared after me open-mouthed, the ideal inspired by their favorite literature realized in the flesh.

But greatness, if greatness it can be called, has been thrust upon me. People are laboring under a delusion; I, in the rôle in which I appear to have acted, am an imposition on the people; and, until now, I have permitted this to go on, when, so to speak, an outraged conscience pointed a shaming finger at me the while and insisted that I make the truth known. "Cool decision and striking cleverness," indeed!

Some weeks ago I was called upon to assist in an operation on a patient living four or five miles out of the city, near what is known as the Bucknam Road. When the surgeons had finished their work they withdrew, leaving me in charge until I should deem it safe to entrust the case to the attendant nurse.

As it happened, I did not get away before nine o'clock in the evening of that day.

A drenching shower, which was just then abating, had so softened the roads that the use of my bicycle in returning home was out of the question. I was forced, therefore, armed with my stethoscope and satchel of surgical tools, to strike out across the country on foot, with the somewhat doubtful encouragement that the force of gravity would assist my progress nearly all the way to the city. For, as is well known to everyone dwelling in Hillwell and thereabout, the country from the Bucknam Road slopes down to the river, forming an inclined plane of no mean descent facing the city on the opposite side.

I took a southerly direction, which I knew must shortly bring me to the sure footing of the railway. I had soon the satisfaction of seeing the charred ruins of the old Babcock Lumber and Salt Mills—just beyond which lay the tracks—loom up in the darkness ahead; but as I drew near and entered the place, with the soft, spongy tread of one who walks upon a rain-soaked and yielding sawdust path, I could not repress a shiver at the closer aspect of the gloomy devastation that lay about me.

Three towering brick chimneys stood sentinel over numerous dilapidated sheds of oblong shape that lay clustered at their feet. Fearsome specters they seemed to me, and the sheds were coffins, huge and hollow, over which they watched.

I whistled a tune like a small boy in the dark, and quickened my pace; for with the strain of the day's work, and unnerved a little, no doubt, by the operating I had had a hand in—an aversion to which I have never quite overcome—I was becoming a trifle uneasy. It was with relief that I emerged from these dismal surroundings and turned east upon what had once been a side track running beside the mill yards and communicating with the main road lower down. The rails at this end, however, were now gone; the ties alone remained. I shambled for several yards along this despoiled relic of a thriftier day, when——

What was that?

A voice—a series of uttered sounds, hoarse, vibrant and sepulchral—broke upon the still, damp air. I could not have halted sooner, nor with less surprise, had I encountered a stone wall. The man from whose throat the sounds came was plainly near at hand, and—a fact that amazed me, that filled me with what was very near to bewildered fright—the voice seemed to issue from somewhere above me. Although it was deep in tone, as befitted a voice coming, I shudderingly thought, from the grave, yet its source seemed to hover in mid air.

Probably I am not in the merest degree superstitious; certain it is that never before had I met with a circumstance that hinted at the existence of agencies other than natural. But here, it must be admitted, was a proceeding that assumed anything but a straightforward bearing.

Obscure a man's vision and confront him with a dread and mysterious presence, and his first impulse is flight—and investigation afterward. Hence I was about to be gone from this neighborhood, when I was startled by a repetition of the sounds.

I glanced up and to the right, where, not thirty feet away, but hitherto unseen, arose the black, uncertain form of a water-tank. Then my dismay gave way, and in its stead came a vision of the drowning struggles of some venturous but luckless wretch who had slipped into the pool enclosed in that stilted reservoir.

I ran forward, dropped my satchel and hastily mounted the iron ladder that ran up its side. As I gained the top I heard muffled voices, and a strong odor of tobacco assailed my nostrils. I bent over and peered through the partly lifted trap-door in the roof. The tank was empty—of water. But it was not vacant.

What I beheld there beneath me made a scene more vivid, far more vivid, than I hope to convey to the

reader. From a jut of rusty pipe a smoky lantern hung, shedding a yellow light on two roughly clad men, seated in the center of the tank, at a box that was serving them as a card-table. A third man, reclining on a bedding of straw, his back propped against the wall, presented to his companions a wan visage as he looked on with weary, though increasing, interest. On the floor beside the box stood a satchel. Traces of food and utensils necessary for its preparation lay scattered about. In one place stood a small oil heater, and near by a bucket. From nails driven in the rounding wall hung a long coat, a sack of something, a tin pail, an old vest, a ham and so on, completing a circle.

One of the players was tall and spare, and I noticed that his movements were strong, quick and graceful. His back was toward me, and I could not see his face, but I fancied it was flushed, for he frequently brought a flask to his lips and acted like one in the first exhilaration of intoxication, giving vent now and then to boisterous laughter which his partner tried in vain to prevent, presumably as a measure of caution.

The second card-player was manifestly the prominent figure of the group, both in appearance and in personality, as shown by a certain deference the others paid him. He was the opposite of his comrade just described in that he was older, shorter and stout in build. His thick neck supported a large head; a bulging forehead intensified the littleness of his eyes, which had a puffiness under them suggesting fatigue; and a matted growth of sandy hair covered his mastiff jaws.

But what fixed my stare more than all else in the place was this man's right hand. As he brought it forward to deal, I gasped and nearly lost my balance: the three middle fingers were missing! All manner of ugly injuries have I seen in the course of my surgical experience, but never did the sight of a maimed member inspire in me the dread that I now felt as I looked upon the hand of Two-Finger Gideon.

He it was, without a doubt; Gideon, the noted burglar, with two of his cunning accomplices; he who was wanted by the police in twenty different parts of the country, yet who, it seems, had never been taken. But why, is hard to understand, knowing that his hand, with its missing fingers—which, it is told, were severed from the knuckles in one of his safe-dynamiting exploits—was almost as distinct a mark as a cloven hoof would have been.

And so the late Hillwell robbery was the work of the Two-Finger gang, after all!

Three weeks before the night of which I write the Second National Bank had been entered and the safe blown open. Cash and securities amounting to eleven thousand dollars were seized. The thieves, by the way, did not escape unscathed, for one of them carried away a bullet in his leg, thanks to the guard's marksmanship.

No satisfactory description of the robbers could be obtained; it was known only that there were three—or more. The expertness and daring with which the thing was done led some to think that Two-Finger Gideon was responsible for the bank-breaking. However, their disappearance was complete, and every effort to trace them failed.

No wonder! Who would think to look for them here, encamped right under the nose of the police, as it were, in this disused and solitary water-tank? In this place were they "lying low" until the storm they had created blew over, until the vigilance of the detectives relaxed, venturing forth only by night, on none but imperative occasions.

And I, by the merest chance, had stumbled on their nest, weaponless and alone!

To understand what my feelings were as I clung to the ladder will not, I believe, be difficult for the reader. I was elated at having discovered what so many had sought for in vain, yet, at the same time, the realization of the peril I would be exposed to were my presence discovered was strong upon me. There was nothing to be gained by remaining longer, so I concluded to

descend as softly as possible and fetch the police.

But before I could act on this decision an unexpected development in the interior of the tank stayed my departure and held me a spellbound spectator.

"It's a lie, Gideon!—you've flipped that card too often already," accused the tall player in angry tones, forcibly shoving back his seat. "I've taken a lot of your magic, but I won't stand for any more. Just pass back the ducats you've juggled out of me, or——"

"Hush, hush-sh! Not so loud, Ed," whispered Gideon. "You've done enough shoutin' in the last ten minutes to bring the whole bloomin' town out here."

"Hand over! You can't gull me. D'you think because I let you hang onto my share of the swag you can cheat me out of the little private stuff I happen to have about me?"

"Here," the other growled, pushing several coins forward. "Does that suit you? *I* know, an' so does Alf," nodding to the man on the straw, "an' *you* know I've played a square game. It's mine, fair enough, but I don't want it. An', Ed, better go light on the booze—it isn't agreein' with you."

"Mind your own business, Two-Finger!" retorted Ed, pocketing the money. "I'm sick of obeying your orders."

"You be, eh?"

"Cussed sick of it."

"You may be sicker, Ed."

"Don't be too sure, you——" Here followed a torrent of abuse.

"Them is hard names, Ed. I wouldn't stand 'em from many men, an' you wouldn't be among that number if I didn't know you'd sort of lost your bearin's. Seein' you can't be cured, you'll have to be endured, that's all."

"You won't have to endure me any longer."

"Umf!"

"I'm tired of you and this whole blasted foolishness of yours."

"You've said that before, Ed."

"You'll not hear me say it again."

"Come, Ed, you are excitin' yourself."

"See here, will we leave together, or do I go alone?"

"We'll all leave together—in time, just as soon as Alf's leg mends. It'll not be long; he can bear part of his weight on it now."

"Hang Alf's leg! Have we got to suffer because Alf was fool enough to get shot? We're makin' the biggest kind of blunder. Should we run our heads into a noose on Alf's account? He wouldn't do it for us. Ha, not Alf! We're running great risks; and, besides, being cooped up in this blamed hole is played out. We've made a good haul—a deuced good haul. Are we spending and enjoying it? No; we're hanging around here and rotting, that's what we are. I won't put up with no more nonsense. Hang Alf and his leg, I say! I go to-night."

There was a pause. Then Gideon cleared his throat, thought a moment and slowly said: "Alf stood by me when I was in a fix once, an' dummed if I'm goin' to desert him—not until I have to."

"We might've jumped a freight long ago," Ed fumed on. "I'm sure we've had chances enough. They sidetracked a car down yonder not two hours ago. Once aboard that night freight, and we'd be out of this part of the country and safe in no time."

Gideon shook his head. "Alf couldn't make it—yet."

"Then," exclaimed Ed hoarsely, bringing his fist down on the box with a furious thump, "I'll go alone! Hand me out my third of the boodle!

Gideon jerked his pipe out of his mouth and used it as an index. "See here, Ed, you're makin' too much noise. That liquor must've gone straight to your head. What? Give you your share and let you leave us here? Who'll go down to the town nights an' bring back what's needed when you're gone? No, Ed, it won't do." Gideon arose and began pacing to and fro.

"You can afford to risk your face there as well as I can," Ed declared testily.

"The face—yes, but not the hand.

D'you take me for a lunatic? They suspect me now. I'd be known in a minute."

"You could work the gloved-hand dodge; it wouldn't be the first time."

"Never! The risk is too great."

"Say, all this is not my fault. Two-Finger, for the last time, will you hand over what belongs to me, or shall I take it?"

Gideon stopped abruptly and faced the other. An angry glint lit up his eye, but died again when he saw Ed, who now stood directly beneath the trap-door, and who, having become a little unsteady in the legs, was clinging with one hand to a rung of the inside ladder, making, despite his blustering petulance, a helpless figure indeed.

"I reckon you'll take it yourself, Ed," he said quietly; and as Ed glared at him, catching his meaning perfectly, Gideon cast a troubled look at the satchel.

Bang! A deafening report rang out, and Gideon lay sprawling. His agility saved his life—Ed's bullet buried itself harmlessly in the opposite wall. As he raised his weapon to fire again, a cry of horror escaped me, which was luckily drowned by a shriller one.

"Stop!" Ed turned—to look into the muzzle of a revolver in the hands of Alf, who sat pale and upright on the floor. Here was intervention from an unexpected quarter. Ed had miscalculated. But this move on Alf's part was unnecessary, for Gideon, even in his prone position, had drawn his own revolver and was already covering his assailant.

Under the two-fold menace of this artillery, Ed could do nothing but surrender.

Regaining his feet, Ed commanded wrathfully: "Lay that shootin'-iron on the box, Ed."

Alf nodded a vigorous assent.

The baffled desperado leered at his fellows a moment in a dazed sort of way, then his manner slowly underwent a change. The transition from the attitude of murder to that which followed was startling, even in a drunken man. His head sank forward on his breast; his eyes closed tightly. Presently he gave several convulsive sighs and broke into a flood of tears. Alf and Gideon exchanged looks of wonderment.

"You're right, Gideon, in havin' me do it," he sobbed. "You—you're always right. You always know what's—what's best to do. An' you come out on top of the heap every time. You're best man—as usual—an' I don't expect no mercy. I deserve none after my treach'ry, when I've played you dirt like thish. You've always treated me square, pard—treated me square, and thish vill'nous attempt on your life—your life, old pal—is my thanks. But you've proved the best man—again. You knew how to take care of yourself—an' me, too. I'm a low, miserable skunk, thash what I am; I'm not fit to 'sociate with straight, high-toned chaps like you—an' Alf. I haven't head 'nough on me for this kind of business. Leastways, I'm good for nothin' but play-actin', an' I should never've left the show business. But I'm not worth much at anythin', thash so. Here, take my gun, which a cur like me oughtn't to handle, an' say, Alf, you better give him your shooter, too. Gid's one we can trust, and he'll keep 'em safe for us."

Ed gave over his weapon, and, staggering to Alf, begged him to do the same. Alf, perplexed, looked at Gideon, as if to ask: "Shall I do it?" In turn he received a wink, the purport of which was: "Yes, do so, to humor him. It is a drunken whim. We can't afford to offend—we must seek to please him."

Gideon distributed about his person the three weapons now in his possession, sat down at the further side of the tank, and, with a sigh of relief, wiped the sweat from his brow. Ed reeled across the room and leaned upon the box.

"Gid," he lisped, "you've ask—asked me to leave off drinkin' any more of the juice, an' I'll do as you say—after I take jus' one las' swig, with which I'm goin' to drink your health." Then

reaching to his hip pocket, as if to pull forth his flask, he added: "So here's to you, Gid!"

There was a click, and a warning cry burst from Alf's lips. Gideon sprang to his feet, but fell back in dismay.

Ed stood leveling at him a deadly six-shooter, all signs of intoxication having mysteriously vanished. "Hands up! Both of you. The first one that stirs, I'll pump him full of lead! Who's best man now, Two-Finger?" He laughed scornfully, picked up the satchel, backed toward the ladder, and began to climb cautiously up.

Poor Gideon! Greater men than he have been vanquished through the wily trickery of deceitful friendship. Armed to the teeth though he was, he dared not move an inch. Not for an instant did Ed swerve the muzzle of the gun from his direction.

So intense, so absorbing was my desire to see the incident to the end that I did not quit my position until Ed, whose ascent was necessarily slow and difficult, had almost reached the trap-door. Terror cried: "Beware! Begone!" Curiosity whispered: "Wait! Stay!" Ed moved a step higher; I withdrew a rung lower. Up came a hand, and the satchel was placed quickly, carefully, on the roof.

An idea then flashed through my excited brain: If I had carried my satchel up with me, might I not now exchange it for the one containing the stolen money? They were similar in size, and, both containing metal, probably they did not vary much in weight. Ed's attention was so engrossed by matters inside, that, were the thing adroitly done, he would scarcely notice the substitution. However, this was vain reflection now.

One step higher he mounted, which must have brought the top of his head on a level with the opening, for he again gripped the satchel in his left hand, as if fearing he might knock it over by some careless movement, and swung his elbow over the edge of the tank. The satchel hung directly above my crouching figure!

Now came the crucial moment. Would Ed manage to get out of the tank and still keep Gideon covered? The silence was broken only by his panting, and the thumping of my own heart. Then Ed's foot slipped. To save himself he clutched the tank's rim. Down came the satchel squarely on my forearms, and rested there.

I felt, I imagine, much as feels the outraged gentleman into whose arms a strange infant has been thrust by its deserting mother. I will not say I felt worse, but I felt dumfounded enough. What Ed must have felt when he failed to hear the satchel strike the ground, but, instead, caught the sounds of my rapid descent, would be worth knowing. Truly he was between the devil and the deep sea. He must at all events make a gradual exit before he could discover what had happened.

When I reached the foot of the ladder, such was my hurry to escape that I tripped over my instrument satchel, a thing too valueless to bother with now, and fell headlong, losing the satchel of money from my grasp. Groping wildly, I came upon the satchel almost immediately, kicked the other out of the way, and took to my heels down the track.

Directly I heard the door of the trap slam shut and knew Ed was coming down in hot pursuit. Moreover, he had hardly reached the ground when a shot sounded from the top of the tank, which meant that Gideon was now also in the race. Whether or not he had heard me descending the ladder and was aware of my action in the affair is doubtful. If so, he would naturally suppose me to be a confederate of Ed's, engaged beforehand by the traitor. In any case, he would show me no mercy if he overtook me.

On I flew. A fleeting glance behind revealed neither of the pursuers, and I was certain they could not see me—or each other, for that matter. But I heard Ed coming. And doubtless he, in turn, heard Gideon not far in his own wake.

Even now I wince when I recall that I was the invisible target that Ed tried

for twice during our dash. Still I am grateful that I was not, as Ed was, a mark for the bullets of Gideon, who, with his right thumb encircling the butt of a revolver and his single fourth digit once on the trigger, is famed never to miss his man. But the darkness was so impenetrable, and the foothold was such a stumble-tumble one, that any accuracy of aim was impossible; otherwise such a number of shots could not have been fired, and no one hurt.

But I had not gone a great distance before the exertion began to tell on me. My gait grew staggering; my breath came in hard gasps, and—fearful thought!—Ed was gaining on me. The satchel impeded my advance not a little. Hence, I thought I must let go of it and make my escape empty-handed. Then, inconsistently indeed, I was vexed at not having brought my tool satchel along, also; what a happy stroke it would be to throw it—a Hippomenian apple—in Ed's path.

Suddenly a dark structure appeared before me, and as I turned aside to avoid it, ready to sink from exhaustion, I realized that this was the freight-car—it proved to be of the refrigerator pattern—that Ed had mentioned. One of the twin doors, which are always to be found on the sides of such cars, chanced to stand open, and my shoulder came rudely in contact with it.

This knocked what little breath and spirit I had left quite out of me. I could run no further. Therefore, as a last resort, I thrust the satchel in the opening, clambered into the car after it, and tottered to one end, where I leaned for support, hoping with a hope born of desperation that Ed would not follow.

But I had been too late. In a moment he leaped in and turned to meet Two-Finger Gideon, who by this time had almost caught up with him. Instead of preventing Gideon's entrance, Ed frantically attempted to explain the situation, but the robber chief, suspecting this to be another ruse of Ed's, or not grasping his meaning, sprang upon Ed as he retreated into the other end of the car, whence issued sounds of what I knew to be a desperate struggle.

Here was my chance! I crept swiftly forward, and, without the satchel—for not all the wealth of the Indies could stay me for an instant now—I jumped out. My feet struck the wet, slippery clay at the side of the track; to keep from falling I clutched one of the thick doors, and it banged heavily shut.

Then I had an inspiration. Like a flash, I turned and swung the other shut, also, but the latch, or fastening bar, was rusty or misplaced, and every effort of my trembling hands to adjust it snugly was unavailing.

Fearing it would not resist the attacks of Gideon, who was hurling his heavy body against the doors with the rage and roarings of a surprised and trapped lion, I went feeling about for a stone or other implement with which to pound it into firmer position.

I found a coupling-pin lodged under one of the car wheels, but with the little strength I then had I could not stir it. Two or three vigorous kicks loosened it, however, and with it my purpose was readily accomplished.

I now felt the joyful thrill that attends complete victory. By a turn of events almost miraculous I had captured the robbers, their plunder and all. But extreme emotions have short lives, a truth of which I became aware when I perceived that the car, having had the only obstacle preventing its forward motion removed, was starting to go slowly down-grade.

Still this did not cause me much alarm, and, after running around to see that the doors on the opposite side were securely fastened, I took my time in mounting to the top, where I began turning the brake. I revolved it a score of times, but the brake gave back no resistance. What further efforts I expended on it served only to confirm my fear that the brake was not in working order.

The car moved on more rapidly, and there sounded a thump, thump, thump on the rails, which betrayed the fact that one of the wheels had lost a fragment from its rim. I then understood

why the car had been side-tracked alone in that out-of-the-way place.

That we should soon reach the switch leading to the main track I was aware. If the switch were open—and I reasoned it surely would be—we should be derailed, and no one could guess how much confusion would ensue.

I jumped for the ladder at the fore end of the car, but as I did so I heard a ringing clank, clank—clanky, clankety, clank, clank, and was relieved as I realized we had passed safely over a spring switch and were now gliding with considerable speed down the main track.

I say I was relieved; but the relief was only momentary. For how to stop the car I knew not; in fact, before many seconds I saw I could not stop it. Even if it were possible, what, I asked myself, was to be gained by bringing the car to a standstill there on the main track? I should be unable to push it back and on the siding again, out of the way of——

"Oh, Heaven!—the ten o'clock express! A sensation of piercing chill shot through me. I pulled out my watch—strange, the part that habit plays even in our profoundest moments—but, of course, I could not see the white of its face. Had the train already gone through? No, I was sure it had not. Then it was almost due! And before my mental vision arose a chaos, the fearful consequence of a collision with the night express. I heard the sickening crash, the shriek, the wail of agony. What fate had ever placed a man in so piteous a plight as mine?

I thought of my two prisoners. Poor fellows, what a death-trap this would be for them! They were outlaws, it is true, but still they were men. And who shall say that one human soul is not as precious as another? But what could their lives offset in the balance against the lives—a hundred, perhaps—that were imperiled in the coming train? The thought of it benumbed my senses.

Hoo-oo, hoo-oo, oo, hoo-oo!

The whistle! The train was coming! I crouched on the lowest step and hung there in indecision. Should I jump and save my own neck, or, perhaps, break it, I thought, as I noted our increasing speed? Should I jump to the ground, and, leaving the rest to their horrible doom, slink off into the darkness alone and unknown? It would be an act for which I knew I should despise myself forever afterward. Yet, could I be blamed for wishing to live? My death would save no one. If I jumped at all, I must do so at once. Yes—I would risk it.

One, two! Here I paused, as the thought occurred to me that if by chance the car should escape destruction, I should lose, by jumping, the prestige of having caught the robbers and recovered the money. Then might I not escape uninjured even in case of collision? In such a contingency, some one else was likely to be hurt, however, and of all things, a physician's aid would be the most necessary. But he would need tools to work with; and for the third time that night I regretted having left my satchel behind me.

Again the whistle sounded.

My opportunity had slipped by; to leap now would be madness, for we were sweeping along with greatly increased velocity. Judging from the added number of lights that shone from the city, the car had already covered more than a mile.

Hoo-oo, hoo-oo, oo, hoo-oo!

At this juncture the train itself came in sight, and I gave a start when I perceived that it was not approaching on our track, but on another that crossed ours at a point not far ahead. There was danger of a collision, but not a head-on collision. Moreover, the absence of lighted windows between the locomotive and the rear car showed that it was a freight, not a passenger, train.

The engine went over our track; on toward it we rushed at breakneck speed. The train was now half-way over; nearer, still nearer, we drew. It was three-fourths over; we were almost upon it! My heart was in my throat—a collision seemed almost inevitable. I hope never again to suffer the agony

of suspense that I suffered as I clung to the side of that car. I dared not leap; I dared not remain; the result was inaction.

Over our track went the caboose; over their track we went—swish!—saved by the width of a hand. I caught a glimpse of the retreating form of the conductor, who stood in the narrowing doorway of the caboose holding a lantern aloft to view with startled eyes the flight of the runaway car.

We now neared the river, and as we thundered over the bridge that spanned it I was sensible of a confusion of red and blue lights in the murky depths of the water beneath. On entering the outskirts of the town I saw the keeper of a switch tower peer out into the darkness to discover what lightless train could be speeding by at that hour. With no bell or whistle to give warning of our coming, we rushed across the streets and under the electric lights at every corner. How it came about that we ran nobody down I will not attempt to explain.

However, our speed was slackening, for the car was now ascending a moderate slope; and my hopes rose with it. Soon we swung round a bend, and I could have shouted for joy; the station had at last come in sight. As the distance lessened I made out several persons on the platform, and, climbing to the top of the car, I seated myself conceitedly on the brake and tried to assume an air of nonchalance.

The momentum of the car gradually expended itself, and it so happened that we came to a stop nearly in front of the station, where a large number of people were assembled. My arrival was greeted with looks of surprise and curiosity.

The yardman ran out, wanting to know "What the devil kind of business is this?" After which he invited me down to make an explanation. When the car had been pushed off on a nearby siding, he turned to me and inquired: "Who are you, and what does all this mean?"

A crowd of idlers and lookers-on closed us in. Questions were raised as to where the refrigerator came from and what it contained. Noticing that the doors were not padlocked, the yardman was about to open them, when I interrupted him with:

"Do not open that car!"

"Why not?" he demanded.

"Because," I said, "you do so at your peril."

"What!" he exclaimed. "You threaten me?"

Two officers of the law pushed their way forward, as if expecting some rash move on my part.

"No," I answered, "*I* do not threaten you, but a much more dangerous man than I."

"Great thunder! What are you driving at?"

A moment I hesitated, and then said, so that all could hear: "Two-Finger Gideon is in that car!"

The brief silence that followed this announcement was broken only by the distant whistle of the belated ten o'clock express. Then startled exclamations arose on all sides, and the crowd fell back in confusion. The officers and the yardman looked at me incredulously, as if questioning my sanity. One of the former gasped:

"Are you in earnest?"

"Do I look like a practical joker?" I asked angrily. "Come, see for yourselves," and I pounded on the door. "Hello, inside!" No sound. "I say, Gideon, hello! Come, it's of no use! You're a good man, all right, but we've got you! Hello, hello!"

Still no answering sound. The yardman smiled knowingly and tapped his head. Ignoring the insult, which I should have resented at another time, I redoubled my efforts to bring a response from the inside, but without success. Some one had rung up the patrol, which rattled up with more officers, and the captain of police. Pistols were then produced, a ring was formed, the doors were thrown open and the captain commanded that whoever was within "Step forth, in the name of the law."

His order was not obeyed, however. Hesitating only for an instant, he thrust a lantern in the doorway and took a

quick glance. Then, mumbling something under his breath, he climbed into the car, and all who had not already fled, crowded forward and craned their necks to see.

On the floor lay a man with an ugly gash in his head, just regaining consciousness. It was Ed. But Two-Finger Gideon was not there!

Tears of chagrin then forced themselves from my eyes. He had escaped, I thought, and had taken the satchel of money along with him, of course. But how had he got out?

This was soon explained. Over the floor at the back end of the car were strewn forceps, lancets, bone saws and other surgical instruments, which I recognized as my own. There lay my satchel, also, open. In the solid timbers that partitioned the ice receptacle at that end from the interior of the car a jagged hole had been sawed and cut. Gideon's exit through this opening, and thence through the trap-door in the roof, was an end easily attained. He must have made off while the car was on this side of the river and slowing up. Yet he might have climbed out almost any time during the journey, walked the full length of the car; might have even tried the brake and, descending by the rear ladder, been no more aware of my presence on the front ladder at the other side than I of his presence outside the car. I was nonplused. Could Gideon have picked up my satchel at the foot of the tank and brought it with him?

Then I started from my daze as another possibility struck me. Touching the captain quickly on the arm, I whispered to him that I knew the whereabouts of another robber who could be taken if we were prompt to act.

Selecting two of his men, the captain boarded with me the outgoing express, and we soon stepped down at Bucknam Road. The race over to the mill yards was a short one. Almost the first flash of a dark lantern revealed the satchel lying on its side at the foot of the tank, where I had kicked it.

As I stood scratching my head in the realization that I had carried off the wrong satchel and had left a small fortune exposed there to the open night, the astonished officers congratulated me on my bravery and cunning strategy.

The look that Alf gave me as I directed my gaze in upon him—a look of expectation and then of bitter disappointment—is one I shall not soon forget. There he was, helplessly sitting, wondering what had become of his chief, his protector and friend—wondering what had become of Two-Finger Gideon.

And that is what the police have been wondering ever since.

A VERY LONG WALK

THE dear old professor was one of the kindest-hearted men in the world, but he was also one of the most absent-minded.

He was recently visiting his newly married nephew, and, naturally, the young wife was full of the praises of her first-born. The professor listened like a man in a dream to her recital of the remarkable fortitude with which he cut his teeth and his truly wonderful intelligence.

At last the dear old fellow woke up with a start, and felt he really must say something for the sake of at any rate appearing interested. "Can the dear little fellow walk?" he inquired, mildly.

"Walk?" said the proud mother. "Why, he has been walking six months!"

"Dear me!" said the professor, lapsing once more into abstraction. "What a long way he must have got!"

At the Court of the Maharaja

By Louis Tracy

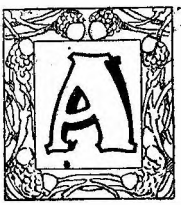
Author of "The Pillar of Light," "The Wings of the Morning," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Gopal Singh, nephew of the Maharaja of Barapore, one of the native principalities of India, is visiting London when he meets and falls in love with Kate Forsyth, a middle class English girl. He is really a person of no particular importance, but he claims that he himself is the maharaja, and in this guise persuades her to marry him. Three weeks later news arrives from Barapore that his uncle and his cousin have both been assassinated, and that Gopal Singh has therefore succeeded to the throne. He lavishes rich presents on his bride, and makes arrangements to take her with him back to India. Kate's marriage has been regarded as a calamity by many of her friends, who realize what her life thereafter must be, and that her husband probably already has one wife, and perhaps several, in his own country. Marion Forbes, a beautiful young English girl, who is an especial friend of Kate, is particularly apprehensive, as is the man who is in love with Marion, Captain Richard Ayriss, of the Fourteenth Bengal Lancers. Ayriss is in England on leave of absence, but is soon to return to India.

CHAPTER IV.

NEW IMPRESSIONS.



T last Kate found herself flying south through France in an express train bound for Marseilles. The journey gave her the first quiet hour since she quitted her mother's house. Was it possible that so much could have happened in ten days? Was it not all a strange dream? Would she wake up, after dropping over a precipice, and stare with wondering intensity at a queer old picture of the Duke of Wellington at the Siege of Badajoz, which faced the end of her bed in Montrose Lodge, and usually caught her waking glance?

The duke, bestriding a maddened charger, was gazing fixedly at a distant steeple. Around him shells were bursting, walls crumbling to pieces, men dying in hundreds. Behind him stood a cloaked and big-hatted staff, whose horses were quiet as graven stone; but the duke paid heed to naught save the steeple. With his huge nose well lifted he seemed almost to smell it. She never entered a fusty church but she remembered that picture. Would it suddenly stand forth on the lace-covered cushions opposite and tell her that the new grandeur of her existence was as visionary as the artist's idea of the storming of Badajoz?

No—these places were quite real. Amiens, Paris, Dijon, Lyons—hoarsely bawled by night or seen by day in fitful revelations, fleeting but genuine enough. Then came Marseilles, the docks, the steamer; a rapt and admiring examination of the special suite of rooms prepared on the promenade deck of the *Peninsular*—and, finally, the infinite peace, the delicious languor of a summer cruise in the Mediterranean.

She was in the midst of English people, but of a different tribe to any she had hitherto encountered. They spoke a weird jargon, an educated dialect it seemed to her. Then slowly recovering from the torpor of too many events she became conscious of a disagreeable fact. If these were to be her future associates they engendered in

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her soul a profound dislike, passive toward the men; active, indeed venomous, toward the women.

In the first place, she made the unpleasant discovery that they never, by any chance, alluded to her as "her highness" or "the princess." To them she was "the maharani." On their lips it became almost a term of derision. By the men she was treated with distant courtesy; by the women, for the most part, with critical contempt. This she could fight with the powerful weapons of good looks and magnificent costumes; what galled her most was the friendly pity extended to her by those whom she quickly learned to recognize as the leaders of society on board.

The awakening commenced during her first visit to the saloon. The ship's officers, not knowing who this wealthy maharaja might be, were amazed to find that his wife was a young and beautiful English woman. Gopal Singh's attire, too, was scrupulously English—flannels, white boots and an Alpine hat. Such potentates often stand in the high places at Simla. The captain, with a sigh—some old friends were on board—yielded to expediency, and bowed them to his right and left at table. All other passengers took any vacant chairs near at hand, for the regular seats to be occupied during the voyage were not allotted until later in the day.

At that early stage none of the others paid heed to either Kate or her husband. The girl might be going East under the captain's care to find a chaperon and a bridegroom waiting on the quay at Bombay to hurry her off to the cathedral. The native was of no account. In Anglo-Indian classification he was simply a "baboo," until he explained himself.

Everyone seemed to know everybody else. The wedded pair, some globe-trotters, and a quartet of German commercial travelers were the only strangers in the company.

The conversation at the captain's table at once struck up a lively note between a staff corps subaltern and a policeman returning to Burma. Natural history was to the fore.

"Did I ever tell you about a yellow 'pi' I picked up in Chin-Lushai?" said the policeman. "He was the lineal descendant of four thousand Chinese mongrels, but after I had him six months he developed into a thoroughbred pointer."

"As how?" inquired the subaltern.

"He found a pedigree in an old copy of the *Field,* and swallowed it. Then he began to grow beastly fat. I never knew where he got the stuff to eat until I accidentally heard that he levied blackmail on all the other dogs in the place. You see, he belonged to the police."

"Anything strong in cats up your way, Pompadour?"

"Cats! There's not a cat in the country. All household mousing is done by snakes."

A growl went round the table.

"Snakes are barred," cried the subaltern.

"I wouldn't tell a snake story for worlds," said the irrepressible policeman—an official, by the way, who ranks with an army officer in the East—"but you fellows ought to seize opportunities to improve your minds. For instance, I don't suppose any of you know what snake-fishing is? You find an old stone wall in a Mahommedan cemetery. Bait a hook with a small frog and use him as a running worm. You never know what you will land. In good ground the catch ranges from a python to a karait."

Kate laughed. She scarcely understood what the policeman was talking about, but his liveliness was infectious. The subaltern, placed by the gods next to a pretty girl, utilized the chance.

"Don't mind him," he said. "He holds the kettle for India."

"Not the kettle, Tommy; only the spout," cried the story-teller.

"I am afraid I cannot follow all you say," explained Kate. "This is my first visit to India."

"I envy you," said the policeman. "What a time you will have! Let me

put you up to a few points. It will save you a world of trouble."

"May I rely on your accuracy?"

"I appeal to the present company. Here is rule one: never flirt with less than two men at a time. How's that?"

"Excellent in theory," broke in an elderly man, whom Kate had noticed at Victoria bidding farewell to a pale-faced wife and two weeping children. He had the air and style of the diplomatic service. The others called him "judge."

"It is far better, and safer, in practice. Moreover, it gives poor beggars like me a chance. Rule two: on the hilltop or in the valley, bless ye the viceroy."

"Pressed beef, sir?" said a steward.

"Go away. I'm a Hindu. Rule three: a native is neither a man nor your brother."

"By the way," put in the skipper loudly, singling out the judge as the most sedate person present, "do you know the Maharaja of Barapore, Tennant? Let me introduce you, and also to her Highness the Maharani."

The policeman thought the captain had suddenly gone mad. He gazed fixedly at Kate until a vicious kick from the subaltern made him rub his shin in anguish.

Tennant, though taken aback like the other men, instantly bowed to Kate, whose face was aflame. The old Anglo-Indian had too much tact to effect too rapid a change in the conversation.

"Our friend here," he said, nodding affably at the policeman, "is let loose only once in five years. Hence he has so much to say that he becomes incoherent."

But Kate was too offended to pass lightly over the incident. Her husband saw it and rose. "If you have finished luncheon we will go on deck," he said.

"Yes, dear."

They went out.

The policeman leaned his head on his hands.

"Who would have thought it?" he moaned. "The son of a black pig! And a girl like that, too!"

"I must say, Pompadour, you do put your foot in it occasionally," was the subaltern's condolence.

The captain, too, looked unhappy.

"I am afraid it was partly my fault," he growled. "I never dreamed that trouble would arise so quickly."

But Tennant, the judge, frowned and sighed.

"Poor girl!" he murmured to himself. "Poor girl! Had she no one to warn her?"

They were all concerned for the woman; as for the man, confound him, the *soor!*

An enlightened purser banished both policeman and subaltern far from the captain's table at the next meal. Tennant sat next to Kate. Opposite to her were Sir Charles and Lady Grandison. Her ladyship, naturally a kind-hearted woman, spoke pleasantly and naturally to the maharaja and his wife.

The girl's alert intelligence discerned that the manner of addressing her had been a subject of discussion. The captain and the other men entitled her "madam" when necessary. Lady Grandison, after a few days, called her "my dear," for Kate, less of a spoiled beauty now than ever before in her life, had sense enough to see that the wife of a lieutenant-governor was a valuable ally, while her heart was touched by the other woman's motherly utterances.

But the distinguished party in the saloon felt the presence of the maharaja as a constant embarrassment. The girl's most harmless questions about the land of her adoption often taxed the ingenuity of the Anglo-Indians, if they answered her in truth and without offense.

CHAPTER V.

THE BARRIER OF THE UNKNOWN.

Among the men Kate liked Tennant. She learned by inquiry from Lady Grandison that his title of "judge" did not mean that he was a Justice of the High Court, but a member of the Indian civil service, acting in a judicial capacity.

"Probably," said her ladyship, "you

will meet Mr. Tennant at Barapore. He expects to be appointed to a commissionership in the Punjab—in all likelihood the division bordering on your State—so if the maharaja invites him to a shoot——"

"Oh, I am sure he will. We will always be glad to see him."

"Quite right. Encourage hospitality of that sort. The rulers of native states too often run to extremes. They either harbor a crowd of European loafers and horse jockeys, or seclude themselves rigorously from all Western influences. Try and get the maharaja to take Gwalior or Mysore for his model."

"I am so ignorant," sighed the girl. "I seem to be drifting toward a land where I must learn the A B C of things all over again."

"We all did that, my dear. You, it is true, are called upon to face unusual circumstances, but the maharaja's position will render life easier for you than for other women who have made the same—choice."

Kate glanced shyly at the speaker. In Lady Grandison's presence she always behaved, as she wrote to Marion, "like a good little girl." But the pause, with its significance, was not lost on her.

"Don't you approve of marriage between the two races?" she asked.

"What do you expect me to say? Is not such a question fraught with pain? You have already decided it for yourself. Why seek now to discuss its outcome?"

"I am sorry. I did not mean to impale you on a dilemma. India is so curious—so fantastic—that I cram myself with information, like a chicken with food. Some of it may prove indigestible—it does indeed. I cannot help it. I am always ready to gorge once more."

Beneath the careless banter of the words there was a ring of defiance. That morning the steamer had reached Port Said. Hardly a woman but was included in one or other of the many parties formed to go ashore. No one invited Kate. Her husband hired a boat and took her and her maid, a wizened French woman, who would have gone to Spitzbergen or Timbuctu with careless equanimity so long as the pay was good.

Hitherto the studied neglect shown to her by Anglo-India had only aroused in Kate a scornful indifference. To-day it rankled.

Lady Grandison, with an effort, strove to emulate her mood.

"I am useless as an encylopedia," she said. "Moreover, I don't know anything about chickens."

Kate went to her own private saloon, a deck cabin converted into a tiny sitting-room. She found Gopal Singh there, rummaging through papers in a despatch-box.

"Lost anything?" she inquired.

"Yes, a small scrap of paper."

"Was it important?"

"Not exactly; a memorandum, a sort of message, that is all."

"What was it about?"

"Oh, it was a scrawl in Persian from Barapore."

This barrier of the unknown began to annoy her. It pushed her back so unexpectedly.

"I suppose even a message in Persian has a meaning," she said.

"Yes, dar-ling. Of course it has. This on-ly referred to a business trans-ac-tion. That is all."

She wished with her whole soul that he would learn not to split up his words in that way. It grated on her nerves. The habit was more pronounced, more noticeable, when he was excited or emphatic.

For some reason, to-day, she was miserable. The maharaja, to her considerable astonishment, seemed to draw further apart from their fellow-passengers as the voyage progressed. In England he was hail-fellow-well-met with everybody. Here he kept himself aloof. He never entered the smoking-room. Beyond commonplace civilities, he took no further part in conversation at table.

In one respect he was quite admirable. Kate might gossip with Mr. Ferrars, or any other man, all day, and

her husband never showed the slightest resentment. This puzzled her somewhat. He was passionately attached to her, and she half-expected a slight display of jealousy at times from such an ardent lover. Anyhow, he might *suspect* her of a flirtation.

But this Othello was indifferent to the behavior of his Desdemona. Whether it was Iago or Cassio who was lacking, or both, Kate could not determine. The fact remained that Gopal Singh was as excellent a cavalier as she could possibly have found, save in one respect: notwithstanding his perfect knowledge of English, he was no adept in the art of weaving together idle words, which serves to beguile the slow hours at sea.

Instead of seeking the solace of a novel, Kate punished her refractory mood by persistently reading a history of the Punjab which she had dug out of the recesses of the ship's library. It was not a cheerful tome. The book absolutely reeked of slaughter and assassination by dagger or poisoned bowl. It frightened Kate. She surprised herself in an odd feeling of thankfulness that men like Ferrars, like Sir Charles Grandison, like the too-outspoken policeman even, were the latter-day rulers of India. Their presence meant safety, guardianship unwearied and unswerving. Her husband was greatly in love with her, no doubt. Would that satisfactory condition continue? Would his affection grow in depth and intensity during the years to come? Heaven help her if she sought an answer from the oracle who compiled this Newgate Calendar of titled criminals once governors of the Punjab!

She was aroused from unpleasant reverie by a thump on the deck without, followed by a child's cry of anguish. Others ran, but Kate was first. A little boy, not a strong little boy, but an active and courageous one, had tripped over an iron stanchion and cut his head. It was only a skin wound, but it bled profusely.

Kate gathered him up in her arms and carried him to her cabin, where Annette was sorting out a dinner dress.

"*Ah, le pauvre p'tit!*" cried the maid. "But take care, madame. Your dress! It will be ruined!"

"Never mind my dress. Give me a sponge. There, dearie, it will soon be all right. Don't cry!"

"I'm not cryin' for that," sobbed the youngster. "I'se on'y cryin' 'cause mammie will be so miserable."

A slightly built, small woman entered —one of those fragile English women who bleach in India, each year becoming a shade whiter. She smiled bravely.

"A scratch like that is not serious enough to make me miserable, Bertie," she said. "Good gracious," she added hurriedly, "look at your lovely frock! It is spoiled. Oh, I am so sorry!"

Kate laughed. She was now fixing some court-plaster on the bruised forehead.

"This is a washing dress," she said. "It will not be damaged in the least if attended to at once. Won't you sit down? Annette, ring for the steward. A box of chocolates will soon cure that bump. Won't it, Bertie?"

"Yes, your majesty," said the boy.

Even his pallid mother joined in the outburst of glee that greeted his quaint answer.

"Why on earth do you call me 'your majesty'?" said Kate at last.

"'Cause they said your husband was a black king. So I s'posed you were a queen; though you ain't black," he answered candidly.

"Please don't mind him," put in his mother. "Children do get such odd ideas, you know. I have to look after him and two other smaller morsels, so he runs wild on board ship. He talks Hindustani better than English, and I expect he heard some nonsense from the Lascars."

"Then you are alone?"

Kate was becoming used to the idea that Gopal Singh's light bronze was hopelessly and irredeemably "black."

The other woman blushed. Her white face suddenly became beautiful. Years ago she must have been very pretty.

"It is too absurd," she explained. "I

am traveling 'first,' as I am supposed to be delicate, but my husband is in the second class. We are very poor. We could not afford to be together. I protested against it, but he would have his way. Owing to the plague we could not get an ayah for love or money. Otherwise we could both travel 'second,' as she would have taken so much off my hands."

Her eyes filled with tears. The explanation sounded so odd, so unconvincing, yet the husband's expedient was a loving one.

"What a delightful man your husband must be!" said Kate. "But surely he can be with you all day, except at meal times?"

"No. The ship's rules are very strict. He is absolutely forbidden to come into this part of the ship. I can go to him, but the second-class space is limited, and the presence of noisy children is objected to, so you see we are quite separated. But we can talk to each other across the barrier."

She smiled weakly. There was something ludicrous in the arrangement, after all.

"Surely the difference in fare cannot be so great?" cried the girl.

"Oh, it really is—a matter of twenty pounds, added to the already increased cost of my passage. And we cannot afford it. We are in the Salt Department, you know."

The Salt Department! Did that explain everything? How Kate hated her ignorance of India and its denizens.

Annette returned with the chocolates, all the stewards being busy.

"Dinner is an event to-night, madame," she said. "A great man, an official, travels with us to Ismailia. The ladies will be *en grande tenue*. You will wear a Paris gown, madame, is it not?"

Kate nodded. Her mind was occupied.

"You must find it hard work to look after three small children?" she said to the visitor.

"Oh, I am used to it. Of course, I missed my Indian servants at first, but after six months at home I got my hand in again."

"Isn't it about time you left the little boy in England?" The judge's scraps of information were bearing fruit.

"England! Poor little chap! he must be content with a school in the hills. It strained our resources to the last piece to get home and back again. And it is all my fault. You see I was foolish enough to break down badly. Of course, you don't understand what people in the Salt have to put up with."

"No," said Kate, slowly, "but it sounds like a pickle, doesn't it?"

The little woman laughed; the quip was so unexpected.

"It is very good of you to listen to my woes"—she stood up—"but I must not bore you with them any further."

"Don't go. I want to ask you something. Do you speak Hindustani well?"

"Yes, for a woman. We live among natives—right away from civilization, that is, I mean——"

"Don't worry to explain. Now, if you will give me two hours' instruction in Hindustani each morning, I will arrange with the purser to have your husband transferred to this side of the ship. Is it a bargain?"

The white face flooded with color again, this time with joy.

"It is too much; I will gladly do anything to help you. Oh, you cannot tell——"

"Now that is absurd! I must learn how to speak to the people among whom I am going to live. If you succeed in giving me even a bowing acquaintance with their language, the knowledge will be cheaply purchased. Tell me your name."

"Mrs. Mold—Barbara Mold. Old-fashioned, they say."

"Come with me at once after I have changed my dress. We will find the purser before dinner and get things settled. You will have your husband with you in half an hour. It is too absurd. Going all the way to India divided by a hand-rail! I never heard of such a thing!"

For a little while Kate was herself

again, imperious, the child of waywardness. And no one can measure the joy of seeing another woman of her own race lifting a worshiping face to her, another woman ready to proclaim that, no matter what the color of the man she had married, here indeed was a princess.

And so, for an hour, Kate was happy and important. It did not occur to her that Gopal Singh would be a better tutor than Mrs. Mold. Oddly enough, he had never suggested that she should learn a syllable of Hindustani.

In very truth, the girl was not eager in the pursuit of linguistic lore. What she wanted was a friend of her own sex, some one less highly placed than Lady Grandison, yet removed from the rank of a servant, like Annette. Having attained her wish, she was glad.

CHAPTER VI.

AN EXPLANATION.

"Colonel the Honorable Rupert Farringdon—her Highness the Maharani of Barapore!"

They bowed. The man, startled out of his habitual cynicism, wondered if he had heard aright. Yes, there could be no doubting the strange title, for here was Lady Grandison now introducing him to the maharaja. With the pleasant society smile that covers bewilderment, Colonel Farringdon, a very young man to attain such rank, held Kate's chair, and turned it when her skirts were comfortably disposed.

That night she looked glorious. The deft hands of the maid had arranged her *coiffure* to show off her splendid hair to the best advantage. Diamonds gleamed in her dark tresses. Her costume was a striking confection of some black semidiaphanous material shot with spun gold. It closely followed the lines of her beautiful figure. In each fold it did justice to the artist who designed it and the statuesque form that it draped.

The maharaja, too, was sleek and well-groomed in evening dress. He was tall and gracefully proportioned, not an athlete, but finely modeled. He made no display of jewelry. His eyes sparkled and his thin lips parted as one who would say:

"Behold the ornament I selected for my crown. This jewel lives and breathes. She is a pearl among women."

Kate's white arms and shoulders gleamed beneath the lighter folds of her dress. This again was a subtle stroke of the *costumier*. Though far from being too *décolleté*, as suitable for a sea voyage, the corsage revealed the fact that the cream-tinted skin owed nothing to deceptive art. She was superb, triumphant in the naturalness of her beauty; and the manner in which she repaid, by totally ignoring, the prying glances of the other women completed her conquest. She was predominant. She knew it; they knew it. What was there left?

"This ship should be a galley with purple sails." Colonel Farringdon had found wits and voice. "She should be equipped with silver oars moving to the sound of music, and your fitting place the poop, lofty and burnished with gold, where you would recline on a splendid couch shaded by a spangled canopy."

"My name is not Cleopatra. Is yours Antony?"

"No. My misguided parents christened me Rupert."

"A bold prince, they say, your namesake."

"I wish I had half his impetuosity. Then Heaven knows what would happen between here and Ismailia!"

"His imprudence was manifested in action. I hope you confine yourself to words."

He looked at her steadily, then turned to the maharaja.

"I have not had the pleasure of meeting your charming wife before this evening," he said. "So you married an English woman, after all, maharaja?"

Gopal Singh started uneasily. The manner of the address perplexed him. But the reply came quickly enough:

"A man does not get such a gift from the gods twice in his life."

"To see is to believe. I was wondering what lucky star guided your footsteps from St. Petersburg to London."

"St. Petersburg!"

The maharaja was either genuinely astonished or amazed beyond further expression. His Oriental features permitted such superabundance of facial play that at times it was difficult to read the enigma they presented.

"You didn't recognize me, eh? I was attached to the British embassy there last year. I often saw you on the Nevski Prospect. You were not head of the Barapore State then, I suppose?"

"No, no. My un-cle died only a month ago, that is, more or less. I for-get ex-act-ly. I mean the af-fair took place un-ex-pec-ted-ly."

Gopal Singh was quite confused. Kate could now measure his degree of emotion by his staccato accent. And the date of his uncle's death! Was it so recent? Strange that he had never told her. By an odd trick of memory she recalled Dick Ayriss' labored explanation.

Sir Charles Grandison and Tennant listened with open ears. But it was evidently not the Honorable Rupert's desire to embarrass anybody.

"So you have meanwhile come into your title and made such a fortunate matrimonial venture, eh? Well, here's good-luck to you."

"I believe all this is intended to be complimentary to me," put in Kate.

The colonel swung round to her again. "Compliments! What a feeble word to be applied to you!"

She laughed.

"How far is it to Ismailia?"

"One cannot measure an epoch. It will be the end of the world."

"And then, I suppose, you return to Cairo? Cairo is very gay at this time of the year."

She met his admiring glance unflinchingly. She wondered if he would have spoken to her so daringly were she the wife of a brother officer and not of an Indian prince. It was nothing new to her to realize that men lost their heads when they addressed her. The method of their madness varied, from incoherence, in Marsh, the butcher's son, to outrageous hyperbole as now. Of course she was beautiful, dangerously attractive, but yet there was usually some measure of respect in their utterances. Colonel Farringdon was warned, and checked himself. He quietly glided off into the smooth waters of a Cairo season, and the dinner came to an end.

Then he quitted the party. Kate ascertained from Lady Grandison that he had come aboard to consult with some officials from Calcutta. She went on deck and encountered Mrs. Mold, who shyly introduced her husband. Gopal Singh was present. He evidently intended to remain with his wife. By chance the captain passed, and invited Kate to come on the bridge and watch the effect of the electric light playing over the desert. Kate instantly slipped her arm through Mrs. Mold's.

"Come with me," she said. "You, Jack, can go and smoke. Do anything but dance attendance on me."

"I will drink long life to my new name."

"By all means. I made up my mind during dinner to christen you. I must make you more of an Englishman."

He smiled. Kate's light-heartedness pleased him.

"I," he said, "mean to make you more of an Eastern princess. It will be a tug-of-war."

The Egyptian plain, which had looked panoramic, illimitable by day, now had an added element of impenetrable mystery. Right ahead the great lamp in the bow of the ship cast an expanding arc of radiance over the smooth canal and the low fringe of desert on either hand. In the far distance the red signal of a *gare,* the masthead light of an approaching steamer, shone like stars fallen from the surcharged firmament. The land was indigo blue, the sky purple on the western horizon. The scene breathed peace, utter solitude. A stately camel, caught by the glare in front, only added to the ghostly unreality of the hour.

"This is marvelous, mystic," mur-

mured Kate. "I could stay here all night."

"A most unwise proceeding," said the captain. "The wind blows cold over the desert, madam. If you remain even a few minutes longer let me send a steward for some wraps."

"Wraps! perish the thought! Would you have me mix this memory with rueful thoughts of a cold in the head? Come, Mrs. Mold, we will keep this private peepshow uncontaminated. Besides, I am sure you are anxious to visit your babies."

Nevertheless, it would have been better for Kate's happiness, present no less than deferred, had she listened to the captain's advice. It befell that the maharaja, musing over Colonel Farringdon's random remarks, went to the smoking-room to pick up gossip concerning that officer's movements. Hence, when Kate reached their suite, she found the place empty. Annette had flitted to the dim regions where stewardesses dwell.

There was already a suspicion of keenness in the night air, so she picked up a cloak and drew the hood over her head. Thus protected, and shrouded from observation, she found her own deck chair and sat down beneath the open windows of the music-room.

That portion of the promenade deck was comparatively empty. Most of the passengers had crowded to the forward part of the ship to watch the illumination of the canal. Within the music-room two youthful daughters of an indigo planter were "rehearsing" the terrific duet which they intended to contribute to the concert "after Aden." A staid married couple—who had traveled eighteen times from London to Bombay—were playing piquet. A few people were reading or filling up pictorial post-cards purchased at Port Said.

And Kate was alone; for the first time since her marriage she indulged in a luxury rare in her life as in the lives of most young women—she reviewed the past. It seemed to her that the events of the bygone month were not so much episodes in her own existence as scenes in a modern comedy. From the moment when Gopal Singh met her and swept her soul with the breath of his fiery wooing she had abandoned herself to the mood of the hour. Abandonment — complete, unreserved abandonment — nothing less would serve. Everyone she knew, every person whose opinion she valued, counseled her against marrying a "black" man. Marion, the only person she loved, was so incensed by the mere suggestion of such a development that she urged poor old Mrs. Forsyth to bundle the maharaja out of the house neck and crop. Then, in long procession, came the varying utterances of men like Captain Ayriss, Mr. Tennant, Sir Charles Grandison, this remarkable young colonel, Rupert Farringdon—even the captain of the ship—men who, collectively, represented the common sense of the world, yet they all concurred in regarding her marriage with Gopal Singh as a moral offense, almost a crime. Why? Was the sacrifice all on her side? She did not love the man—now she acknowledged that candidly—but he gave her all else that her soul yearned for. No woman could have a more generous or affectionate husband. It might be that residence in Barapore would prove tedious by reason of its isolation and restrictions, but how could these drawbacks, perhaps wholly imaginary, compare with the penal settlement of a London suburb, the region of the Salt Department as depicted by Mrs. Mold?

"An adventuress, I tell you! This yarn about a Bayswater boarding-house is all moonshine. Possibly she ran him to earth there, but she must have marked him down long before."

The duet had ceased. Two people were talking in the music-room and looking out through a window at the passing shadows on the canal bank. Kate recognized the voice of the last speaker—a fair, slight woman, with a profusion of closely curled flaxen hair, and light-blue eyes set too near together, a Mrs. St. John, going out to join her husband at Rawalpindi.

"It is certainly odd that the marriage

should have taken place so soon after the murder. Even if everything were square and aboveboard, it was scarcely decent, was it?"

"You agree with me at last! You men are always dazzled if a girl is good-looking and well-dressed. Of course, it is natural. Those are our only weapons of assault—obviously they must be effective."

"You should be the last to admit that because a woman is pretty she is therefore an adventuress."

"Captain Browne!"

It was evident that a squabble was toward and that Kate's appearance was the inspiring topic.

"Is that awkwardly expressed? Surely, Mrs. St. John, I need hardly explain that if my speech trips my meaning the reason is that you should be annoyed by a harmless expression of admiration for another beautiful woman."

"Oh, don't become tragic. Let us laugh rather at the Barapore farce."

"At least the native is devoted to her."

"Like a child with a new toy. But she takes herself too seriously. Wait until she hears of, or meets, the real maharani and the little heir. Don't you understand? The government of India knows nothing of this English marriage as yet. There will be a fearful row when they reach Barapore. The sirkar sets its face sternly against the plural wife system for native princes where English women are concerned. By the way, *is* she English? She is very dark."

Had Cleopatra's asp suddenly darted at the girl cowering and listening in the deck chair without she would not have been so mortally stricken. She shivered with terror. The cruel words bit her in ten thousand places. Their malice was deadly. Could it be true that Gopal Singh was already legally married? Had he deceived her by a lie that was half a truth? This woman seemed to know all about his Indian life, though her malignant gossip was so mistaken concerning recent events. Kate, hardly knowing what she did, tore two handfuls of her resplendent dress as she clenched her nails in a fierce effort to remain quiescent and hear the rest, if aught yet remained to be told.

The man was uneasy, wishful to run with the hounds but sympathetic toward the hare.

"Poor girl!" he murmured. "Why do you hate her so, Alice?"

"Don't call me 'Alice.' I have forbidden it many times. Some day you will forget yourself when others are present. I don't hate her. I hate her display of wealth, her cool assumption of rank, her intolerable good taste in dress."

"You are candid to-night. These feminine distinctions as to what constitutes hatred are a revelation. Are you sure there is a boy? These Indian marriage laws——"

"I am not a lawyer. Were I in her position I should want to know whether or not I was Maharani of Barapore; whether or not my son, if I had one, would be his father's heir. Every native in Barapore will answer those questions in the negative. Perhaps a merciful government may come to her aid. Barapore, I hear, is in a bad way. This fellow, Gopal Das, is really the descendant of a Bengali. He is no more a Sikh than I am. You never know what will happen in India, but, *ma foi,* 'her highness' will have a hard row to furrow."

"Well, I didn't bring you here to discuss *her* troubles. How strange that we should meet again after all these years!"

Their voices sank to a lower note. Soon they went out into the companion-way and began to pace the deck on the opposite side.

Kate's temples throbbed with anguish. Her heart beat so violently that she thought it would kill her. She stood up and rushed to the rails in a sheer physical effort to recover her self-control. Against the iron plates a few feet away the water swirled pleasantly. It would be warm, too, down there in the whispering void. Yet she was young, only twenty-one, too young for the world to be melting beneath her feet. Oh, it was pitiful! She trembled

violently at the thought of death. In an agony of repulsion she shrank away from the railing. The water was black —blacker than the skin of the man whom she called husband, with what justice or right God alone could determine. She staggered along the even deck. Some one caught her arm.

"What is it? Are you ill? Let me help you."

Colonel Farringdon, much concerned to find a half-fainting woman swaying across his hurried transit, almost carried her to the light of a small lamp.

"Good heavens! It is the maharani. Here, some one——"

"No, no," she moaned. "Do not call for help. Take me—take me—to Gopal Singh."

She clung to him feverishly. Here was a gentleman, a stranger, who would leave the ship in a few hours. She could trust him. He would force her husband to tell the truth once and for all. Then to avoid scandal she would go to India, but return home by the next steamer. Anything, anything to prevent those horrid women from pointing the finger of scorn at her. That she could not bear. She would die first.

She found strength to conduct her bewildered companion to her stateroom. The maharaja was there, writing. He was always writing during these days. A bottle of champagne, half empty, stood on the table. He jumped up, amazed at the sight of his wife. Her face was pale, her eyes distended. Two great rents in the black and gold material of her dress showed the glinting silk of the lining.

"Is it true?" she cried hoarsely. "A woman out there said that you are already married and have a child, a boy—that some native woman is the true maharani and the boy your heir. Is it true? Tell me no more lies. Oh, you, who are an Englishman, make him speak, I implore you."

Colonel Farringdon had the sense to close the door. He looked at Gopal Singh, who seemed to exude oil. No burnished bronze ever shone so brightly. And in his eyes were tiny bloodshot veins. But he was silent while one might count five slowly; to all appearance he was the most self-possessed person present.

"You don't seem to understand this lady's words. She says you have been lying to her. Now, you must stop it."

The Honorable Rupert strode nearer to the native. He was in a mighty temper. As yet he did not comprehend exactly what had happened. It was enough that a woman sought his aid and a native seemed to deserve a kicking. Perhaps it would be useful to commence with the kicking.

"Is it to you, Colonel Farringdon, or to my wife, that the explanation is due?"

The maharaja was quietly dignified. If, as Mrs. St. John said, he were indeed a Bengali, his manner showed no sign of fear, and one associates cowardice with a Bengali as milk with a cow. The soldier, though he hated the necessity, had to moderate his tone.

"I am an outsider in this business. But your wife appealed to me. She brings a grave charge against you and asks me to force you to answer. I will obey her wishes, not yours."

"Is it so, Kate? Is this man to be arbiter between us?"

Gopal Singh's perfect English was not now marred by balanced syllables. If he were truly a knave, he carried off the rôle of honesty with magnificent assurance. Not even the anguish of the moment could blind the girl to the reproach in his eyes.

"God help me," she wailed brokenly, "I am far away from my own people. I have no one——"

"If Colonel Farringdon is here simply because he is a fellow countryman in whom you trust, I ask no further warrant. There is only one woman on earth whom I recognize as my wife and whose children shall be my heirs. That woman is yourself. I am a man, with all the passionate desire of a man to select his own mate. I recognize no contract made for me when I was a child of seven. It is true that I was betrothed at that age to a girl aged four. I told you of this. It is true that we

were decked out in flowers and sent to parade the bazaar, surrounded by torch-bearers and trumpet-blowers; that when I was a boy of sixteen I was bidden to regard this girl of thirteen as my wife. I knew no better. I was forced by the laws of my caste to take her to my house. Then I came to England, to France, to Russia, and was educated. For years I lived away from my people and resolved never again to go near them, for my sympathies, my tastes, were no longer theirs, and my soul revolted against going back to a woman who wore a gold ring in her nose and chewed betel-nut. I can prove my words to you. I saw her last year and fled from her. When asked to participate in a movement which would have brought me to the head of affairs, six months ago"—for an instant his deep eyes traveled from Kate's tear-stained face to Colonel Farringdon's set features—"I refused finally and irrevocably, on that ground alone. Then she died!"

He did not appear to notice the girl's half-repressed movement toward him. His voice became wistful, pleading; the grand manner fell away from him. He might be acting. The melodramatic pause almost suggested it; but the realism was thrilling.

"There is a boy, aged eight, I think. I have only seen him once as an infant. I had no love for his mother—it was not her fault, but she was the living embodiment of a hateful system—and no one can deny, either, my right to marry you, Kate, or to recognize as my heir any one of my children. I thought to keep these things a secret from you. Indian ideas differ from yours in many respects. But I could not help loving you, and I married you, as you know, before I became maharaja. It would, perhaps, have been wiser to take you fully into my confidence. My explanation is that I feared to lose you. I was fool enough——"

Kate stopped him with a gesture. This time there was no restraint in her attitude. Between them all they were treating the man very badly.

"Forgive me," she sobbed. "I will never suspect you again. But that hateful woman nearly drove me mad. Say you forgive me, Jack."

Colonel Farringdon effaced himself. He reviled the stars, and the night, and all things intangible.

"She called him Jack!" he confided to the desert. "I believe she is fond of the beggar, and he, poor devil, worships the ground she walks on. And yet, she is going to a native state, with all its intrigues, its duplicity, its lies and hatreds. What if the first wife isn't really dead? Umrao Singh would humbug anybody who refused to fall in with his plans. And such a woman—such a woman! She called him 'Jack'! Oh, damn it all, I'm glad I am leaving this ship at Ismailia!"

CHAPTER VII.

GERMS.

One afternoon, turning a corner carelessly, Ayriss cannoned against a man. He apologized but sourly, for a sharp twinge reminded him of his recent fracture. But the incident reminded him of his promise to the house-surgeon of St. George's Hospital, and he telephoned an invitation to dinner. Some one answered:

"Mr. Glen is on duty this evening, sir. He hopes you will be able to call about nine o'clock, as he expects to be disengaged then for a couple of hours."

They met with a degree of cordiality gratifying to both. Two young men more dissimilar in manner, though intended by nature to be physically alike, it would be difficult to discover. Ayriss was cast in the mold of the smart cavalry officer; Felix Glen already carried on his forehead the seal of the clinical eminence for which he was destined. He was pale, thin and a smoker of strong tobacco. In defiance of the rules he would impose on others he took physical exercise only once a month. Then, no matter what the state of the weather, he went by train to Windsor and walked to London. Having done this journey some sixty times, he claimed to know the Thames valley

roads with a certain degree of accuracy.

"Well, and how is the clavicle?" he said, when the two were seated in his comfortable den, a quiet room far removed from the external bustle.

"First-rate. There is no excessive callus formation. Ossification is progressing, and all danger of periostitis has vanished."

Glen did not even wink. He wiped his eye-glasses and said quietly:

"That girl must be a wonder. Does she habitually talk that way?"

"No. The fact is I worked up those remarks in the club library before dinner."

"Ah, you relieve me! I was sure she was young and pretty."

"You were right, but I honestly think she would understand my symptoms, even in that lingo."

"A perfect cardiograph, in other words."

"I give in," laughed Dick. "If you will come down to my level I promise never to offend again."

"But the young lady interests me. Who is she, may I ask?"

Ayriss needed but slight incentive to talk of Marion. The telling involved some mention of the Barapore marriage, and the young surgeon looked grave.

"Forsyth!" he repeated. "Kate Forsyth! Is she any relation to a Chevalier Forsyth who died some fifteen years ago?"

"It is possible. The date is accurate, and from what I heard of her father he would be the sort of chap to carry that style of handle to his name."

"Coincidences are always inexplicable. A few days ago I read in the *Times* of a curious outbreak in the State of Barapore. It recalled to my mind this very man, the Chevalier Forsyth, and now you come and tell me that his daughter has married the maharaja, who was your companion at the time of the accident which made us acquainted."

"It is still more strange that he also met his wife on that occasion for the first time."

"How about you and the other girl—the heroine of the diagnosis?"

"No such luck for me. But why should the Barapore *émeute* remind you of the maharani's father?"

"Because, when I was a boy in Berwick, there was an old colonel who lived in the next house to ours, a man who lost both wife and daughter in the mutiny. They fled for protection from some small outpost in the northwest provinces to this very State of Barapore, but were fiendishly murdered in the approved manner of the times."

Ayriss nodded. He remembered the hot blood that rushed to his cheeks when he stood in the Memorial Church at Cawnpore and read the names graven in the marble tablets of the chancel—names, for the most part, of women and children.

"The poor old fellow was almost insane on the native question. My father told me he was sent home after the mutiny because of a tendency to stick a knife or a fork into any native servant who came near him at table. Incidentally, it was an access of ungovernable rage on this topic that killed him. It seems that the Chevalier Forsyth was engaged to his murdered daughter, and Colonel Howarth imagined he should have devoted his life to revenge. When he read of the man's marriage he went into a frantic passion and died. I remember the names and circumstances perfectly, because I saw the colonel, red-faced and stertorous, carried in from his garden, where he was reading a newspaper at the moment of the seizure. Naturally, such an affair made a deep impression on a small boy. Young dog that I was, I told my father that it would be a good thing for the colonel if one of his servants had tried his master's Indian prescription and prodded him with a fork."

"I always grumble at coincidences," said Ayriss. "You never know what will happen next. If you could deduce event C because events A and B have come off, there would be some value in them."

"Perhaps the new maharani will fulfil

her father's imaginary mission and exact reparation from Barapore State."

"By Jove! she will have her work cut out."

"Let us hope her life may be more profitably spent. By the way, when you were thrown from your horse did you lose anything?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"A day or two afterward a policeman called here and told the hall-porter that he found, lying where you fell, a piece of paper with some Hindustani characters scribbled on it. The porter has his number should you wish to claim it."

"It did not belong to me. Probably a memorandum dropped by Gopal Das. If I meet him again I will tell him, though he and I are hardly on speaking terms."

"Indeed! Why?"

"I pitched into him—rather a foolish thing to do—but we Anglo-Indians hate to see Englishwomen married to natives."

"India strikes me as a strange country. I hope, some day, to go there."

"That should be easy enough for a chap like you. The army is always crying out for doctors."

Felix Glen smiled. There are not many McEwen scholars in the R. A. M. C.

"I can't afford to leave London yet," he said modestly, "but I have quite a number of Indian correspondents. Just now I am experimenting with Haffkine's plague serum."

He rose and unlocked a cabinet. He took out some tiny glass phials, carefully stoppered and sealed.

"Here," he said, holding one beneath the electric light, "is the poison of twenty full-grown cobras, enough to kill six hundred people, at a moderate estimate, provided it is injected from a hypodermic syringe. I can supply you with cholera, smallpox, typhoid, mosquito-engendered malaria, or any other reasonable tonic your nervous system may require, at the shortest notice. But this is what I want to show you. Have you ever seen the bacillus of bubonic plague?"

"No."

Those innocent-looking bottles suddenly became more awe-inspiring to Dick than so many live torpedoes.

Glen, whose face was now animated and slightly flushed, keenly examined a tube beneath a powerful microscope.

"Cultivation is proceeding so rapidly here that you would hardly notice any change," he said. "Give me a moment and I will make a fresh test."

He passed into a small laboratory, and returned with another phial, which he placed beneath the microscope.

"Now," he cried, "look quickly. I have placed a pin-point section of colonized gelatin into a new tube. The difficulty is, you know, to isolate any given organism. Here the isolation is complete. You will note a thing like a dumb-bell in the center of the field. Watch it."

Ayriss glued his eyes to the microscope and easily discerned the plague germ. In a little while the bacillus—so called owing to the "little staff" or connecting-rod between the two spherical forms at the ends—divided itself longitudinally, and became two dumb-bells; then four, eight, sixteen, and on, until he lost count.

"When a fellow gets the plague, does it go ahead in his system at that rate?" he asked.

"Much more rapidly."

"Could you start a plague epidemic here?"

"I could infect any individual. To create an epidemic, one must have assistance from vestries and other scientific local authorities."

"And why do you keep these vials of wrath?"

"I hope to discover the true plague germicide. Think what it means—the saving of millions of lives. One's name would live through the ages. An insurance office only gives me thirty years. This may confer the everlasting."

Something in the young surgeon's tone caused Dick to rise from the instrument.

"Look here!" he cried. "You surely don't try experiments on yourself."

Glen laughed quite pleasantly.

"In the present state of my knowledge that would be doubly suicidal," he said. "Does this sort of thing interest you?"

"Rather, by Jove! I have seen poor devils of natives dying in thousands from plague. The worst part comes when we have to kill a few hundred of them in order to get the rest to adopt ordinary precautions."

Glen seemed to hesitate a moment. "I am only striving to find a simple phraseology," he explained. "I suppose there is little use in talking to you about phagocytosis and ameboid movements?"

"You might as well address a prehistoric ape, unless you allow me a dictionary."

"I will be the dictionary. Put briefly, I believe that certain cells in the body have a definite power of resisting the invasion of bacteria. It is a pitched battle. If the cells, or phagocytes, are the stronger force, the patient lives; if the bacteria, or invaders, win he dies. Now, as general commanding the phagocytes, what do you advise in such a case?"

"Make 'em fit and increase the army."

"Ah, you ought to be in the war office. That is my program. To test my resources I keep a supply of the enemy on hand."

During the remainder of the visit, Ayriss was kept busy answering the enthusiast's questions on plague features as viewed by the ordinary man. The conversation impressed itself on his memory. He came away imbued with a deep respect for people who studied amebean movements, and he extracted a promise from Glen to dine with him and two other men at the club before August 1 with its Indian mail.

He learned from the society column of a paper that the maharaja and his wife had gone to the East. Once again Gopal Das' behavior puzzled him. Although the maharaja's presence might be needed in the State, it was a dangerous experiment to bring an English lady to India in the middle of the rainy season. Somehow the act reminded him of Felix Glen and his bacilli.

Then came that memorable "Sunday fortnight" when, D. V., the weather permitted a mail phaeton and pair to draw up in front of Montrose Lodge. Marion, sedate but bewilderingly pretty, awaited her escort.

"I am so sorry," she began. "Kate's departure has so upset Mrs. Forsyth that she is ill. She positively refuses to come out."

Dick's heart bounded painfully, yet he thought that Marion's dress suggested the chance of inspection by other women.

"Surely she is not very ill," he murmured. There was a quaint mingling of hope and fear in his voice. He really meant to say: "I trust she is just ill enough to stop at home while permitting you to leave her."

"So we must cut short our drive," went on Marion, severely, for his suppressed intent was legible as a poster advertisement.

The sight of the vehicle chosen for the drive sent a ripple of amusement over her face. In any event, he meant to have her to himself on the box-seat. A smart young groom would have shared the second compartment with Mrs. Forsyth.

They crossed the park. The day was gloriously fine. Handling a capital team, with Marion's muslin frills and flounces wafting a subtle perfume through the air, Dick felt quite happy. It was not a time for a war of wits. The future lay in the lap of the gods; the present was bright and joyous. They were both unfeignedly delighted, and Marion raised no protest when they turned into the High Street, Kensington, and pursued the direct road to Richmond.

While passing Holland House they were nearly driven into a midway rest by a meandering brougham. A glance showed that the carriage was empty and that the footman was driving while the coachman was filling his pipe.

Ayriss checked his horses, and said quietly:

"When the footman drives, you ought

to change sides. You almost caused an accident by your carelessness."

"Run away and play, young man," came the courteous retort. "Why didn't you bring your grandmother to take care of you?"

The footman found his friend's humor delicious. He laughed loudly. Even Ayriss' menial regarded the joke as excellent and longed to answer in kind.

"You are not nervous?" murmured Dick to Marion.

"Not in the least."

She wondered what would happen. She was not left long in doubt. The best polo-player in India forthwith gave the erring coachman a lesson in the art of riding off. For two hundred yards down the broad thoroughfare there was not a cab, a crossing-place, or a lamp-post toward which that unlucky brougham was not insidiously impelled and forced to pull up or be smashed. Soon the drivers of passing omnibuses and hansoms perceived the contest, and roared their appreciation. White with anger, the coachman grabbed the reins and strove to measure his skill against this doughty opponent. In his haste he dropped his pipe and heard it crack beneath a wheel. He strove to whip his horse into a gallop, but had to pull the animal onto its haunches to stop it from cannoning against a gravel-box. At last, when the man was nearly frantic and the whole neighborhood was in a paroxysm of delight at the corkscrew curvetings of the brougham, Marion touched Dick's arm.

"'E's 'ad enough, sir," said the groom at the same instant.

Ayriss soothed his excited pair and permitted the discomfited enemy to draw up on the off side. His right hand swung the whip easily. His antagonist, sulky and mortified, caught his eye and suddenly abandoned any folly he might be contemplating.

"I didn't require my grandmother," said Dick. "She taught me a lot of tricks like those I have just shown you."

But the coachman, though impudent, was a Briton. Moreover, he had never in his life seen a pair handled in such style.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, and touched his hat.

Then the mail phaeton sprinted toward Hammersmith Bridge, the team being now very lively. Dick could spare a second to glance at Marion. Her eyes sparkled. She had a heightened color. Between her parted lips the rows of even teeth glistened in the sunlight.

"I'm awfully sorry——" he began in orthodox apology.

"Sorry! For what? For teaching that flunky a lesson in manners? I thought it was glorious. Did you see him lose his pipe? It fell, and was smashed by his own carriage."

Marion, called prudish by some of her friends, was excited, carried out of herself. Dick wanted to pitch the reins on the horses' backs and take her in his arms. This escapade had bridged weeks of commonplace acquaintance between them.

"Do you know," he said, and the girl's acute senses caught the premonitory ring in his voice, "it does a fellow good to meet a woman like you."

A quick tumult arose in her heart. She was timid, embarrassed. The citadel of her reserve was crumbling. Instead of granite she had builded of lath and plaster. With a restraint that was passionate in its power—so tense that she moved a little away lest he should feel that she trembled, she cried:

"Mere feminine curiosity demands the reason for such a statement."

"How can I place in words a thrill, an inspiration?"

"Am I those things? I have never before been called either a thrill or an inspiration."

"I am glad of it."

There was an absurd content in his impetuous utterance. She felt a delightful sense of alarm. His simple tactics were becoming so marked that a definite barrier must be opposed to them. Her hands tightened as she forced herself to say calmly:

"I, too, am glad that you will carry

with you to India such a novel impression of my qualities. With equal candor I will tell you that I like to see a masterful man. You could not have earned your reputation as a soldier were you otherwise."

Somehow Dick felt that this straightforward compliment was intended to stop the incipient flirtation.

"I think you could keep a tight hand on the reins yourself," he ventured, after a pause.

"Yes. I love horses. If I pass my examination next year I will try for an appointment in India, chiefly because one can ride and drive there on a small income. Perhaps we will meet in some up-country station with a small hospital and a big death-rate."

"Are you speaking seriously?" he demanded so earnestly that she looked at him in apparent surprise. Like the rest of her sex she was an admirable actress.

"A degree in medicine is not usually a subject for levity," she laughed.

"I don't like it. I don't regard you —as suited—for that profession."

"I hope the authorities will not share your opinion."

He flung out the whip in an angry swish. "Why should you wish to adopt such a career?"

"Why not? If a woman deserves to be called a ministering angel is there any valid reason that she should not minister scientifically?"

"Yes, I know. I cannot argue with you. But I would urge you to give it up."

"What? Give up all hope of earning my own living?"

"Is it necessary that you should earn your own living?"

His face was set in stern lines. He seemed to be incoherent, desperate, a man struggling against an impulse that might be overwhelming. Marion understood that in the next breath he would ask her to marry him. She, too, was again fluttered out of her self-control. She dared not look at him. Her eyes were suddenly moist. She was quite certain that if he noticed her agitation he would place his arm around her neck there, in the open street, before the groom. For an instant a fierce temptation assailed her. Among the few men she had encountered, Dick Ayriss stood preeminent. His manliness, his single-hearted words, the true simplicity of a character revealed to her by the intuition possessed by all good women, made him a husband worth winning. Yet the notion was absurd, impossible, so she crushed the impulse —almost, not quite; she would bar the way, not destroy it. She spoke slowly, daringly.

"I have a pension as the daughter of an Indian civilian. It is enough for existence when added to the interest of my father's small savings. It ceases when I marry, if ever I do get married. That important event, however, demands no present consideration. On no account would I bind my life with another's until I am older, more experienced, until I have done something which entitles me to be regarded by my husband as a fitting helpmate, capable as he to weather the storms of future years."

Her confidence returned. Her voice became firmer. She even glanced smilingly at her companion to assure him of her perfect self-possession. The smile masked a sharp pain in her heart, but he saw only the smile. Before he could disentangle his jostling thoughts she continued in lighter tone:

"We have chosen a quaint topic. You will not take it amiss if I change the conversation? Two mornings ago I was unexpectedly interviewed by a policeman."

"A policeman!"

He could only echo her words mechanically. He was conscious now of a lost opportunity. A grotesque idea that Gopal Das, sitting there in his stead, would not have bungled a delicate situation so utterly angered him beyond expression.

"Yes. During my early morning walk in the park——"

"Do you walk there every morning?"

She could not help tittering, for her nerves were shaken far more than she cared to admit.

"Always, when the weather permits. But don't interrupt. It seems that when your accident occurred the maharaja dropped a piece of paper. I say the maharaja, because it could hardly be your property. The policeman found it and gave it to me when I said that I expected to meet you later. It is a message, a memorandum, written in the Skikast, and therefore difficult to decipher. I made out that it referred to an elephant and a keddah, but the rest puzzled me. I read Persian a little, you remember?"

He remembered every word that fell from her lips, he assured her.

But Marion was imperturbable now. She calmly produced her purse and handed him a tiny document.

"It may not be of any value. On the other hand, the maharaja might set some store by it. Would you mind sending it to him if you think it is his property?"

The road was fairly clear of traffic. Dick steadied the horses and scrutinized the spidery scratches that form the Skikast or "flowing hand" of the Indian scribe. It bore, too, a thumb-mark, the impress of a huge, ill-shaped thumb. The legend was pithy. Helped by the context, he soon extracted its meaning, so far as the mere words went. He read aloud:

"The elephant grows fat and contented. When next he enters the keddah he will be slain.

"Not a very important communication, yet a native seldom puts his sign manual to screeds that are of trivial interest."

"A keddah is the enclosure into which elephants are driven when they are captured, is it not?"

"Yes."

"Are there wild elephants in the neighborhood of Barapore?"

He frowned meditatively. He found the transition from an imminent offer of matrimony too quick for his understanding.

"I think so. I have heard of them in the Dehra Dun district—not far away."

"Well, it is worthless, evidently. Will you forward it to the maharaja?"

"Surely it is not worth while. It can hardly be of value, I think."

She agreed with him. Promising herself an hour's wrestle with the intricacies of the hieroglyphs, she replaced the paper in her purse.

And after that they gradually became normal young people, and enjoyed tea on the terrace of the Star and Garter, and did not flirt a bit, and Marion only laughed when she declared at six o'clock that Mrs. Forsyth would think she was lost.

When they parted at the door of Montrose Lodge they shook hands in the best society manner, and each of them knew that a lasting memory had come to them, that they had but deferred the settlement of the greatest problem of life.

CHAPTER VIII.

DIFFERENCES.

The manner of Kate's introduction to Indian life at Bombay impressed her greatly. Her reasoning powers were clear enough, and her board ship experiences had considerably widened their scope; but it was certainly a shock to her to find that however unimportant the Maharaja of Barapore might be deemed in London—outside the magic circle of the tip—in Bombay he was regarded as a nonentity for the most part, and occasionally treated as an outcast.

It seemed to her that in his own country, at least, he was a prince and demanded the recognition due to his rank. She had yet to learn that Hindustan is as big as Europe, and quite as varied in racial and physical features. Maharajas are plentiful as English blackberries in September. Titles borne, more or less legitimately, by the rulers of a few important states are assumed by a legion of petty landowners, many of whom are little removed from the rank of a ryot, or peasant. In Scotland it is comparatively easy to become a "laird," but in India, before British dominion became paramount, any Mahratta freebooter or Sikh swash-

buckler who had the wit or courage to set himself up as a leader of men became the lord paramount—the raja, maharaja, king—of his neighbors, until some bolder rascal broke up the dynasty.

Gopal Singh, it is true, did not come under this lower classification, but the western capital of India was nearly thirteen hundred miles distant from Barapore, and among the Jains, Mahrattas and Gujeratis of Bombay, this Sikh potentate was as little known as a Hungarian prince in Wales.

The girl's first sharp check came at the chief hotel. The French maid was such a helpless person in this strange land that Kate remained with her husband at the custom-house until their multitudinous belongings were sorted out from chaos.

Hence they were late in arriving at the hotel. They were met by the manager, a polite Swiss.

"Dere iss no rum in ze plaze," he explained, stopping, by a wink at the hall porter, the unloading of a mountain of luggage.

"But I was assured at the docks that you had several suites unoccupied!" protested the maharaja.

Luckily, Mr. Tennant, who had already secured a bedroom, happened to note their coming. He overheard the manager's statement and now hurriedly intervened.

"You *must* find apartments for the Maharaja of Barapore, Alphonse. Come, now. Surely you have a nice suite on the second floor overlooking the bay?"

His eyes met those of the Swiss, and, oddly enough, there did happen to be the very thing at liberty, just vacated, quite forgotten by the man who knew every chink and cranny in the house.

It took Kate some hours to elucidate this little mystery. The explanation was forcible enough: natives were not allowed to occupy apartments in the hotel. Exception was made in the case of very distinguished persons, known socially to Anglo-India, but the "ballister-at-lar," the Parsi, the Bengali, was rigorously excluded. Had it not been for Tennant's presence in the entrance-hall Gopal Singh and his wife would have been shunted to some less exclusive establishment.

The novelty of her new surroundings temporarily dispelled this unpleasing impression. From her dressing-room Kate looked out over a glorious panorama of sea and sky.

The Marine Lines, sweeping round the semicircle of Back Bay toward Malabar Hill, must surely be the most verdant spot on earth.

Splendid public buildings and private residences stood in the midst of luxuriant tropical vegetation. The sea was blue as a sapphire. On the distant promontory Government House nestled in a garden of gorgeous plants and shrubs surrounded by strangely beautiful trees.

Something of the mystery of India was wafted to her by the pungent, penetrating, not wholly offensive scent of the hidden bazaar.

During her short drive through the streets she had seen nothing but moving tableaux of brown-legged natives, lumbering bullock-wagons, queer little women who covered their faces if gazed at by a European.

But now, by lifting herself aloof, as it were, she glimpsed the eternal majesty of the unchanging East. Away beyond those saffron hills were wild jungles, peopled by savage beasts and equally savage human beings. And then there were snakes!

With a start Kate sprang into the consciousness that India simply swarms with reptiles. She gave shuddering glances into dark corners. The gloom of an inner bathroom filled her with vague alarms.

"Jack!" she called.

The maharaja came at her cry.

"Do you think there will be any snakes in this hotel?"

"No," he said, smiling more pleasantly than was his wont during these latter days. "I suppose there is little use in telling you not to be afraid of snakes. They hate noise and movement. They try to avoid us quite as much as we strive to keep away from them. A snake never attacks you un-

less in self-defense—when you come on him by accident, so to speak."

"But I don't want to come on him by accident or any other way."

"Of course not. But you are sure to be nervous about snakes during the first month or two. Nevertheless, you might live here twenty years and never see one."

"I thought India abounded with them."

"So it does. But lots of things exist here that are neither known nor seen."

She pursued the topic no further.

They dined at a small table and glanced around the room to see if many of their fellow-passengers were staying there. Sir Charles and Lady Grandison, with the bulk of the important people on board, were going straight up-country or to Calcutta by the mail trains. Mrs. St. John's husband had come to meet her, and seemed to be as friendly toward Captain Browne as the lady herself.

The trio passed Kate on their way out. She noted that, in their case, in common with the other English people present, there was little of the East in their garments or headgear. Mrs. St. John wore a demi-toilette; the two men were in white mess clothes. A number of others wore ordinary evening dress.

Major St. John glanced at Gopal Singh and asked his wife a question, to which she replied with a curt laugh. Kate believed her to be a worthless woman, but there was a sting in her behavior. How was it possible for the consort of a native prince to be made the subject of a jest by such a person?

"Do you know where the Molds have gone?" she asked, yielding to a sudden sense of loneliness.

"I thought Mrs. Mold told you," answered the maharaja.

"She did, but I was mixed up between so many hotels and their queer names. I think I might recognize the place if I heard it."

"After dinner I will send a man round to inquire. Would you like a drive? It will be pleasantly cool then."

"But I don't think it is very hot now."

"You have come here during the rains, and there is a sea breeze. I fear you will change your mind when we go up-country."

"When do we start?"

"To-morrow night."

She leaned her elbows on the table and placed the backs of her doubled-up hands against her cheeks.

"You puzzle me at times," she said thoughtfully.

"I do? How?"

"This morning, before we landed, you did not know how long we would remain in Bombay. Now you are definite. What have you learned meanwhile that decides our movements? Again, why has no one come to meet you? Are there no officials, no ministers, in Barapore State interested enough to await your arrival at Bombay and lend some sort of dignity to your advent? Now, Jack, I am not grumbling a little bit. I only tell you how things impress one who views them, to some extent, with the eyes of a stranger. Don't say that I cannot understand your motives even though you try to explain them. If, for political purposes, you wish to keep me in ignorance, do so by all means. Only I object to my intelligence being constantly underrated."

Her quiet self-possession robbed the words of any hidden meaning. She was expressing a natural curiosity, and he grasped her mood.

"There is nothing to conceal," he said. "Very few in Barapore State knew of our departure from England, still less of our actual presence in India. My friend, Umrao Singh, the commander-in-chief, is aware of my movements, and has telegraphed to me to say that preparations will be made for our reception on Saturday——"

"Will it take us three days in the train to get there?" she interrupted.

"No. Two in the train, a night's rest at a *dak* bungalow, and then over a hundred miles by road. This latter part of the journey will be tiresome."

"Well?"

"The government of India also

knows and approves of my quiet procedure," he added with a smile.

"But why is all this secrecy—if that is the right word—necessary?"

"Because the State has been much disturbed of late. There are always two parties in an Indian State, sometimes a dozen. In my case a small section of the people regard me as a usurper."

"Oh! Indeed!"

"The pretense is ridiculous. There is no question that I am the rightful heir, and the government will support me so long as I behave myself."

"Surely you will behave yourself."

"With you as my counselor and companion I can hardly fail to make the necessary effort. Now, while Annette finds your wraps, I will go and send some one to inquire about the Molds."

They drove out in a handsome carriage and took the road to Colaba, a low tongue of land that juts far into the sea and carries a lighthouse on its tip.

Returning by another route, they found themselves in the midst of a crowd of private carriages and hired vehicles standing on a spacious quay. The strains of a military band playing on the lawn of the yacht-club reached them.

Through a chance opening in the line of equipages Kate caught sight of a cluster of English people on the bit of cool green turf. Among them was Mrs. St. John.

Between the quay and the club enclosure ran a small open basin intended for the convenience of yachtsmen and others. From this point the grounds were easily overlooked. Elsewhere they were sedulously screened and guarded by native policemen.

"Can we go in there?" she said.

"No," said her husband; "not unless we are invited. That is one of the most exclusive clubs in India."

She scrutinized the place closely. The clubhouse occupied an ideal site. The waters of the harbor washed the retaining wall of the lawn. The dancing waves were dotted with native craft, with here and there the white hull of a man-of-war, the black one of a P. and O. steamer, or the black and red of a tramp.

Elephanta and other islands were a vivid blue in the fading light. The heights of the interior *ghats,* rugged, majestic, jumbled in mad confusion by some sport of the earlier gods, were mellowed by distance and painted in crimson and gold by the setting sun.

Over all was the glory of a monsoon sunset, new and entrancing to the girl's artistic senses.

"India looks like a first-rate sort of Paradise," she murmured.

"Better than a London fog, eh?"

It was a stupid reply. Gopal Singh was not at his best in lighter mood. The words jarred in her ears.

Her glance came back from the distant hills. It rested on the well-bred men and handsome women in the yacht-club enclosure. It swept the crowd without—Parsis, Mohammedans, Hindus, a good many Germans, some unmistakable Britons of the trading class, each and all of them outcasts from that sacred half-acre of green turf.

An involuntary sigh escaped her.

"Are these the Peris at the Gates, I wonder?"

"I beg your pardon. What did you say?"

She aroused herself. Mrs. St. John was looking straight at her. She turned to Gopal Singh with a sweet smile.

"People call this the Gate of India, don't they?"

"Yes."

"Well, it is a very handsome doorway. Now let us drive on. It will soon be dark."

At the same moment Mrs. St. John was saying:

"I cannot understand Kate Maharani. She really appears to be fond of that black fellow."

"She seems to be a nice sort of girl," said her husband. "Don't you know her?"

"No. I didn't happen to be one of her mother's boarders."

"Lady Grandison liked her—spoke awfully well of her, in fact," interpo-

lated Browne, who was honest in his way.

"Ah, I forgot! You, of course, were smitten with her, like all the other men on board."

"Oh, I say! That's unfair. You know quite well——"

"I know quite well that I am sick and tired of hearing her very name."

Major St. John hardly understood this sudden blaze, but he laughed.

"Anyhow, she is booked for the Barapore zenana. When do you travel up-country, Browne?"

Night fell with almost startling suddenness. Going back to the hotel by a detour, Kate and her husband passed a tree ablaze with fireflies. The wondrous sight fascinated her.

Millions of insects, glinting with fitful brightness, danced among the dark foliage.

To please her, Gopal Singh stopped the carriage.

"They sparkle like diamonds!" she cried! "Most certainly India has fascinations denied to our gray England."

Near to the tree stood a large double tent. From its sable depths came a rush of men, shouting excitedly, and making murderous whacks at some object in the grass. The horses pricked their ears and became restless.

"Oh, what is it?" She clung apprehensively to the maharaja.

"Only a snake. It is probably quite harmless, but the *chowkidar* always kills every snake he sees. Go ahead, coachman."

After this the broad and well-lighted veranda of the hotel seemed to be a safe place. Gopal Singh's messenger returned and a confab in Hindustani ensued.

Kate was amused to note that the man, a Delhi Mohammedan, was most deferential in his manner.

At last the maharaja explained.

"The Molds have gone. They left by to-night's mail. This *chuprassi* saw them at the station. He says the sahib had received urgent orders to proceed to Allahabad."

"Gone! I am so sorry. I liked Mrs. Mold. And I don't even know where to write to her. I suppose you can find out?"

"Easily, after we reach Barapore."

Neither pursued the topic. Kate regretted the departure of her quiet little friend, while Gopal Singh, who had his own reasons for wishing his wife's knowledge of the vernacular to be deferred, was very glad that the Salt Department was in such a hurry to avail itself of Mr. Mold's services.

The *chuprassi,* after being liberally tipped, salaamed himself away. He found an ayah, and the ayah betook herself to Annette, with the result that the maid handed Kate a note in her dressing-room. It read:

MY DEAR MAHARANI: Although we are unexpectedly ordered to Allahabad, my husband is certain that, a week hence, we will be stationed close to Barapore. I am so sorry we leave Bombay without saying good-by, but if you write to me, care of the Salt Department, Moradabad, I will soon answer, and we may perhaps meet in the cold weather. With love, I remain, ever yours, sincerely, BARBARA MOLD.

Kate smiled. She questioned Annette and learned the tortuous passage of the letter.

"What funny ways these natives have!" she thought. "But Barbara seems to understand them. I must bring her to Barapore at the earliest moment, for when I am surrounded by natives only I shall be in a dreadful stew until I can talk to them."

She mentioned the incident to Gopal Singh, and he was greatly annoyed by the *chuprassi's* duplicity.

"These Bom-bay ser-vants are great ras-cals," he said.

"But you told me——"

"That he came from Del-hi. Yes. I know. What is it you say? E-vil commu-ni-ca-tions cor-rupt good man-ners, eh?"

Again that odd broken accent. Sometimes Gopal Singh was a native who spoke English; at others he was an Englishman with a dark skin. But Kate was tired. She soon fell asleep.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The Mutiny of the Six

By B. M. Bower

Author of "The Lure of the Dim Trails," "Chip, of the Flying U," Etc.

The very unhappy state of affairs which existed when the "Happy Family" of the "Flying U" ranch found it necessary to issue a united protest against the action of one of their employers; all of which was fraught with momentous consequences

(*A Complete Story*)

"EAVESDROPPING," said Cal Emmett reflectively, as he helped himself to more butter, "is about as demoralizing to a man's morals as holding a straight flush twice, hand-running. Yuh want more uh the same, and your mind kinda clings to the subject more'n is good for yuh."

"It's sure unhealthy, all right," Jack Bates assented. "I eavesdropped once, and heard a lot uh things about m'self I didn't feel no call t' stand for; so I rose up and declared m'self and started t' drag it out uh m' slanderers. I wore raw beefsteak on m' face for a week afterward. You bet eavesdropping is demoralizing, all right. But my experience don't tally with your views. *I* didn't want no more uh the same!"

"What I heard wasn't no ways personal t' me," Cal explained; "but it was sure interesting. I stretched my ears till they was lame, and my bump uh curiosity swelled so it like t' knocked my hat off. I sure wish't I'd 'a' heard it all." Cal stifled a sigh with half a biscuit.

"Well, what about it?" demanded Weary. "Throw it out uh yuh—any fool can see you're dying t' tell."

"Oh, I don't know," Cal retorted, and seemed about to forget the affair altogether, from pure spite. "Pass the spuds this way, Happy," he requested, with dignity.

"What was it you heard?" Weary asked apologetically, after a long silence.

Cal hesitated, dripped cream out of a tin can into his coffee, and then abandoned his dignity and let his big, baby-blue eyes travel the length of the table.

"It was while I was having my bridle-bit mended," he told them. "I dubbed around town a while, and then I strayed into Rusty Brown's place. There didn't seem t' be anything doing; but a crazy sheep-herder was in there bowling up, and he was stringing out on po'try, so I took a jolt or two and set down on a card-table, listening to him elocute. I was over in the corner, right beside that little box-stall Brown had put in for the use uh them that's too bashful t' walk up to the bar. So I was setting there knocking my heels together and murdering time the best I could, and I heard some one talking in the box-stall—and if it wasn't old Dunk you can call me a liar.

"I didn't pay much attention for a minute, being all took up with his nibs from the sheep-pens. But he slacked up to have a drink, and I caught a word or two that made me prick up my ears some. Whoever it was—and it sure sounded like Dunk—asked somebody if he was ready to open up the ball and the other feller said, 'Yes, you can turn

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This series began in the November issue. The back numbers can be secured through any newsdealer. Price, ten cents each.

her loose any old time, but look out yuh don't mix me into it.'

"Now that there sounded t' me like shady work, and I leans back against the wall and listens for all I'm worth."

"Who was the other fellow?" asked Chip.

"Lord, I dunno! It takes some practise t' locate a man by the sound of him, unless yuh know him right well, that is. I know who it sounded like, all right. Then Dunk, he says—if it *was* Dunk: 'We'll have to make a grand-stand play and run you in, too, but yuh needn't be uneasy in your mind—it'll only be a matter uh form. You go on like yuh been doing, and keep your face closed. We'll do the rest.'

"The other one kinda grunted, like he wasn't real hilarious over the thoughts uh getting pinched, and they scraped their chairs back easy, and I rolled m' eyes around, expecting the men'd walk out amongst us—but they didn't. They made a sneak out the side door, and I didn't get a look at 'em. I got up and sashayed out the front way and like t' run over Dunk, just coming in. I was some surprised to see him there, but I never let on. I kept right on a-going, and the only male human I seen was Joe Dodson, hiking across the street to where his horse was tied. Now, I ain't any Sherlock Holmes, and that may or may not be suspicious. All the same, I wisht I'd 'a' heard it all—or else not a word. It's plum aggravating."

"Who do yuh reckon they meant?" asked Weary musingly.

"You can search me. If it was Joe Dodson in the box-stall, and Dunk, it's almost a cinch they was mixing a dose for the Gordon boys. Joe's been stopping down there in the Bad Lands with 'em."

"Oh, I don't know. Joe's been riding grub-line all winter, up and down the river," objected Jack Bates. "He's a wolfer by profession, and a dead beat by trade. He don't stop nowhere."

"The Gordon shack has been his base uh operations, all the same," said Cal, unconvinced.

"Dunk's got it in for the Gordons," Happy Jack assured them with mournful satisfaction.

"You must be locoed, Cal," spoke up Chip Bennett, disgusted. "Dunk isn't fool enough to mix into a thing like that—especially with a low-down bum like Joe Dodson. And if he was he'd choose some place beside that wine box in Rusty's palace of booze. He's ornery enough, but he's too sharp."

"That's no josh," assented Jack Bates. "Cal went to sleep and had a bad dream. Patsy, d'you expect one pie to go the rounds amongst six grown-up men, when every son-of-a-gun takes half? You limber up your arithmetic, you old devil, and trot out a couple more."

"All the same," Cal persisted, "that thing sure sets heavy on my mind. For half a cent I'd ride down to the Gordon place and scout around some on my own responsibility. I wish to the Lord the Old Man would rise up and kick old Dunk out uh the company. He's sure a blot on the scenery every time he comes nosing around here. The Flying U don't need him or his money."

"You sure know how to cling to one train of thought, Cal," Chip told him sarcastically. "You must be some relation to the Countess. Why don't you say, 'Yuh can know a man's face, but yuh can't know his heart'; and be done with it?"

"By golly, the Countess ain't no fool! She knows what she's talkin' about, and that's more'n you gillies do," cut in Slim, who had a weakness for the loquacious cook up at the White House.

The other five turned the fire of their scorn upon Slim, and the first argument was forgotten for a time by all—that is, all save Cal. Though he called himself a fool many times, the scrap of conversation which he had overheard stuck in his memory; he caught himself speculating upon what had gone before, and calculated mentally the number of seconds which it would take for a man to leave the side door of Rusty Brown's place and reenter at the front. Also, his memory awoke and recalled the grudge which Dunk Whittaker felt against the Gordon boys.

Then he would call himself unflattering names for thinking of the Gordons at all.

What he heard might refer to almost any one—or to no one. It might mean nothing at all. Then he would recall the smooth, grating tones, so like Dunk's voice, and would pinch his eyebrows together uneasily.

Dunk Whittaker, although a partner in the Flying U outfit, was a man whom the Happy Family neither liked nor respected. It is safe to say that James G. Whitmore would not have had any Happy Family had Dunk been much about the place. They would have left it in disgust to a man. But Dunk had other and more important interests than the Fying U ranch. He lived in Butte, where the society was more congenial, and he traveled much. He sometimes visited the ranch, but never for more than a few days at a time. On such occasions the Happy Family became a morose, silent lot of fellows, who went about their work calmly, politely oblivious of the presence of one of their employers.

It was Dunk who adopted the land-leasing system of securing the range, and it was Dunk who surrounded certain small ranchers with wire fencing, leaving them no outlet—after which he bought them out at his own figure, which was none too generous.

The Gordon boys had been so surrounded, but they had not sold out. When they had no longer outside range for their little bunch of cattle they quietly moved them down upon the river bottom, just in the edge of the Bad Lands. There they built a shack, and there they lived, lonely but triumphant, while their stock fed among the breaks and put on great layers of fat for the winter storms.

The Happy Family had laughed quietly at Dunk, and openly wished the Gordons luck. The Old Man, too, had chuckled at Dunk's defeat, although the Gordon ranch was good to look upon and much to be desired. It lay at the mouth of Flying U coulee, and its hay meadows. showed blue-joint straight, with neither weed nor bare alkali spot to mar the level beauty of them. And huddled under the brick-red bluff that rimmed it on the north—a straight two hundred feet of wind-break—were springs, clear and cold, that watered the meadows generously and flowed away to Flying U creek, across the coulee.

The Gordons would sell, but they would sell at their own price. And their own price was more than double what Dunk offered. So Dunk went back to Butte, and the Gordons to the river, and the Happy Family laughed. As the months slipped away they forgot that Dunk had ever coveted the ranch down the coulee.

Down in the little pasture, where they were mending a panel of fence, the next day, Cal spoke of the matter again to Weary. But Weary was a born optimist, and, though he hated Dunk quite as much as he could hate any one, was inclined to laugh at Cal for bothering his mind. Cal might not have heard it straight, he said. And, even if he did, there was nothing to hang a theory to. It might not have been Dunk at all. And, if it was, it was no cinch that he was really making medicine over anything important. He advised Cal to go to the Little Doctor and get something for his liver.

Cal advised Weary to go somewhere else—where no one is anxious to go—and closed the argument. After that he did not mention the matter to any of the boys, though he thought of it a great deal. By Saturday night he had soothed his nerves with the promise to ride down to the Gordon camp and, if he found Joe Dodson around there and acting suspicious, to thump the daylights out of him. Though what possible good could come of such a performance, only Cal or his nerves can say. It is a fact, however, that he slept soundly that night and did not dream disagreeable things, as he had done before.

On Sundays the Happy Family is accountable to no one for its comings and goings—except on round-up, and then there is no Sunday. So when Cal saddled up, soon after breakfast, and rode away down the coulee, no one consid-

ered it his business to ask his destination. He headed as straight for the river as the sharp-nosed bluffs would permit, and zigzagged down-stream, following always a dim trail. For two hours he rode steadily, then rounded a bold, rocky point, and stopped at the very door of a low, sod-roofed cabin of logs. A white-hatted head was thrust inquiringly from the door and a voice hailed him joyfully.

"Come right in, old timer! Yuh sure look good to me." Dick Gordon did not look like the victim of plotters, and somehow his cheerful, commonplace face reassured Cal mightily.

He swung out of the saddle and went in, and Steve Gordon gave him boisterous welcome. It was a monotonous life they lived, and lonely. Except for an occasional trip outside to the home ranch, they saw few human faces. And if they had seen hundreds every day Cal would still be welcome; for there is a certain freemasonry of the range land that makes all true men brothers at heart.

"I thought Joe Dodson was stopping with you," Cal ventured, in a consciously casual tone, after an hour of gossipy conversation.

"Oh, Joe's like the birds. He comes and goes without no rule. He's down river now, hunting out wolf dens," Steve Gordon answered, and began recounting the antics of a "bronc" he had just broken.

Cal felt diffident about clinging, conversationally, to Joe Dodson, and let the subject drift from him, though there was much he would like to have known, concerning the movements of that gentleman.

When the shadows grew long and attenuated in the coulee he rode away home, calling himself names which would have cost another man a badly disfigured countenance. He walked into the mess-house just as the Happy Family had arrived at that stage of the meal which calls for canned fruit, and took his place without a word.

Happy Jack, who never could read the weather signs in a man's face, asked him where he had been all day.

Cal reached for the meat platter, and replied truly and impolitely that it was none of his business. After that none questioned him, and Cal was grateful, in a way. His gratitude bore fruit in his putting Joe Dodson into the background of his mind.

They were out on round-up—all save Chip, who was laid up for repairs at the ranch, and Slim, who was kept at ranch work—when a rider came to camp with their mail and a bit of news that set the Happy Family in a blind rage.

The Gordon boys had been arrested for rustling cattle, and were being held without bail, pending the action of the grand jury. Joe Dodson was arrested as an accomplice.

"Now, what did I tell you?" Cal demanded hotly, when the man had ridden on to a near-by ranch. "I was right, all the time. It was them Dunk was talking about—and it was Joe Dodson with him."

"Mebby not," said Weary, but his tone lacked conviction.

"I'll bet yuh fifty dollars Joe walks out free," cried Cal hotly.

The Happy Family eyed him silently and did not take the bet. They knew Cal would win.

They lay in the bed-tent and discussed the affair in low tones and with much unseemly language long after all good cow-punchers are supposed to be asleep. They argued whether the two sentences which Cal had overheard might be introduced as evidence, and decided that it would not stand as such. They took comfort in telling one another what they thought of Dunk, and there was some rivalry in the invention of strange and offensive epithets applied in that connection. The four or five fellows hired only for the summer, not being of the elect, listened admiringly and sympathetically. If they were shut out from active participation in the debate, they at least formed an appreciative audience, which went far toward soothing the outraged feelings of the Happy Family.

The next week Weary rode to the ranch with a message from Shorty, and told them something on his return

which soothed them still more. It was something about a picture which Chip had painted and which Dunk had sold, thinking it the work of the Little Doctor. He had been furious when he discovered it was Chip's, Weary said. He had said something to the Little Doctor, and Chip had taken it up. Between them they had let Dunk down on his face in a way to make a fellow glad all over. Dunk had left the ranch without waiting for his dinner, and Chip had a good big check out of the deal.

The Happy Family threw up their hats for old Splinter, and said it was a dirty shame the Little Doctor had a fellow in the East. They'd like to see Splinter win out, just to pay him for taking a rise out of old Dunk. There was another long discussion in the bed-tent, with the same appreciative audience. On this occasion, however, the rivalry lay in eulogizing Chip and the Little Doctor as the Happy Family felt they deserved.

When they heard that the grand jury had found a true bill against the Gordons, and that Joe Dodson was released and would testify for the State, they said little—having exhausted the English language and such Mexican obloquy as they knew long before. What they did say, however, proved that their resentment of the injustice had only settled and hardened into a fixed hatred of the two they held guilty.

Chip, newly recovered from a badly twisted ankle which had laid him up for the summer, was sitting upon the north porch of the White House, when he heard a faint, familiar jangle of bells that set his pulse a-tingle—the tuneful clang-alang which heralds the coming of the saddle bunch. He looked up from his magazine and saw the Flying U mess-wagon just dipping over the first descent of the grade. He threw the magazine down and stood up eagerly. A group of horsemen clattered out from behind a willow growth and yelled greeting. Cal and Weary swung their battered hats high over their heads, and Chip gave a whoop that brought the Little Doctor to the door.

Up on the Hog's Back Jack Bates gave an answering whoop and dug the spurs into his horse. Happy Jack, on the bed-wagon, nearly started his four horses down the grade at a run with the yell he gave.

"They'll camp down there by the creek," Chip told the Little Doctor. "If you want to see how they set camp here's your chance."

The Little Doctor needed no urging, and followed Chip down the hill almost at a run. The Happy Family gathered around them and left the strangers to help Patsy set up the cook-tent. Patsy resented their desertion, and grumbled so audibly that the Little Doctor heard and took the hint.

"I must be in the way very much," she remarked, "from the way Patsy's growling around. I'll go home and wait till you're ready to receive company."

The Happy Family protested, and offered to gag Patsy, but there was that in their tones which the Little Doctor read as polite dismissal. She smiled vaguely upon the lot, and went slowly back up the hill, feeling rather hurt, and not understanding their attitude in the least.

When she was gone Chip turned upon them angrily. He would not have his Little Doctor slighted without cause.

"Maybe you'll tell me what that was for?" he said, with lowered brows.

"Ladies ain't always welcome," Weary told him placidly. "Come on into the bed-tent, out uh the sun, Splinter. You look hot."

"Well?" Chip stood, straight and angry, just inside the doorway; his gray hat crown grazed the ridge-pole.

"Aw, lay down here and don't git on your war paint," urged Weary. "You couldn't lick the whole bunch if you tried. Old Dunk's headed this way, and that's what. He came in on the train, just before we pulled out uh Dry Lake. Shorty cut out a gentle horse for him to ride out. When we left he was trying to rustle a saddle. You're real pleased, ain't yuh?"

"Sure," said Chip ironically, forget-

ting his anger at the Happy Family. He came over and sprawled beside Weary on the grass. The Happy Family watched him curiously. They had been telling themselves, all the way out, that they could see Dunk's finish if he went up against Chip. They felt that the quarrel between them was ripe for a climax, and gloated that there would sure be a time when Dunk struck the ranch. They judged Chip's intentions by his silence on the subject, which was certainly ominous. For that reason they had not wanted the Little Doctor around to spoil the fun.

"There seems t' be a general round-up of or'nery cusses in town t'day," Jack Bates informed him. "Joe Dodson was hanging around the saloons, calling up the house and trying t' square himself. I sure was amused at the look of pain he wore when a bunch of us strung into Rusty Brown's. Joe was there ahead of us, and he rares up with a smile on his face like a traveling rat. 'Come on, boys—have one on me!' he sings out, jovial as anything. We didn't do a thing but give him the bad-eye, and turn around and file out again. I could hardly keep m' hands off'n him."

"You fellows didn't hear what he said, I guess," spoke up a stranger who was not remarkable for his loquacity. He seemed always to wait until a subject had been well threshed out before adding a word. "I was the last one out. Joe kinda sneered and says to Rusty: 'They're sure rollicky and sassy, that Flying U bunch—but it don't cut no lemons with me. I'll be unrollin' my soogans in their bed-tent before sundown.' "

There was a space when no one spoke.

"The devil he will!" snorted Cal, at last.

"He'll sure have plenty of room," said Weary softly.

"He can have my place," offered Jack Bates generously.

"Well, it ain't my fight," remarked one of the strangers, "but I'd sure make rough house for him, for a few minutes."

"And if Shorty kept him on and fired you, what about it?" fleered Cal.

"Shorty wouldn't," Jack assured him. "He'd never dare."

"Joe, he's a real wolf," murmured Weary, with his eyes closed. "He talks heap big, but I notice he didn't tackle Shorty for no job. I guess he don't unroll his soogans in this old tent *to-night*. At the rate he was tanking up when I seen him last he'll likely sleep under Rusty's pool-table."

"Betche, if he comes out here with Dunk, he'll go t' work," prophesied Happy Jack, with his usual intuition.

"Happy, if you say the like of that again, I'll hand yuh a bunch uh trouble that won't need no magnifying-glass," Cal promised.

"As the Countess says," interposed Chip, "Yuh don't never want t' cross no bridge till yuh git t' where it is, an' then the chances is yuh can ford it if yuh want to!"

"Oh, say!" cried Cal, "what about that yarn that the Countess has got a fortune left to her? Anything in it, Chip?"

"I'd tell a man!" said Chip. "She's sure lucky, that old girl. She——"

Every man in the tent rose silently to his elbow and listened. The grating voice of Dunk came to them in the silence.

"Well, I have hired him, and I shall expect you to put him to work. I have a perfect right to hire men, you know—though I don't trouble to exercise it very often, I own. It would be better for the ranch if I did, I think. There would not be so many fellows about who think they own the place."

"But the boys won't stand for it," Shorty protested. "If I'm any judge, they won't work for him a day."

"Who is supposed to be running this outfit?" inquired Dunk politely.

Shorty growled an oath and subsided into mutterings.

"As I have said," went on Dunk smoothly, "the man should not be ostracized because he was found in bad company. There was absolutely no evidence that he was concerned in the rustling—on the contrary, he will prove

a very valuable witness for us. When he asked me for work it occurred to me that it would be a good way to keep him in sight, so that we will be able to get him when we want him. I think he is honest, and I really felt sorry for the fellow. I want you to give him a chance, and I shall expect you to see that he gets fair treatment. There is too much of favoritism shown among the men as it is. I object to forty-dollar men being treated like honored guests."

"That's you, Splinter," whispered Weary in Chip's ear.

"Well," temporized Shorty sullenly, "I s'pose I'll have to put him on, but I won't guarantee that he'll stay."

They heard Dunk walk away toward the cook-tent, where Joe evidently was waiting.

"Well, I call that darned rank work," muttered Cal, and began to roll up his bed. "Why the devil didn't Shorty tell him we're all onto him bigger than a wolf? I hope somebody plugs me with lead if I ever turn another cow for the outfit."

There was a general movement in the tent. Every man—save Chip—rolled up his bed and tied it securely, with savage jerks. Long practise had made them adepts in the art, and shaved time down to a minimum. Chip did not move, except out of the way of the others, for he had no bed to roll. He was wishing just then that he had. There is a certain grim pleasure in open rebellion for a principle. The men stood up and looked at one another.

"Come on," said Weary, grinning wickedly. "I head the bunch. We'll give Dunk's man a clear tent."

Dunk's jaw dropped when he turned at a shuffling sound, and saw the bed-tent spewing determined looking cow-punchers, each one dragging behind him a tarpaulin-covered roll of bedding. He counted them mechanically. With the strangers there were ten.

"I guess I'm ready for my time, Shorty," announced Weary, with a mildness that belied him much. He threw his roll upon the ground and stood aside for the others.

"Same here," said Jack Bates, and threw his roll down beside Weary's.

"Same here," echoed the eight, adding their beds to the pile upon the grass. The strangers could not resist the temptation to strike with the Happy Family, though theirs was merely a sympathetic demonstration. Also, they knew it would be well to side with the Happy Family and save future painful developments.

Shorty stifled an appreciative grin and looked at Dunk. "I guess your man will have heaps uh room," he remarked placidly.

Dunk's eyes traveled slowly over the silent group. He did not quite like the looks of them, but he had a great, abiding faith in himself—had Dunk. He had one fatal weakness; he considered himself a born diplomat. And when a man labors under that hallucination trouble is his portion.

"What is the trouble, boys?" he asked them blandly. To show that he was quite at his ease, he pared the end off a cigar and lit it, studiously calm. This to prove to himself how diplomatic he could be.

"Oh, nothing," Weary answered evenly. "We're ready to quit, is all."

"You have a reason, surely. What is it?" Dunk puffed at the cigar with mathematical regularity.

"Well, speaking for myself," began Weary slowly, "I don't work for no outfit that will hire a——" Since ladies may read this chronicle I must refrain from finishing that sentence as Weary finished it. It is enough to say that when he was through speaking, Dunk's face was red and his eyes furious, and the boys approved audibly. Also, Joe Dodson was facing the crowd in an attitude which would have been warlike if it had dared.

Patsy, hearing something of what passed, appeared in the door of the cook-tent, frying-pan in hand. His round eyes wandered from the boys to the piled-up bedding.

"By cosh, I go mit you!" he cried suddenly, casting the frying-pan far from him. "I don'd cook no grub mit

no Joe Dodson, I tells you dose!" He jerked off his apron, rolled it into a tight little ball, and sent it to keep the frying-pan company. Then he rolled down his sleeves and awaited developments.

Joe, who could not hope to fight the ten with any chance of success, contented himself with asserting, to Dunk, that a whole lot of Flying U cowpunchers needed killing off. But when Cal and Weary advised him cheerfully to "start right in killing," he abandoned the argument.

Dunk's eyes fell upon Chip, standing quietly at one side. Perhaps he mistook Chip's passive attitude for timidity. He remembered that Chip had not dragged a bed after him when he came from the tent, and foolishly concluded that Chip's "soogans" were inside.

"Joe will have at least one congenial companion," he sneered, forgetting his diplomacy. "Our friend the artist evidently does not despise a forty-dollar job. One seldom finds genius and thrift so linked together—but perhaps the senator did not prove so gullible, after all."

Chip pinched off the lighted end of his cigarette from habit born of long riding over the range land, where carelessness with fire is a crime, and then tossed the cigarette into the creek; took two swift strides and made a quick move. Dunk fell over the pile of bedding and lay in a most undignified posture, with his head down and his feet waving impotently in the air. Well-shod feet they were, and the Happy Family gazed at them with grave interest.

Chip's boot helpfully sought a good target and landed with effect. Dunk rolled off the bedding.

"By golly, yuh got t' count me in on this, whatever it is!" cried a voice behind them, and Slim was added to the mutiny.

Dunk scrambled to his feet, and immediately sprawled again in the grass.

"Get up!" commanded Chip, grinning ever so little. He was enjoying himself very much. He had dreamed of such a reckoning, but it had been a dream he never thought would be realized.

Dunk did not get up. He lay upon his left side, and looked up craftily, with the snarl of a wolf on his lips. His right hand stole backward—but he reckoned without the boot. It was there, just where it was most needed, and Dunk had two raw knuckles to remember it by. When one would draw a gun, one should do it quickly. Something splashed in the creek, and lay gleaming in the shallows, where it was soon surrounded by an investigative school of tiny minnows.

"Now, wouldn't that rattle your slats?" murmured Weary to the others.

The Happy Family nodded, looked at one another inquiringly, and made a forward move. They stooped, lifted, sang out a cheery "Yo, heave ho!" and something else splashed in the creek—a mighty splash, which drove the minnows scurrying, with panicky flirt of tails, to hide under the willow roots.

"Thanks," said Chip, giving the Happy Family a brief glance of approval. "I was wishing you would." He reached into the shallows and recovered the silver-mounted pistol, with Dunk's initials engraved intricately upon the butt. He dried it carefully with his handkerchief and delivered a short, impromptu address which was a masterpiece of biting truth and picturesque profanity. Like Weary, he left Dunk in no doubt as to his meaning.

Shorty, Joe, Patsy, the strangers and the rest of the mutinous six lined up on the bank and listened solemnly. Dunk wisely remained in the creek, which, as he sat, came just to his shoulders, and listened also, having no choice.

The horse-wrangler was inconsolable that night, because his duties had prevented his presence at this oration, which held, in concentrated form, all the bitterness against Dunk which the Happy Family had nursed for three years.

The speech ended in a brilliant burst of verbal pyrotechnics. Weary suddenly conceived an appropriate finale. He stepped quietly to one side, seized the unsuspecting Joe Dodson by the

shoulders, and with the aid of his foot sent him headlong into the creek, to the further discomfiture of the minnows. The crowd gave a shout of approval.

"What goes next—the mess-wagon?"

Shorty, Patsy, the strangers and the mutinous six wheeled with a start, to discover the Old Man sitting calmly by on his little gray pacer. There was a twinkle in the Old Man's eyes, but he became instantly grave when they faced him.

"What's the row here?" he demanded peremptorily. He had been looking after the ditches in the lower meadow, and rode down to camp to hear the news of the range. He arrived in time to see Dunk land in the creek, and had listened to Chip's maiden speech with considerable amusement, if the truth were known.

Dunk crawled up the bank, very wet and very much relieved at the presence of his partner. The Old Man could handle these howling savages better than he, after all. He stood, dripping and wrathful, and explained how he came to hire Joe. He did not fail to state that a man should not be ostracized for being found in bad company, and that he felt sorry for Joe.

The Old Man listened, and looked back. He eyed the Happy Family from under shaggy brows. "I hope you fellows ain't been makin' dog-goned fools uh yourselves," he said tentatively. As a general thing, he had always found his Happy Family amenable to reason.

"Not any to speak of," retorted Weary sweetly. "If Joe ain't blowed in what he got for caching Flying U hides around the Gordon place, he can get along fine without a job for awhile. The need uh work didn't harrow his feelings none last winter."

Dunk wrung out his handkerchief and wiped his face with it. "Who's been stuffing you with lies, you fools?" he snarled, an anxious note in his voice.

"Oh, I don't know as it's any lie," drawled Weary, blowing upon his cigarette book to single out a leaf. "I guess you didn't cook up a deal with Joe—eh? I don't suppose yuh ever seen him till yuh got plumb full uh sympathy to-day, and brought him out here t' bed down with white men—to which the white men has certain strenuous objections."

"It's all a lie," repeated Dunk with emphasis. "I suppose," he added, "the whisky inside Joe has set him gabbling—and you were fools enough to believe his drunken drivelings."

"Look here, now! That there's something I won't stand fer. Yuh got me out here into a scrape, and now yuh try t' clear yourself by knockin' me. I ain't been talkin' none, but I *could* tell a lot uh things you'd hate t' face. An' anyway, yuh lied t' me. Yuh said yuh was only goin' t' make a bluff at the Gordons, an' drive 'em out!"

The Old Man climbed rheumatically down from his saddle and confronted them. "Dog-gone it, this here thing has got t' be cleared up right now! They's been something in the Gordon business that didn't look right t' me, all along. I'll push a rustler as far as the next one, but I ain't in with no dirty work. Joe Dodson, if yuh got anything t' tell, dog-gone it, I want yuh t' out with it! I'll see 't Dunk don't eat yuh up whilest you're havin' your say."

"Well, I'm dead sick uh the hull thing, anyway," cried Joe recklessly. "Dunk Whittaker come t' me last winter, an' told me how he'd got a soft thing fer me, and wanted me t' help him git the Gordons out uh the country. He said they was rustlin' calves, but he couldn't never ketch 'em at it. He hired me t' stop with 'em an' try and ketch 'em at some shady work. After a month er so I sees him one day and tells him I couldn't see nothing wrong, so then he gets me t' cache some hides in the rocks and fix things so he could scarce 'em good. He said he'd have 'em arrested, and then let 'em off if they'd quit the country. I was t' git five hundred dollars—but I ain't never seen but fifty of it yet. Then he gits me this job—and things don't look good t' me here, neither."

The Happy Family grinned at him in a way that made him squirm.

"It's a lie," repeated Dunk, parrot-like. "You're drunk, Joe."

"Mebby I was, but that there dip kinda sobered me some," he retorted.

The Happy Family laughed outright.

"What you say carries no weight whatever with thinking men. I demand proof."

"As to proof," remarked Cal, "the boys here can tell yuh that I come home one night last spring and told 'em about hearing some conversation in Rusty's box-stall about this same deal."

"Is that right, Cal?" asked the Old Man, looking at him queerly.

"That's right," affirmed Cal gravely. Then to prove how right it was, he repeated the fragment of conversation word for word—only he did not say that he was doubtful of the speakers. What was the use, when they all knew who they were?

Dunk glared impotently upon him, and turned sullen.

The Old Man sat down upon the pile of bedding and proceeded thoughtfully to fill his pipe, as though that were the most important business on the ranch just then. When it was done to his satisfaction he fumbled in his vest pocket for a match, his eyes fixed reflectively upon Dunk's horse. Dunk, by the way, was busying himself with the cinch.

"Yuh must 'a' rode him pretty fast fer such a hot day," he remarked, "but them pintoes are tough; I guess he's good for another twenty mile—and the sun's getting low, so it'll be cooler. Too bad yuh got t' ride in them wet clothes, Dunk, but I guess they'll be dry by the time yuh git there. I want t' see yuh up at the house b'fore yuh start. I'm going t' buy out your interest in this outfit."

The Happy Family vented their feelings in a whoop that could be heard a mile. The Old Man gave his full attention to his pipe, and appeared deaf. After a minute he looked around the group, and there was a paternal glow in his eyes when they rested upon the Happy Family, standing close together.

"Ain't these beds aired all they need, boys? Looks like you'd put 'em in the tent, where they b'long. Who throwed your fryin'-pan in the crick, Patsy?"

Patsy grinned and went down after it and his apron, which had lodged in a willow.

The Old Man smoked meditatively until he discovered Joe Dodson hovering apprehensively on the outskirts of the group.

"Joe, yuh better hit the high places. And if I was you I wouldn't stop till I was clean over the line. That'll be dog-goned tough on the Canucks, but there ain't room over here for gents uh your caliber."

Five minutes later a lone horseman climbed the grade, leading behind him a tired packhorse which bore meekly a cowboy's "soogans." Down below, the Happy Family shouted derisive farewells as they dragged rolls of bedding into the tent which had sheltered them through many days of wandering.

HIS FINAL INDUCEMENT

"SPEAKING of that lawsuit of which you told us the other day, I have a story of that kind which will beat it," said the lawyer. "I had a case in a nearby parish in which a man was arrested for stealing a cow. He was held over for the grand jury on preliminary hearing, and he sent for me. His letter ran something like this:

"Dere Sir—I am in Jale and the man sayes I am likely to goe to the pen. I did not steel the cowe and I am purfuctly innercent. Pleese gete me out, if it are the last act of yure life. This is not a nice place. Pleese do get me out. I think I can pay you sum day. I did not steel thes cows. Tell the Judge that. And if You get me off free I am willing to do all I Can for you. If you do I will Give you the cowe. Yours truly, Bill Smith."

A Plunge Into the Unknown

By Richard Marsh

Author of "The Ape and the Diamond," "The Whistle of Fate," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

On learning that his fiancée, Dolly Lee, is false to him, George Otway, millionaire, becomes disgusted with life, and conceives the idea of trading clothes and identities with a poor wretch named Jacob Gunston, who has murdered his faithless sweetheart and is determined on suicide. This he does, and when, later, Gunston's body is found, clad in the habiliments of the millionaire, it is identified as that of Otway. The latter, dressed in the dead man's garments, has several narrow escapes from arrest. From the last of these he is aided by a man who afterwards drugs him, and when he recovers consciousness he finds that he has been shipped as a sailor on the *Queen of the Seas*, a vessel owned by a party of South American revolutionists under the leadership of a fat, vulgar woman known as Donna Luisa. Otway announces who he really is, whereupon he is well treated, and the woman finally tries to coerce him into marrying her. Before he gives her a definite answer he is secretly made a prisoner by the other revolutionists, who fear his influence, and cast adrift in a small boat in company with Miss Thornton, a young girl whose presence is not desired on board.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ISLAND.

OTWAY only had to row straight on to succeed in finding a landing-place. He beached the boat on level, sandy ground, on which the pair had no difficulty in dragging it up beyond what appeared to be the reach of the waves. At that point the cliffs declined so as to form a natural valley. Together they moved away from the sea. Tropical vegetation came right down to the point where the shore met the land, growing so closely as to form what seemed, at first sight, to be an impenetrable thicket. When they perceived this to be the case, they paused to consider the situation, Otway being the first to speak.

"This doesn't look very inviting. Which is the way in, I wonder! Can you see any sign of a track? Not much promise of civilization there."

"No; but there's promise of mystery. As for track, I don't believe there is one. We shall have to cut one with our pocket-knives."

"I presume that the fact that I don't possess a pocket-knife doesn't count. I fancy that the trees don't seem quite so dense on the cliff on our right. Let's try a little exploration in that direction."

He led; she followed. At the point to which he had referred the growth was less dense. It was possible, but only just possible, to force a way through the trees, shrubs, creepers, climbing plants, which had become so interlaced as to form a kind of network. So dense was the foliage overhead that where they were all was in strange, mysterious shadow. Progression involved no slight labor. The heat was great. There arose an unpleasant odor from the rank vegetation. Before they had gone forward many minutes Miss Thornton began to have enough of it.

"Shall we ever find an end to this dreadful place? Wouldn't you like a little fresh air? We might be miles away from the sea. I can hardly breathe."

"It is a trifle sultry. It reminds me of an orchid-house, only it's a great deal closer."

"I don't like orchid-houses, thank you, nor the atmosphere of any kind of greenhouse. If you please, I'd rather go back, if you don't mind, to where we can taste the fresh air from the sea." He hesitated, as if doubting what to do. "Well—shall I lead the way back, or will you?"

"You, by all means, if you know which is the way back; I'm beginning to wonder if I do."

"Mr. Otway!"

"I'm afraid that we haven't been very wise; and that I, in particular, have been a first-class fool. A maze is nothing compared to this; we ought to have looked out for landmarks. In which direction would you say the sea was?"

"I haven't the least idea." She was looking about her with startled eyes. "You don't mean to say that we're lost in this dreadful place?"

"We can scarcely be lost; it's only a little bewildering, that's all. I propose that we press on."

"Then press on; but what do you call pressing on?"

"Well, I think we were going this way when we stopped."

"Then let us keep on that way; any way's better than standing still."

They again moved forward, for, as it appeared to them, an interminable length of time. The ground became uneven; it rose and fell; it was hard to keep a footing. The sense of mystery, of darkness, grew more and more. Climbing plants, lacing tree to tree, formed impenetrable barriers. They progressed in corkscrew fashion, winding in and out as best they could, all sense of direction gone. Here and there monstrous ferns, coarse grasses, enveloped them on every side, rising high above their heads, so that they bade fair to be choked among their roots. So far they had encountered no living creature except themselves. Suddenly, however, something moved, as it seemed, from underneath their feet.

"What was that?" cried the girl.

"Oh, Mr. Otway, I believe it was a snake!"

"Whatever it was, it was afraid of us."

The same thought had occurred to her. Although his actual knowledge of the subject was *nil*, he was conscious of a feeling that this was the sort of nightmare forest in which serpents might be expected to breed. The presence of the moving thing seemed to have affected Miss Thornton more than anything which had gone before. She spoke as if she gasped for breath.

"How long—do you think—we shall be—before we get out—of this dreadful place?"

"Not long now, I hope. Bear up a little longer, and I shall say you're a girl in a billion."

"It's not easy—to bear up."

It was not easy. More than once she was in danger of breaking down. He had continually to encourage her, though he was badly in need of encouragement himself. Fortunately there were no further signs of their causing disturbance to any living thing. Spent, torn, filthy, they struggled on through the trap into which they had so inadvertently strayed for what seemed hours, until Mr. Otway suddenly cried:

"Look! There's light ahead! It's the sea; or, if it isn't the sea, please goodness, it's the end of this."

With renewed energy they struggled on to where the sunlight could be seen glancing through the vista far in front. It was not the sea, but it was the end of that vegetable tangle. So soon as they were out of it the girl sank exhausted on the ground. With his coat sleeve he wiped the sweat off his cheeks and brow, trying to smile at her.

"Tired? It was pretty bad, wasn't it?"

"It was like some horrid nightmare; I don't believe I could have kept up much longer. But now where are we?"

To judge from appearances, they had not reached very desirable quarters yet. They seemed to have found an open space in the heart of the jungle—an abode of desolation on which even tropical vegetation refused to grow. It was

as if some devastating blight had claimed it for its own. The ground was bare of covering. Shut in by trees on every side, the atmosphere was not much more invigorating than in the forest itself. Otway felt, as he looked about him, that it was not a place which one could love.

"We don't appear to have struck oil now to any extent. The most favorable remark I can make is that over there the forest does seem thinner, and that there is the promise of some sort of a path. Shall I go forward and investigate?"

"And leave me here? No, thank you." She was on her feet in an instant. "This place isn't much better than where we've just come out of. Where you go I will go, with your permission."

"There's no such haste. Hadn't you better rest a little before you go on again?"

"There is haste; and I don't want rest. I don't want any rest till we're back to the sea. I'd sooner be on the sea forever than here for a single day." He laughed outright at what seemed to him to be feminine exaggeration. She turned to him in sudden anger. "Why do you laugh at me? I mean what I say. You mustn't laugh here, in this place of evil! What is that on that tree over there, the one which looks as if it had been struck by lightning?"

Otway had been wondering himself. Together they went to see. Against the trunk of what was but a mere torso of a forest giant a board had been nailed, on which, in rude letters, which had apparently been burned into it, was this inscription:

THIS IS THE GATE OF HELL! AVOID IT IF YOU WOULD FLEE FROM EVIL!

It was a startling legend to encounter, unawares, in such a place. As she read it the girl came closer to the man, nestling to his side, slipping, as if unconsciously, her arm through his. He felt that she was trembling. Her voice sank nearly to a whisper.

"What does it mean? Then there is some one here beside ourselves. I wonder who. What a dreadful thing to put upon that board!"

"Evidently there has been some one here; but whether there is anyone now is another question, as to which I'm doubtful. It's a long time since that board was put up there. The lettering's faded, the nails which attach it are rusted, they're sagging out of the tree."

She gave a little cry.

"Mr. Otway, there's some one lying under those trees now, asleep!"

He looked where she was pointing. There, in plain sight, was the figure of a man recumbent on the ground. His back was toward them. Otway raised his voice to a shout.

"Hi! you there! Hello!"

No answer was returned. The figure did not move.

"He's sleeping very soundly," said the girl.

"Not so sound but that, if he is asleep, we'll wake him."

They crossed to the silent figure. Otway, stooping down, laid his hand upon the sleeper's shoulder. As he did so, the figure seemed to crumble; all at once the patchwork suit of clothes was empty. With an exclamation he started back.

"My God! it's a skeleton!"

"A skeleton!"

The girl's voice echoed his amazement, his horror. It was a skeleton, which, owing to some freak of nature, had hung together inside the clothes until Otway, by applying pressure, had dissolved it into separate bones. When they looked more closely they perceived that a scrap of paper was pinned to the fragments of what once had been a jacket. On it were scrawled some almost illegible words which Otway with difficulty deciphered.

This is John Cleaver who went mad and died 1865.

"Forty years ago! For forty years he has lain there, sleeping. Went mad and died? I shouldn't be surprised if it were he who put up that board. I wonder who pinned this paper on to his

coat, and why that person didn't bury him. There's a mystery here which might be worth unraveling."

"Come away! or I shall be in danger of going mad."

The words were scarcely spoken when there came a sound as of many thunderclaps; the ground shook under their feet, the sky was obscured. She clung to him, screaming. For some moments he himself was at a loss as to what had happened. As, by degrees, it dawned on him, he strove to comfort her.

"It's all right! It's only the volcano making what I take to be one of its periodical remarks. It is its tendency to behave in this sort of way, which explains, I fancy, the singular statement which is on the board there, that this is the gate of hell."

How he got her out of that place of desolation, through that labyrinthine maze born of tropic prodigality, back to the sound and sight and taste of the sea, he could not afterward have told; and she never knew. Sometimes he led her, as if she were a child, by the hand; sometimes he dragged her through obstacles it was impossible to surmount; sometimes he bore her in his arms. Luckily the forest, on the side on which he now attempted it, was less dense than at first, or he would have had to give up the struggle long before the end. When at last he found himself clear of the trees, under the open sky, he was reeling like a drunken man. He was carrying the girl. His first thought was for her. He laid her down on the ground as tenderly as if she had been some tiny child. Then, sinking like a log at her side, before he knew it he was asleep.

She was first to awake; starting up as if in sudden alarm; looking about her, in doubt as to where she was. She was lying on what was apparently almost the edge of the cliff; in front, far below, was the sea. Strange noises were in her ears; the earth was shaking; dense masses of smoke hid the heavens. Beside her lay her companion, still sound asleep—torn, travel-stained, bedraggled almost beyond recognition.

"Mr. Otway!" she cried. "Where are we? Where's the boat?"

He instantly sat up as she pronounced his name. Then, as a perception of his surroundings returned to him, he raised himself to his feet, stretching his limbs like a giant refreshed.

"I rather fancy that I've been dozing; I'm feeling all the better for it. And you?"

"I also have only just woke up. Where are we? How did I get here?"

"I've an idea that I carried you, at least now and then."

"Carried me? You couldn't! You must be nearly dead! I'm so heavy."

"I don't think I'm nearly dead; and there was no other way."

"But where's the boat? The volcano's in eruption!"

"I've no notion what is the name of the volcano whose habitation we have struck, but I'm inclined to the opinion that it's his custom to go on like this. As for where the boat is, we oughtn't to have much difficulty in finding that out." He looked over the top of the cliff. "It strikes me that a little further on it would be easy to scramble down to the beach. There appears to be a belt of dry land between the cliffs and the sea. It might be better to get back to the boat by the shore than to attempt to return by way of the forest."

"The forest! I would sooner stay here forever than try to get back by the forest!"

They scrambled down, as he had suggested, on to the shore, experiencing no difficulty in returning by it to where they had left the boat. Miss Thornton was for getting into it at once, and putting off, at any risk, from that inhospitable place. But Mr. Otway was against her. He pointed out that the wind was rising; that there was a prospect of more dirty weather being close at hand; that so small a craft could not be expected to live in anything like a heavy sea.

Temporarily, at least, they were safe where they were. They had firm land beneath their feet; probably as much chance of catching the attention of passing vessels as if they were afloat.

While, if they got afloat again, not having the vaguest knowledge of their whereabouts, they could only drift aimlessly hither and thither; they could not know which course to steer, nor how to bring themselves within reach of the ocean highway.

Perceiving the relevancy of his arguments, she fell in with his ideas. They found irregularities in the face of the cliffs which afforded rudimentary shelter. Here they carried their scanty stores, in the hope that they would be kept both dry and cool.

At one point there was an abrasion, or rent, in the surface of the rock, which amounted to an actual cavern—of small dimensions, truly—but still large enough to serve as sleeping chamber to a single lady. Here Miss Thornton established her night quarters. The cave, which was some ten or twelve feet above the shore, was reached by a sloping shelf, which formed a natural, if somewhat slippery, footpath.

Mr. Otway slept below, in any nook he at the moment fancied. And sometimes, in wakeful mood, he would keep watch and ward over the lady in her nest above.

In this remote corner of the world these two persons spent three weeks; shorter weeks than some might suppose. Not always in the same spot, for by circumnavigating it in their boat they ascertained that the place was an island. The complete circuit occupied four days and they returned to their starting-point almost with a feeling that they were coming home.

Besides establishing the fact that they were on an island they had acquired two other pieces of information: one, that the island was fertile on one side only—that on which they were; on the other the volcano had worked wholesale destruction. The mouth of the crater was on that side of the mountain. Seemingly it was, more or less, in continual eruption. An unending stream of lava, now so slight as to be scarcely perceptible, now rising to a torrent, was pouring down the slope, stretching out on either hand, carrying ruin and death wherever it went.

The second item of information was to the effect that, as they had surmised, the island was uninhabited. It was hardly likely that any person, or persons, would choose, of their own free will, so insecure and solitary a dwelling-place. They could discover no signs that anyone ever had lived there; though, at times, their thoughts recurred to the skeleton under the trees.

Elsie Thornton's petticoat—it soon became, with George Otway, a habit to address her by her first name—floated from the top of the highest tree. It was intended to be a signal of distress; but whether it would convey that impression to a passing ship was a point on which they were not agreed.

Their chief anxiety at the moment was caused by the rapidity with which their stock of food diminished. Sufficiently scanty to commence with, husband it as they might, it approached extinction with alarming haste. Their appetites—to make matters worse—seemed to be preternaturally large. They found the coarsest food not unworthy their attention; they always wanted to be eating. They resorted to fishing as a means of replenishing their larder.

Water was another source of trouble. At the beginning they managed pretty well. A tiny runnel, rather than a stream, trickled down over the cliff a few yards from where they had pitched their tent. Discovering it, Otway hollowed out a sort of basin in which it could collect in sufficient quantities to be of use, and therein it kindly collected. It had not the pleasantest taste—showed, indeed, a disposition to be brackish—but sometimes they would boil it in an empty beef tin, when, having cooled, it became quite drinkable.

Still, there was no disguising the truth that it was never quite the sort of water one would choose to drink. And, presently, it changed in every way for the worse. Possibly the constant state of excitement in which the volcano lived injuriously affected its constitution, for the smoky monster was never really still; indeed, he grew daily more demonstrative. And, though the girl

and the man had become, in a measure, reconciled to its curious methods, there came a night when they thought that there was an end of all things.

In the morning the stream was dry; there was not a drop of water to be had.

The girl, roused by the tumult of the volcano's fury, objecting to the sulphurous fumes which were entering her rocky sleeping chamber, in the darkness came running down the slippery footpath which led to where the man was waiting and watching on the shore beneath. As she came she stumbled; and, as she stumbled, she sprained her ankle. In the morning not only was she unable to move, or even stand, but the ankle itself was swelled in a sufficiently ugly fashion. The only remedy which was within their reach was a cold-water bandage; and there was no water.

Nor was water wanted for the lady's foot alone; they were both badly in need of it to drink. Although the first violence of the eruption had perceptibly lessened, it still continued. The air was full of fine, impalpable ash, which got into the throat, provoking thirst.

The pain which the girl was suffering resulted in slight fever. She kept asking for something to drink. At last, succeeding in overcoming her not unnatural reluctance to be left alone, he succeeded in persuading her to allow him to go in search of water. Carrying her, at her own request, into the shallow recess which they used as storehouse, making her as comfortable as the conditions permitted, off he started.

"Don't be a second longer than you can possibly help!" she pleaded.

"Not a second!" he assured her.

At the same time both he and she were aware that his absence might of necessity be a somewhat prolonged one.

He took with him their two largest empty tins. As to the exact neighborhood where water was to be found he was wholly at a loss to decide. Her experience on the day of their landing had made on Miss Thornton such an impression that the interior of the island had remained practically unexplored. They had looked about in the immediate locality of their camping-place for a stream which could be substituted for their original brackish supply, and had looked in vain. Beyond that perfunctory search their explorations had not gone.

Otway had a vague notion that at a spot about a couple of miles away what he sought for might be found. When on their voyage of circumnavigation he had noticed, on a low-lying stretch of land, what had struck him might be a stream. Reaching the point in question he found that in part he had been right; there was what evidently had been the bed of a stream; but, where it ought to have run into the sea, the bed was dry. It occurred to him that, if he walked along it, nearer the source he might still find water.

He was encouraged in this hope by the fact that, when he had gone some little distance, the hitherto dry bed grew damp and miry. Increasing his pace, he pressed more eagerly on. Presently the stream began twisting in and out amid vegetation which became momentarily denser. Signs of water became perceptible, but as yet what there was was more suggestive of slime than of anything fit for human consumption. On and on he went. At last his perseverance was rewarded. For some time the water had been growing more like water and less like slime, until all at once he came upon a broad pool, of an inviting depth, and of a delicious clearness.

He dipped in one of his tins and drank. It tasted to him like nectar—cool, sweet, refreshing. Filling both tins to the brim, he prepared to return. But, glancing round, he saw, in a clear space on the other side of the pool, what seemed to be a hut, formed of branches of trees, and rough, unhewn logs. He hesitated, then crossed to see what it might mean. As he went his foot struck against something which was lying on the ground.

It was a human skull, blanched by time and exposure until it had become almost as white as snow. A little beyond was a rusty metal box, resting on

what was apparently the skeleton of a hand, as if its dying owner had gripped it to the last. Attached to the handle was a strip of paper, on which was written, in characters which had become almost illegible:

I, Ebenezer Pullen, of Hull, in the county of Yorkshire, give and bequeath this box, with its contents, to whoever finds it. 1867.

The box itself came open as George Otway raised it. A hasty glance sufficed to show him that it apparently contained bank-notes of different countries, and varying values. He thrust it into the bosom of his blue-serge jersey.

By the time that he returned to their camping-place he had probably been absent at least four hours. Regard for the precious contents of his two tins had prevented his making as much haste as he might have done. As it was, not a little of their contents had been spilled; the length of the way, its difficulties, the nature of the receptacles themselves, made it impossible for him to prevent what, under the circumstances, was a cruel amount of waste. As he approached their camping-ground he quickened his pace; calling out to Miss Thornton to advise her of what he knew would be his welcome return.

"Here I am at last! With water, too, the best and sweetest you ever tasted!"

No answer was returned. With sudden anxiety he pressed forward to the recess in which he had laid her. It was empty. Supposing that, growing weary of waiting, having recovered sufficiently to enable her to move, she had ascended to her own particular cave, he ran up the footpath, calling to her as he went:

"Elsie! Elsie! Where have you hidden yourself?"

There was no one there. He stared about him in stupid bewilderment. Then he hurried back to the shore, looking for her here and there; shouting all the time, over and over again: "Elsie! Where are you?"

It was a question to which he was to receive no answer. For hours he went this way and that; back and forth; up and down; screaming himself hoarse. She was to be seen nowhere: had left no sign that she had ever been.

During his absence in search of the water of which she had stood in such imminent need she had apparently been spirited off the face of the earth.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FELLOW-PASSENGER.

One of the passengers on the mail steamer *Cormorant,* who were endeavoring, with the aid of their marine glasses, to make out as much as possible of the volcanic island which they were passing on their port side, thought that he saw a figure standing close down to the water's edge. When he announced his discovery it was endorsed by others. The captain, from his vantage place upon the bridge, perceived that the figure was that of a man, who was waving something above his head. He telegraphed the order to shut off steam. A boat was launched; and presently returned with George Otway.

He had been more than a month alone on the island. He presented an extraordinary spectacle, looking more like a wild man than a civilized Christian, but he seemed in good health, and, at any rate, physically none the worse for his solitary sojourn. He became at once a center of interest to all on board. Responding to the captain's inquiries, he stated that his name was John Lennard, that he had been a passenger on board the steamship *Queen of the Seas,* and that it was owing to a misunderstanding that he had been left behind upon the island. The captain did not attempt to conceal his opinion that that statement was more than a trifle curious; but, as the reserved man declined, point-blank, to add to it, and, moreover, expressed his willingness, and ability, to pay for any accommodation which might be given him—displaying a large number of bank-notes in proof of such capacity—the officer in charge of the *Cormorant* had, perforce, to believe as much—or as little—of his story as he chose.

It happened that voyage that the *Cor-*

morant's passenger-list was almost full. There was only one vacant berth on board, in a double cabin on the lower deck. For this John Lennard paid the price demanded, in ancient bank-notes, at which the purser looked askance.

"These notes are as old as Methuselah; why weren't they presented for payment years and years ago?"

"They are part of a legacy which was left to me by a man who died some time ago, and who kept all his fortune in a box."

The purser eyed him fixedly for a moment or two, then a twinkle came into his eyes.

"Rather a curious legacy, wasn't it, Mr. Lennard? Almost as curious as the way in which you got left behind upon that island. It's another curious fact that you'll have rather a curious cabin mate; meaning no offense, I should say that it will be a case of two curiosities together."

George Otway—as John Lennard—understood, in some degree, what the speaker meant when, in the purser's company, he arrived at the cabin in which a berth had been assigned to him. Although it was broad daylight the door was locked; and it was only after repeated knockings that any notice was taken of their presence. Then a voice called to them from within:

"Who's there?"

"I'm afraid that I shall have to trouble you to open the door, Mr. Colenutt. I'm the purser."

A further delay of some seconds. Then the door was opened about six inches. In the interstice appeared an undersized man, with short black hair, close cropped beard and mustache, and a complexion so dark as to suggest a mulatto. His manner was not exactly conciliatory.

"What do you want?"

"Sorry to interrupt you, Mr. Colenutt, especially if you were enjoying an afternoon nap. By the way, you must be pretty fond of napping, since you seem never to appear on deck."

"I suppose I'm at liberty to keep to my cabin, if I choose, since I've paid for it."

"Certainly, perfectly at liberty; not a doubt of it; but now it won't be your cabin only."

"What do you mean?"

In Mr. Colenutt's voice there was a change of tone which seemed to amuse the purser.

"Allow me to introduce you to Mr. Lennard, just come aboard. Since yours is the only cabin in which there is a vacant berth, Captain Matthews has put him down for it."

"Put him down for it! Is this—Mr. Lennard?"

Otway had enjoyed the ministrations of the ship's barber; had had a bath; had placed himself inside clothes which had been procured for him—at a price—from some one's redundant wardrobe, and which did not fit him so badly as they might have done. He was, therefore, a very different spectacle to that which he had presented when his rescuers first found him. But had he been an ogre, or a gorgon, or some fabled monster, Mr. Colenutt could not have regarded him with more undisguised repugnance; a fact which the purser—who seemed to have a vein of humor which was peculiarly his own—noted with a grin, which was equally ostentatious.

"This is Mr. Lennard; who, I have no doubt, places himself at your service. I am sure that he has as much pleasure in meeting you as you have in meeting him."

If there was any pleasure on Mr. Colenutt's side, then he concealed the fact with considerable skill. He drew back with something which was so like a snarl that every hair on his head seemed bristling.

"But this is my cabin! You can't let a berth in it over my head just as the whim seizes you. It was only on the understanding that I was to be its sole occupant that I took it; why, it was you who assured me that I should have it to myself."

"Excuse me, Mr. Colenutt, but when you came aboard, at the last moment, just as the boat was leaving the wharf, and asked me—as if you were half beside yourself—if there was a vacant

cabin, I told you there was this one. And so there was this one. I wasn't to know that another passenger would come aboard in midocean. There are two berths in this cabin; you've paid for one, and Mr. Lennard's paid for the other."

"But if you'd given me the faintest hint that anything of this kind might have been expected, I'd willingly have paid for both."

"Pity you didn't mention that before. A passenger who wishes to reserve an entire cabin should say so—and pay for its exclusive use—at the time of booking. It's too late to talk about it now."

Mr. Colenutt addressed himself to Mr. Lennard.

"If you are a gentleman, sir; if you have the slightest sense of gentlemanly feeling, you will not endeavor to intrude yourself where, most emphatically, you are not wanted."

Compared to the other's heat, Mr. Lennard's manner, as he replied, was calmness itself:

"It is so long, sir, since I was between a decent pair of sheets, that you must show me some very sufficient reason before I can consent to allow you to shut me out from what, after all, is my own."

"So that's the tone you take. Very well! You'll at least stop outside till I've put away certain personal private belongings; and afterward I'll talk to you in a different fashion."

Before they had anticipated his intention he had withdrawn inside the cabin; shut the door, and bolted it in their faces. Mr. Lennard laughed, but the purser's vein of humorous perception seemed to have suddenly run dry.

"He's a cool hand!—confound his impudence!" He hammered at the door with his fist. "Now, Mr. Colenutt, I hope you've got sense enough to know that this sort of thing won't do. If you don't open this door at once I shall have to make you."

Mr. Lennard played the part of peacemaker.

"That's all right; let him store away his treasures—how does he know what sort of character I am?—then you'll find that he'll open fast enough."

The forecast proved correct. Presently the door was flung wide open.

"Now, sir, if you choose to intrude yourself into my cabin during my temporary absence, I suppose that I cannot help it. I am going to see the captain. When I have explained the position to him, you will find that he will order you to take the course which your own sense of decency ought to have dictated."

The purser interposed.

"It's no use your going to the captain, Mr. Colenutt—not the slightest. Since this gentleman has paid his passage money, the captain has no more right to turn him out than he has to turn you."

"I prefer to learn that from the captain's lips rather than from yours; being well aware that with you the whole business is simply a question of the itching palm. If I had made it worth your while to keep this fellow out you would have kept him out; but as I forgot to bribe you, you pay me out like this."

Off strode Mr. Colenutt, the purser staring after him in angry amazement.

"Well, after that! A nigger like him dares to tell me to my face that I only do my duty because he didn't bribe me not to do it! That's a finisher! I'll show him that he's not the only person on board this ship."

Off went the purser after Mr. Colenutt, and Mr. Lennard entered the deserted cabin. It was a small affair—an inside cabin, inclined to be stuffy, with an upper and a lower berth, and but scanty accommodation besides—probably one of the worst on the ship. Apparently Mr. Colenutt had been in occupation of the lower berth. His sole property in sight was a black canvas cabin trunk. Seemingly the rest of his belongings were stowed away in the lockers—of which, of course, hitherto, he had had the entire run. As Otway observed how cramped one was for space, he told himself that it was not strange that the late sole tenant resented the appearance of some one else

to share his quarters. If only he had done so with a little more civility!

But evidently Mr. Colenutt had his own method of confronting a delicate situation. When, after a considerable interval, he reappeared, his agitation had not grown less. He broke into a torrent of vituperation on the instant.

"The captain of this ship has no more sense of honor and propriety than his subordinates. It seems that you are to be forced upon me. Very good, then let's understand each other clearly. If you come into this cabin you come as a trespasser, in spite of my strongest protests, to my most serious inconvenience. I warn you that I'll make you as uncomfortable as you're making me; you won't score in the end. I'll make your stay here a continual misery; before long you'll be wishing that you had jumped overboard instead of thrusting yourself where you were not wanted."

The man's anger, though real enough, seemed so futile that the other laughed outright.

"You're candid, anyhow; so now we know where we are. You couldn't have given me a heartier welcome if you had suspected me of designs upon your family plate. All I have to do is to prepare for the good time that's coming."

Mr. Lennard's levity did not tend to sweeten Mr. Colenutt's temper.

"You may sneer, but I shouldn't be surprised at your designing any kind of robbery. I understand that you're some vagabond who's been picked up from goodness alone knows where; no doubt those with whom you were associated were glad to be rid of you at any price. You call yourself John Lennard, I am told; though, possibly, that is not your name. The captain as good as admits that he does not believe a word of the tale you told him; and thinks that probably you were marooned on the island on which you were found as a punishment for some disreputable conduct of your own. In other words, he inclines to the opinion that you are a liar and a blackguard, and—maybe—something worse. This is the man whom he has made a sharer of my cabin. That he is not far out in his estimate of your character your own action in this matter suggests. I will look out for proof that you are what at present Captain Matthews only hints you are. If I find it I will have you—metaphorically—nailed to the ship's counter."

John Lennard only answered:

"You queer little dark-skinned person."

The next night he could not sleep. In the cabin it was close and stuffy. Longing for air, he went up on deck. Leaning over the vessel's side, he looked back over the course she had come. It was a fine night; there was a cool, sweet breeze; stars peopled the sky. He almost fancied that he could see a faint gleam against the distant heavens, which might have been the light of the volcano on the Island of the Gate of Hell. As he thought of the days and weeks which he had spent there, pondering, as he was wont to do, on the mystery of the disappearance of Elsie Thornton, some one, coming across the deck, ranged himself alongside. It was the purser, whose name, he had learned, was Adams. Lennard moved his head in acknowledgment of the other's presence, but Adams was the first to speak.

"Isn't it rather late for you to be about, Mr. Lennard? Everyone has turned in but you."

"And you."

"And me." There was what almost amounted to an ominous pause; he had seemed to speak with unnecessary emphasis. "It isn't my fault I'm about. Early hours suit me best. But when you're playing policeman you have to let your own tastes go by the board."

"Playing policeman? What do you mean?"

"A nasty thing happened last night—the night of the day you came aboard. There was a thief on board this ship."

"A thief? How do you know?"

"Because somebody was robbed by him; a lady who has a state cabin. She's one of those foolish females who won't fasten their cabin doors on the

inside, not even when they go to bed; the Lord alone knows why. This thief found out that she was that kind of fool. He sneaked in while she was fast asleep, and sneaked out with what he could lay his hands upon. I tell you this in confidence, Mr. Lennard. It isn't generally known on board, as yet; but I thought I'd let you know that it was known to me, especially as nothing of the kind has ever occurred upon this boat before, so that it seems odd that it should have taken place the very first night you came aboard."

There could be no doubt that there was significance in the purser's tone.

"One would almost think, from the way you speak, that you suspected me."

"I don't know that it's got quite so far as suspicion yet, as regards anyone, Mr. Lennard. It's only got to wondering, up to now. Only you yourself will perceive that, under the circumstances, it might be just as well for you not to keep hanging about after everyone's turned in."

"I can wish to escape for a few minutes from the stuffy atmosphere of my cabin and yet be an honest man."

"Of course; not a doubt of it. Still, that thief, if you found him hanging about, maybe that's the kind of talk he'd have at the tip of his tongue."

CHAPTER X.

A WILD VENGEANCE.

As John Lennard returned to his quarters below, he had to admit to himself that both in the purser's words and manner there had been something unpleasantly suggestive. It was both odd and awkward that the robbery and his arrival on board should have coincided. Situated as he was, it did not need much imagination to perceive that it might easily become very awkward indeed for him. On trying the handle of his cabin door, he found that the bolt had been slipped inside.

"Calm—on my word. To the best of my knowledge and belief, Mr. Colenutt was fast asleep as I went out. I went as softly as I could; I doubt if I disturbed him; yet he must have got up directly my back was turned, and—locked me out! As he prophesied yesterday, if he indulges in pranks of this sort, there will be trouble. Inside there." He rapped with his knuckles, first gently, then more loudly. Since no heed was paid to his summons, he began to lose his patience. "Mr. Colenutt, if you don't open this door at once I shall rouse the ship; I'll show you that you shan't keep me out of my own cabin with impunity."

Apparently the threat sufficed; before it was necessary to knock again the door was opened. On the threshold stood Mr. Colenutt, completely attired. It seemed to be one of his peculiar habits to go to bed with his clothes on; so far, Mr. Lennard had not seen him remove a single garment. He assailed the newcomer as if he had been to blame.

"You seem, like certain birds of prey, to be fond of prowling about when all the world's asleep. Last night you chose the small hours for a ramble——"

"Pardon me, Mr. Colenutt, I fail to see what interest my movements can have for you, but last night I did not move out of my berth after I had once got in; I slept much too soundly."

"You must suffer from a bad memory, Mr. Lennard. I myself saw you get up; I saw you go out; I saw you return. When you did return, you were carrying something in a pocket handkerchief."

He spoke with such an air of assured conviction that the listener was staggered.

"You must have been dreaming!"

The other's rejoinder amazed Mr. Lennard still more.

"It was because some instinct told me that you might say something of that kind that I made up my mind to-night to prove to your satisfaction, and my own, that I was not dreaming, unless we are both dreamers, Mr. Lennard."

Before John Lennard had a chance of replying, the purser—still, it seemed, playing the policeman—came up to them.

"This sort of thing won't do, you know, gentlemen—you're disturbing all the ship."

Mr. Colenutt explained the position from his own point of view, with instant readiness:

"The room-mate you have given me, Mr. Adams, appears to be a person of uncomfortably nocturnal habits. He started on an expedition round the ship in the middle of last night——"

"Last night!"

The purser regarded Lennard with keen, scrutinizing eyes. John Lennard returned his gaze unshrinkingly.

"Mr. Colenutt is mistaken. I turned in before ten o'clock last night, and did not turn out again till seven this morning."

The little dark-skinned man shrugged his shoulders; he drew back into the cabin.

"Very good. Then, as I saw Mr. Lennard both go and return, I must have been the victim of an optical delusion for the first time in my life."

The purser was still eying Mr. Lennard.

"Do I understand you to affirm that you did not leave your cabin last night, in spite of what he says?"

"You do. I fell asleep as soon as I was between the sheets, and did not wake till I went to my bath this morning. I must have been walking in my sleep if what he says is true. But it isn't."

"It's odd; and it's not the only odd thing about you, Mr. Lennard. Let me recommend you to turn in now, and not to walk in your sleep."

When they were alone together, John Lennard addressed to his cabin mate a very candid question:

"May I beg you to inform me, Mr. Colenutt, what prompted the malicious falsehood which you have just told Mr. Adams? Because you know perfectly well that you did not see me leave this cabin; and that, in fact, I did not leave it."

"You charge me with malicious falsehood. After that, so far as I am concerned, there is nothing to be said. You have a front of brass; but I do not intend to quarrel with you, nor to bandy words. It's perfectly clear to me what kind of character you are; I warn you that I mean to make it equally clear to every person on the ship. I do not intend to be forced into close association with a man of your type a second longer than I can help."

"I see what you are driving at; after your frankness I could hardly help but see; but you will find that I am not to be bluffed so easily as you suppose; and I on my side warn you that it is a dangerous game which you are playing."

After he had fallen asleep, John Lennard dreamed a somewhat singular dream. He dreamed that a woman was in the cabin. How she came there he did not understand; he only knew, all at once, that she was there. She stood and looked at him; her hair was hanging down her back. She drew close to the side of his berth. She had something in her hand, but he could not make out what it was. She leaned over him as he slept, and suddenly he was overtaken by a great fear. Even in his slumber he had a hideous consciousness that he was in imminent peril of his life. She touched him; and her touch was so real that it banished sleep upon the instant.

He sprang up in his berth with so much vigor that he struck his head against the woodwork above, and, falling back, lay for some seconds half stupefied. When, regaining his senses, he looked about him, he found that the cabin was in darkness, and that all was still. But the feeling that there had been some one there was so strong upon him that he switched on the electric light. The cabin was empty; the door was shut; he saw that his fellow-passenger was lying in his berth.

"It must have been a delusion; but, upon my honor, Colenutt himself could not have had a more realistic one."

The following day he was made aware of a somewhat uncomfortable fact—that he was looked upon askance by his fellow-passengers. Whoever he approached drew back. At first he supposed that this must be his own fancy; but when, after the third or

fourth rebuff, he perceived with what generosity he was left in sole occupation of much more than his share of the deck, he understood that, for some cause, he was in ill odor.

The following night it was dirty weather. He turned in at the usual time; but, after what seemed only a few minutes' sleep he became suddenly conscious that he was wide awake, that outside something like a storm was raging, and that the atmosphere of the cabin was almost stiflingly oppressive. Great beads of perspiration were on his brow. Scrambling out of his berth, slipping into his clothes, he ascended to the deck, careless, alike, of the captain's orders, and of the rushing spray which greeted him as soon as he had got his head out into the open. As luck would have it, he had hardly taken half a dozen steps when he all but collided with the purser. Recognition on Mr. Adams' part was instantaneous.

"So it's you, is it? I thought you were informed that it's one of the rules of this ship that passengers are not allowed out of their cabins after lights are out."

"If that really is one of the rules, it happens that I'm not the only one who's breaking them. I fancy that my cabin mate's looking for some breathable air as well as me, and if you felt the temperature of the cupboard in which we're berthed—I believe that we're right on top of either the furnaces or the boilers—you wouldn't say that either of us was to blame."

"Do you mean to say that Colenutt's about the ship?"

"He wasn't in the cabin when I came out of it."

"Then it was he I saw go aft. There's such a sea on, and it's so infernally dark, that I thought I was mistaken; but if what you say is right I wasn't. What little game is he up to, I wonder, in weather like this! If he chooses to stay in his cabin all day, he shan't come out of it at night—or I'll know the reason why."

Mr. Adams, grumbling to himself half under his breath, made the best of his way astern, apparently oblivious of the fact that John Lennard was adding to his misdemeanor by accompanying him uninvited.

The *Cormorant* was one of the few ships which, at that time, had fitted up a Marconi installation. It was right aft, bearing, to the uninstructed eye, but a scanty resemblance to the telegraph of ordinary life. At the foot was a small enclosure, screened off from the public gaze, where the operator was wont to take his stand. At night this enclosure was supposed to be secured against intruders. What was, therefore, the surprise of Mr. Adams and his companion when, on their approach, out of it there came rushing Mr. Colenutt. That he saw them was obvious; but that the sight of them did not fill him with amazement, or make him conscious that there was anything which required explanation in his own presence there, was at least equally plain. Even the dim light could not conceal the fact that he was overmastered by some strange excitement. He caught Mr. Adams by the arm; his voice rising in a shrill scream above the wind, the noise of the laboring ship, the tumult of the waters.

"They're on board! they're both of them on board! It's a conspiracy; you're all of you against me! Their names are not on the passenger list; I've seen and heard nothing of them; they're hiding somewhere; but they're on board! on board! and you've deceived me!"

"Steady, Mr. Colenutt; not quite so much of it, if you don't mind. Don't you know that the telegraph's private? What have you been doing in there?"

Colenutt seemed to be making an effort to regain some semblance of self-control.

"I have been receiving a message from a friend, about something which is of the first importance." Then with renewed ferocity: "What do you mean by doctoring the passenger list? Why don't the names of all the passengers appear on it? Why are there concealments?"

"I should imagine, Mr. Colenutt, that you can't be feeling quite yourself. Do

you say you've been receiving a message? Do you mean a telegram?"

"What else? I've been in communication with a friend, who has my interests at heart; from whom I learn that they're on board, both of them on board. You're all joined in a conspiracy to keep from me the truth, but I've found it out in spite of you."

He hurried off, disappearing in the darkness—the purser making no attempt to stop him.

"Let him go; I should put him down as being more than a little dotty. Didn't I tell you that in that cabin of yours you'd be two curiosities together? I don't understand what he means about that message. He can't have been in telegraphic communication with anything human, in the middle of the night, in a sea like this, and with us more than a thousand miles from the nearest land; the idea must be part of his complaint. Hang me, if I like these newfangled notions, which are turning the whole world inside out! Before some of these scientific chaps have finished, we shall be holding conversation with Old Nick at a penny a word."

On reentering his cabin, John Lennard found Mr. Colenutt poring over a passenger list and a plan of the ship; apparently with results which afforded him but slight satisfaction. Seemingly oblivious of the relations which he had hitherto maintained with his cabin associate, he burst into a voluble, and, to Lennard, inexplicable statement of his grievances.

"I can't make it out; there's trickery somewhere; black treachery. There's not a mention of either of them here. Every cabin's occupied; the name of each occupant is clearly given; of nine-tenths of the people I have personal knowledge. Among the other tenth are none who look like them. And yet that message was not a lie—I'll stake my soul that it was not a lie. They are on board; but in what disguise, and where, where?"

After dinner, on the day which followed, Mr. Lennard was again on deck, and, as usual, alone. The unwritten edict, which had put him in Coventry, was still in full force; it afforded him a grim sort of amusement to notice how his advance served as a signal for other passengers to retreat. The weather had changed. The sea was now as calm as, twenty-four hours before, it had been perturbed.

It was past ten o'clock—he was just meditating an immediate retirement to his berth, when the door of a deck cabin near which he was standing was opened, and a man came through it. He staggered rather than walked down to the rail against which Lennard was leaning, swaying up against it like a man who was either drunk or ill. At first Lennard supposed he was the former—but after a few moments' observation he concluded that that supposition was both uncharitable and unjust; the stranger was enduring mental or physical suffering. It struck Lennard that this was a case in which assistance might be required.

"I am afraid, sir, that you are not feeling very well. Can I be of service to you?"

The man turned to the speaker a countenance on which was an expression that resembled none which Lennard had ever seen upon a human face before. He was a tall, slightly built person, between thirty and forty years of age. He wore a dinner-jacket and no hat. He had curly, brown hair and slight side-whiskers and a carefully trained mustache. Not a bad-looking fellow, one fancied, in a general way. But now he was shivering as with ague; his cheeks looked drawn and bloodless; his eyes were distended in a fixed, unnatural glare; the muscles of his face were twitching, his lips kept opening and shutting, as if he were the victim of some unpleasant form of St. Vitus' dance.

It was a second or two before he seemed able to speak; Lennard watched him with an uncomfortable consciousness of the extremely disagreeable spectacle which he was at the moment presenting. When he did speak his words were disjointed, disconnected; conveying an impression of distressing moral collapse.

"I'm feeling unwell, very unwell. I've had a shock, a shock. I've just seen a ghost, a ghost; the ghost of a person who, to my certain knowledge —to my absolutely certain knowledge—is thousands of miles away; and —it's unhinged me."

Evidently something had unhinged him. Mr. Lennard smiled, scarcely sympathetically.

"Are you sure it was a ghost?"

The stranger, clutching the rail with both hands, tried to stand upright; but there was a weakness about the region of his knees which it was not nice to notice.

"Am I sure it was a ghost? Of course I'm sure. I don't believe in ghosts—as such; but this must have been a ghost, or something of the kind." He looked about him in a frightened, furtive fashion, which suggested that he feared to find his spiritual visitant still in clear sight. "Don't I tell you that the person in question is thousands and thousands of miles away? No—couldn't be on board—couldn't be without my knowing it."

"Where did you see the—ghost?"

Plainly the stranger missed the ironical intonation which was in the inquirer's voice.

"Where? Looking at me through my cabin window. I looked up, and it was there. I only saw it for an instant, and it—vanished. Great Heaven! it vanished."

The speaker reeled so that Mr. Lennard feared he would have fallen to the deck; but as he moved forward to catch him the man saved himself by snatching at the rail. With the same uncanny mixture of surprise and horror he turned his head slowly round, as if fearful what his eyes might light upon.

"I think I'll go and get a drink," he stammered. "It might do me good and steady my nerves; they want steadying."

On that point there could be no doubt whatever; but whether the remedy to which he alluded would have the desired effect was a question on which Lennard had his doubts—thinking it possible that the ailment from which he was at present suffering was at least partly caused by a too generous use of that very medicine. He watched the stranger feeling his way along the deck, as if the intervening space which lay between him and the cabin which he had recently quitted had been hedged about by unseen dangers.

"The fellow—from the way in which he behaves—might have delirium tremens," was Lennard's internal comment.

He passed into the cabin—and within half-a-dozen seconds of his doing so there came from it a sound which made the watcher without hurry toward it as fast as he could move. It might have been a cry wrung from some one in an extremity of terror; or in the throes of physical anguish. Heedless of ceremony, without staying to knock, Mr. Lennard thrust open the door and stepped inside. Instinct had warned him that something unpleasant might meet his eyes; but he was unprepared for what he actually saw.

On the floor lay a woman—her clothes all disarranged, wet with blood.

It was a good-sized cabin; a stateroom, indeed; containing a couch, from which she had apparently been dragged while struggling with her assailant, for the cushions had tumbled off it, and she was still clutching at one with the fingers of her right hand. She was a young woman, fair-haired, and wore a low-cut bodice; a fact which helped to make it plain that she had been stabbed, seemingly three or four times, in the region of the neck and breast. The man in the dinner-jacket was standing perhaps a couple of feet from where she lay, in a crouching attitude, bending toward her, staring at her as if the sight of her had for him a dreadful fascination; all the time emitting sounds like some wounded animal.

A sudden conviction swept over Lennard that the whole thing had been prearranged; that from the first the intention had been to throw dust in his eyes; that the man whom he had been considering with a blending of pity and contempt was not only a dastard, but also an accomplished actor. He had

committed the crime before he had originally issued from the cabin; the ghost which he had pretended to have seen was the body of this woman, which he had mangled with his own hands.

In full asssurance that this was so, John Lennard laid his hand upon the wretched creature's shoulder. His voice was portentously calm.

"Don't imagine that you deceive me for one moment with your histrionics. It was you who did this."

The man turned his quivering features toward his accuser.

"I did it? I? My God!"

The fellow's persistence in what the other regarded as hypocrisy moved him to righteous anger.

"Yes, you did it; you! How dare you call upon your Maker with your murderer's lips? If you play the hypocrite any longer you'll constrain me to take the law into my own hands, and wring your neck here, by your victim's side."

Indeed, he was about to take the trembling wretch by the throat, when a sound behind him caused him to swing round upon his heels, just in time to see a curtain moved aside, and a figure emerge from the recess which it screened, the figure of his cabin mate, the dark-skinned Mr. Colenutt.

Although the unexpected sight filled John Lennard with not unnatural bewilderment, he kept his senses sufficiently to be conscious that it affected the man in the dinner-jacket almost as if he had been seized by a stroke of paralysis. Colenutt, on the other hand, seemed completely at his ease; much more at his ease than Lennard had hitherto seen him. There was a smile on his face; and he looked first at the man in the dinner-jacket, then at Lennard, with a light in his eyes which lent to him a very singular expression.

For some seconds there was silence; Mr. Colenutt seemed to be enjoying the situation too much to wish to do anything which might tend to bring it to a premature conclusion. So that Lennard was the first to speak.

"What are you doing here?"

"Ask him; he'll tell you."

Colenutt pointed to the man in the dinner-jacket with a hand in which there was a strip of polished steel, which John Lennard realized, with an odd sensation of disgust, was smudged with blood. Lennard questioned the gentleman referred to, as instructed.

"What does he mean? What is he doing here? What has this man to do with you?"

Mr. Colenutt echoed the latter part of his inquiry in tones of mockery.

"That is the very gist and marrow of it all; what has this man to do with you?"

From the person to whom the query was addressed there only came some gibbering words by way of answer.

"It's a ghost! a ghost!"

Mr. Colenutt laughed outright.

"I'm a ghost! a ghost! That's the crown and climax of it all?"

He threw his hands into the air—the blurred strip of steel flashing as it went—with a gesture which denoted genuine, if saturnine, amusement; then addressed himself to Lennard; there being something in his manner and his words, and the effect which they both had on the man in the dinner-jacket, which suggested to his cabin mate a cat playing with a mouse.

"To you, sir, I shall have the pleasure, and the honor, of making all necessary explanations; I assure you that no explanation is required by the person behind you. He already understands quite well; as you have only to glance at him to see. Although, for the moment, he is a little tongue-tied, his looks are eloquent. You ask what have I to do with him. I will tell you in a single sentence—I am his wife."

"His wife!"

"His wife."

The pseudo Mr. Colenutt raised his right hand—brushed something from his face with some appearance of difficulty; withdrew something from his head with one quick movement; mustache and wig had vanished, a mass of black hair had tumbled loose, and there, in front of John Lennard, though still clothed as a man, was the woman he had seen in his dream.

The transformation was so startling, so unlooked-for, so complete, that Lennard stood staring at her as if spell-bound; the woman observing his amazement with an appearance of real enjoyment.

"You see, it is very simple. Now you perceive why I objected with so much vigor to having to divide with you my cabin. They told me, when we started, that I should have it to myself; I did not expect that we should pick up, in midocean, another passenger, to whom would be allotted half. I beg you, however to believe that it was not to you, personally, that I objected; but merely to your sex. For that I entertained so strong a resentment that I resolved, at all and every cost, to be rid of you. I planned a little scheme; robbed a woman of her trumpery knickknacks; secreted them in your berth—you will find them there; determined to fasten on you the guilt, and so be able to claim exemption from your society, on the ground that you were a proven thief. For that misconduct—which went no further than the inception—I entreat your pardon."

She inclined her head in a sweeping obeisance, which again had in it more than a touch of mockery. When she continued, although she scarcely raised her tone, she spoke with an intensity of bitterness, increasing as she went on; disclosing a relentless, persistent, remorseless singleness of purpose which suggested that, for her, the boundary line which marks the division between the sane and the insane had some time ago been passed.

"You will understand, then, that I am the wife of the person who still is at the back of you; I have been his wife these thirteen years. He won me when I was a child; won me with a lie; oh, he lied in the first sentence which he spoke to me! I have known him, from the beginning, as a liar; and afterward as a coward, a traitor and a thief. It is incredible that, in spite of his notorious virtues, I should have continued to love the creature; but then I would urge on my own behalf that it is only lately I have learned to what logical lengths those virtues really went. I discovered that he was carrying on an intrigue with another woman—this time a woman after his own heart. When he learned that I had found him out he fled, and she fled with him; he carrying, as ballast, such properties of mine as were within his reach, so that he left me nearly beggared.

"Almost as soon as they were away I was at their heels; and I kept at their heels as they passed, like wandering pariahs, from place to place. Although they did not know that I was there, for I had become a man—they were not likely to connect Colenutt, the mulatto, with the woman they had betrayed, fooled, ruined—still, I fancy they were conscious that a malign influence was hovering close at hand, for they kept continually moving on; until, one day, they slipped clean through my fingers.

"How they managed it I don't know even now—whether it was by accident or design—but I woke one morning to find that they had vanished, to all seeming, into the air; that I had lost trace even of their tracks. It was only the other day I heard that they had gone to Europe.

"To Europe! Again and again I had asked him to take me to Europe; always some plausible excuse, some excellent reason why our visit should be postponed to a future period. But she, she had only to hint a wish for a thing—he tumbled over himself in his haste to get at her.

"Within six hours I also was traveling to Europe. My informant could not tell me by what boat they had booked, or when; he only knew that they had gone. When I secured the last cabin left upon the *Cormorant* I did not dream this ship carried them. They had booked under one alias; I under another. For private reasons of our own we kept ourselves inside our cabins—only last night, as you know, a message came to me by the Marconi telegraph, telling me that they were actually within my reach. It is but a minute or two since I learned just where to put my hand upon them. I looked through that window, and saw

him kissing her. I rapped at the pane. He turned and saw me; came out to see who I was, what I wanted. As he went out I came in, and I left her where and as you see her now. She is not so full of life and movement, nor of love, as when she first began to discover how sharp a knife I had.

"Would you not like to kiss her—to make love to her—again?"

She hurled, rather than addressed, this question to the palsied wretch who still was cowering beside the couch; then, dashing forward, passed Lennard, and seizing the man in the dinner-jacket by the throat began raining blows upon him with her knife as fast as she could raise her hand. As quickly as he could Lennard, gripping her arm, wrested her weapon from her.

"You have murdered him, you harridan!"

"Murdered him! I have murdered no one. I have executed justice."

Before he guessed her intention she had whirled herself out of his hold and through the cabin door. He followed her on the instant; and yet was only just in time to see her scramble over the vessel's side and vanish overboard.

The action was witnessed by a score of persons. Half-a-dozen life-buoys were tossed toward her into the sea. The ship was stopped; a boat lowered. But, although all possible haste had been used, valuable time had been lost; the night was dark; in falling she might have struck against some portion of the vessel, and sunk into the depths like a stone.

Certain it is that the boat returned to the ship without having seen any sign whatever of "Mr. Colenutt."

CHAPTER XI.

DAVID CURTIS.

George Otway was contemplating something which was in a glass on a table in front of him in the smoking-room of his Liverpool hotel. He had been in England a week, and as yet had gone no further than his port of landing. He was not regarding the liquid with an air of undue conviviality; indeed, there was an expression on his face which distinctly was not jovial. In fact, he was not enjoying himself so much as he had intended—he had been arriving at that conclusion gradually during the past seven days. When he said good-by to the *Cormorant* he had said to himself that now he would have an excellent time; one which, for enjoyment pure and simple, would take some beating. So completely had realization fallen short of anticipation that he felt convinced that he had never had a more miserable week in the whole of his life.

He was homesick, positively. He thought of High Dene and its hitherto unappreciated beauties with something almost approaching to tenderness; of Dollie Lee, that faithless jade; of Frank Andrews, that scoundrel of a cousin. After all, he had been a bit of a fool. Why had he thrown away his position—the grandest a man could have—for this sort of thing? And he glared at the something in the glass. The hue and cry after the Vauxhall Junction murderer had died away; but, no doubt, the reward was still on offer, and there were plenty of people who might be able to recognize Jacob Gunston if they met him face to face. Somehow the idea of that possibility did not commend itself to him at all. Then there was that Thornton girl—the Elsie of that unforgetable episode upon the island; in a sense, she was the most unsatisfactory part of the whole business. What had become of her? Whither had she vanished? Why, above all! why had she left behind her so unescapable a memory?

She occupied his thoughts in a fashion he resented. If any one had hinted that she was in the neighborhood of the North Pole he would have started off in search of her to-morrow. The mischief was that he had not the faintest notion in what quarter it would be wise to even commence his explorations; and that angered him, because he wanted her—just to talk to, to look at, and to go over old times together—for nothing else, he was certain. One

Dollie Lee was woman enough for him; never again would he become the victim of feminine wiles. Never, never, never! Not if he lived to be as old as —oh, older than Methuselah!

None the less, just for half an hour's quiet conversation with the girl whose eyes were at the same time both grave and smiling, he would have done about anything or gone anywhere. The consciousness that he had not an inkling where to look for her made him—well, he had a sort of a kind of feeling that it might relieve his feelings to some extent if he were to hurl his soda-water tumbler at the first inoffensive stranger who might chance to catch his eye.

The fact that a hand was suddenly laid upon his shoulder made him reach forward to grab at his tumbler with a vague notion that here, at last, was an object on which to vent his spleen. But when he saw who the person was who had touched him he relented, therein showing more sense than he was himself aware of. A brown-haired youth was standing at his back. He was dressed in a suit of what looked like gray alpaca. The inevitable Panama hat was on his head, with the brim turned down behind and up in front, quite in the orthodox way. A brier-pipe was between his lips. On his face, in his eyes, was something which suggested that, at any rate at the moment, he was much more disposed toward conviviality than the man he had accosted. At first, Otway—whose thoughts were elsewhere—could not recall exactly who he was; then the youngster's tongue gave him the clue.

"Hello, Lennard! Going the pace all by yourself?"

George Otway remembered. The newcomer was a lad named David Curtis. He had been one of the passengers on the *Cormorant,* who, after the sequel of the Colenutt incident, had shown willingness enough to fraternize. Curtis had been born in Canada, of English parentage. His father was dead. He had persuaded his mother to accede to his desire to complete his education at an English university. He was on his way to Cambridge—apparently still on his way. Otway, not slow to read the meaning of the something which was on the young gentleman's face, thought it possible that that slight circumstance might have slipped his memory; but he was wrong.

"I fancied you were at Cambridge."

"I'm down for the Long Vacation."

"Down for the Long? What do you mean? It's hardly more than a week since I saw you."

"My dear chap, you don't understand—the 'varsity's down for the Long, and I'm a member of the 'varsity. I've been up; entered my name on the books; paid the necessary fees; and have become a duly qualified undergraduate of Trinity College, Cambridge. So I thought I'd come back to Liverpool and have a look round before going on to town. Let me introduce my two friends, Mr. Howard and Major O'Callaghan—they've been helping me to celebrate. You two boys, this is Mr. Lennard."

Whereupon Otway learned that the two individuals in the background were the lad's associates. He had been celebrating—there could be no doubt whatever about that. But, if they had been his assistants in the sense he intended to convey, their share of the celebration had not affected either their demeanor or their appearance.

Otway told himself on the instant that two less desirable companions for a young gentleman, who was a solitary stranger in a strange land, he had not recently had the pleasure of encountering.

They were both immaculately dressed, though there was a trifle too much color in the major's necktie and too much jewelry about his person. They had the surface manners of good breeding; as Otway was soon to learn, they had well-bred voices. Yet the mere fact of the company they were in spoke volumes.

They were both middle-aged; had about them such an unmistakable air of being men of the world, men of the worst side of the world in a moral sense, that one was driven to wonder what men of their experience could find at-

tractive in the society of a raw Colonial youth; and the answer was not flattering to their standard of what was nice conduct on the part of men of honor.

Although young Curtis did not realize that it was so, they evidently objected to Otway's looks as much as he could have done to theirs. Compared to the warmth of the youngster's manner their enthusiasm was sadly to seek. He drew their attention to the two empty chairs which were at Otway's table.

"Here you are, you fellows, there are two chairs for you. I'll get another for myself, we'll celebrate together. Hi, waiter! Hit that bell; that'll bring him."

The major laid his hand persuasively on the lad's arm.

"I don't think we'll stop, thank you, my dear David."

Otway wondered if they had been the companions of the lad's childhood; or, if not, how long it had taken the major to reach the Christian-name stage. "We shall be troubling Mr. Lennard; and I would remind you that we had just arranged to continue the celebration at home. Come along, it's getting late; the longer we stop here the less time we shall have to celebrate, and I'm dying for a chance of showing you how that sort of thing ought really to be done."

The major had almost made a mistake in tactics. Curtis showed no particular inclination to act upon the other's hint.

"No hurry, old man! Sit down and make yourself comfortable! Lennard's an older friend of mine than you are —couldn't think of leaving him out when I'm painting the town red, especially when I'm so jolly glad to see him."

Otway reflected. He had still preserved the cognomen John Lennard, by which he had been known on the *Cormorant*. If he were an older friend than Major O'Callaghan, then that scarlet-necktied soldier must be a friend of very recent date indeed. Since, therefore, his friendship had advanced so rapidly to the "dear David" stage, it might, perhaps, be as well for the older friend to keep a watchful eye upon the youth, who had already been celebrating to a point which he would assuredly regret when the morning came.

The three seated themselves at Otway's table, Curtis ordering drinks with that air of lordly authority which only a very young man can assume, and he only when the conditions are propitious. Mr. Howard and the major showed themselves to be as temperate in disposing of the contents of their own glasses as they were eager in encouraging the lad to empty his own.

"Drink up!" exclaimed Mr. Howard, putting his lips to his own scarcely touched liquor, "and let's have another. You're not drinking, Mr. Lennard."

"Nor are you. You apparently agree with me in allowing forty-five minutes for each *consommation*."

Mr. Howard laughed, observing the speaker out of the corners of his eyes as he did so. In spite of his air of almost ostentatious congeniality there was about him something which was very suggestive of looking out of the corners of one's eyes—one felt, somehow, that it was an act in which he was probably proficient.

"We should be a much more sober nation than we are if we all did that, and this sort of place would suffer. At any rate, it's not a principle of our friend's here; he likes to get through his drinks at the rate of about twelve an hour, don't you, Curtis? Are you ready to recharge?"

"Rather. I always want to find out if the next drink is going to be better than the last. I didn't think much of that last one, if you ask me. There seems to be something about the whisky which they give you here which reminds you more of the chemist than of the distiller!"

"Isn't that a fault on the right side, Curtis? They say that there's nothing like medicine for doing you good, and you know medicine comes from the chemist."

"Yes, my hat!—and so does poison!"

"I'm inclined to think, Mr. Curtis, that you'll find this whisky poison. If

I were you I should cease to swallow it."

"There I'm with you, Mr. Lennard. You know, Howard, the stuff they give you here is filthy—a headache in every sip. Let's clear out of this! My dear David, if you want to taste something which does suggest the distillery you come with me. I'll give you some of the finest whisky you ever tasted—there's nothing like it to be got in England."

"Where do you want me to come to?"

The same question had been floating through Otway's mind.

"Why, to my house, my dear David. I've got a little place over at Sefton Park—well, I don't want to boast, so you come and see it; you'll find it snug enough—and Howard here will tell you that I know how to treat a friend."

"There's not the slightest doubt in the world that you know how to treat a friend," O'Callaghan, especially a friend of a certain kind."

The sneer was so marked, so unconcealed, that nothing could bear more eloquent testimony to the condition the lad was in than the fact that he failed to notice it. The major, more sensitive, shot a glance at his associate which hinted that he probably did know how to treat a friend of a certain kind; and, under a veil of elaborate courtesy, his answer conveyed as much.

"My dear David, Howard's quite right—quite right! I do know how to treat a friend of a certain kind, and he has every reason to know it, too. But come, we're wasting time; let me pay for the drinks and get out of this place, I don't like it at all."

With sublime unconsciousness young Curtis suddenly drew a herring across the scent which the hospitable major was so diligently pursuing.

"Are you coming with us, Lennard?"

"Coming with you to Major O'Callaghan's residence in Sefton Park? Hardly, since I have not been asked."

"Oh, that's all right; you needn't make any bones about that. The major's game to ask any one who's a pal of mine, aren't you, old chap? Tell Lennard he's to come right along with us."

Not impossibly Major O'Callaghan had had some experience in the sometimes difficult art of schooling one's countenance, but even he was unable to prevent his face from showing what a very unwelcome proposition his young friend had made. He looked at his associate—a look which was full of meaning! He looked at the lad; he looked at the individuul whom that young gentleman proposed to thrust upon him in such a singularly unceremonious fashion, and there was that in the manner in which—after a long, steady and not over civil inspection—he withdrew his eyes, which convinced George Otway that he did not like the look of him at all. In that too friendly fashion, which struck Otway as being, in a gentleman of his sort, his weakest point, he laid his hand caressingly on the youngster's shoulder.

"My dear David, on this occasion I want to devote my whole energies to entertaining you." Otway believed that—heartily. "On some other occasion I shall be only too glad to have the pleasure of Mr. Lennard's company; and for this evening, doubtless, he has other engagements. Come along, this place is giving me a headache."

"I shan't go unless Lennard does. If you don't want my friend you don't want me."

There was a directness about this which took the major aback, and which provided Mr. Howard with an opportunity to show that he was a man of resource.

"That's the way to put it, Curtis—to-night we'll all keep in the same boat. And, anyhow, four's better than three. Perhaps, Mr. Lennard, you'll do me the honor of coming to my place for a cigar and a drink. I can't pretend to offer you the sort of thing my friend has, but to what I have you're very welcome."

The major was quick to take the other's cue. Otway was conscious that in a contest of that sort he was not likely to be beaten.

"Nonsense! I was only thinking

that perhaps Mr. Lennard wouldn't relish such an abrupt invitation. If Mr. Lennard goes anywhere he comes to me; mayn't I hope it, Mr. Lennard?"

"Thank you; I shall have much pleasure in going where Mr. Curtis goes, if I may."

There was an intention in the words which Otway felt was not lost upon his listeners, and which they did not relish, though they showed no inconsiderable skill in concealing their distaste. The major's manner was sugar itself.

"Very good of you to take it like that, Mr. Lennard; very good indeed. Now, if we're all ready, suppose we make a start. It'll have to be a question of a couple of cabs. I'll go on with David in the first one, and you, Howard, follow with Lennard in the other."

Again Mr. Curtis was in opposition. Otway was half inclined to suspect that what he had drunk had not so much effect upon him as had at first appeared; for a semi-intoxicated man, he seemed to be preternaturally keen in detecting what might be at the back of the major's mind. So soon as he had spoken, Otway perceived that, if the associates chose, the major might take advantage of the two-cab arrangement to have the lad all by himself, after all, and the same idea might have occurred to the boy.

"No, you don't. You and Howard can go together. I'll follow with my friend Lennard, if you'll tell me where we're to come to."

Again the colleagues exchanged glances, which again were pregnant with meaning. Once more Mr. Howard suggested another way.

"We'll go four in a growler—that'll be the most sociable way of doing it."

They went four in a growler, though the drive could hardly be described as having been quickened by the spirit of sociability. As soon as they had started, Mr. Curtis began to demonstrate that he was passing through the usual stages which mark a certain type of man who has been drinking heavily—he became argumentative, quarrelsome, even pugnacious, showing a ridiculous inclination to rush headlong over the road along which they would have been content to gently lead him.

"You said you could play poker—poker! Only this afternoon you told me you could play poker."

This was to Howard, who was blandness itself.

"I mentioned that I had seen the game played."

"Then I say you haven't. You can put that in your pipe and smoke it. I say you haven't! No one in England has; not poker, not real poker!"

"Of course, we unfortunate Britishers understand that the game had its origin on the other side of the water."

"Oh, you do understand so much, do you? Then you can understand something else; you can understand that I play poker, real poker! Do you doubt it?"

"Not for a single instant."

"Because I'll just show you if you do, and I'll teach you a lesson."

"I shall be very happy, Mr. Curtis, to receive instruction at your hands."

"Oh, you will be, will you? Then you shall have it. I'll teach you, too!"

This was addressed to Otway, who was seated at his side.

"With Mr. Howard I shall be delighted to be taught; though, again with Mr. Howard, I have seen the game played."

"I dare say you have; I don't say you haven't; you've knocked about the world. But I'll bet you've never seen it played as I play it."

"I think that's extremely possible."

There was a dryness about the speaker's tone which moved Howard to sudden laughter, and the laughter moved the young gentleman to something like wrath.

"What are you laughing at? There's nothing to laugh at that I can see, unless you want to call me a liar, and if you do, perhaps you'll be so good as to say so right straight out!"

"My dear Curtis! I was only amused at Mr. Lennard's modesty. He evidently doesn't need your telling to be aware that you can teach him something."

"And I can teach you something,

too, and likewise the major—though you do fancy yourselves! You're perhaps not so clever as you think you are. You think you've caught a flat, I know! —think I don't know? But you can take it from me that before the night's out, I'll show you you're mistaken."

Otway wondered, and was inclined to doubt. On board the *Cormorant* David Curtis had impressed him as being a decent, well-bred lad, and a fairly shrewd one. But now, only too plainly, decency and shrewdness had both gone by the board. George Otway was disposed to ask if it were really worth his while to save the hobbledehoy from being taught a lesson which might do him good. Then he remembered what the lad had told him—of how he had been brought up as a teetotaler in his Canadian home. Evidently the ingenious pair on the opposite seat had practised alike on his innocence and ignorance; had induced him to drink by concealing what would be the probable result; and this was the result.

They stopped in front of a house which, judging by the exterior, might have been unoccupied. There was not a light in any of the windows; apparently they were all shuttered. The major opened the door with a latch-key. A small hand-lamp burned in the hall, only just serving to relieve the utter darkness.

"Rather dim in here," remarked the host. "They never know when I may come home, so I tell them to have only just light enough to prevent my tumbling over things."

Holding the lamp above his head he piloted the way up-stairs, ushering them into a room on the first floor, at the back. It was a good-sized apartment, furnished in a style which nothing they had seen hitherto could have caused them to expect. It was well lighted by electric bulbs; there was a grand piano; there were fine engravings on the walls, and an abundance of comfortable easy chairs and lounges—all the appointments which go to the making of a handsome room. Otway looked about him, then at the host, and smiled. The smile caught the major's eye.

"This is my little place, Mr. Lennard; I hope you like it."

"Very cozy, major, and quiet. I should think that you could do what you liked in here and no one would be one penny the wiser."

"That's the charm of it; in a great city like Liverpool quiet's the essential thing. Now, my dear David, you shall sample that whisky of which I was telling you." He went to a side-table, on which was a display of decanters and tumblers. "There, my boy, try that! You know good stuff when you get it; tell me if you ever tasted anything better."

Curtis drained the tumbler which he gave him at a draft.

"Perfect!—nectar!—real nectar! Major, that's worth a sovereign a glass; give me another."

The tumbler was refilled; the three elders attacked their glasses with much more discretion than the lad. The talk, for a few seconds, was desultory. Then the major brought it back to the point.

"Weren't you saying, my dear David, something about poker?"

"I should rather think I was. I said —and I say again—that I'll show you how to play poker—real poker—if any one here is man enough to learn."

"Always ready, David, to be taught something I didn't know before. There's a pack of cards somewhere about the place, I feel sure there is."

The major proceeded to hunt for that pack of cards with an ignorance of its whereabout which was pathetic. Here, there, everywhere he had to look before he found it, the find finally taking place at the back of a drawer in one of the cabinets.

"Knew there was one somewhere; was convinced of it. Ah, there's two packs, that's still better; need be no waiting, shuffle one while we play with the other. Will those cards do, David, to play poker with?"

He displayed the two packs with an air of the sublimest innocence.

"Of course they'll do—any cards will do—I've played with cards on which you couldn't count the pips for dirt.

Look here, this isn't going to be any fool game, this isn't. See that! that's money, and plenty of it—good money—and this game's going to be played for money. Any man who wants to play will show his money before he starts."

Curtis took out of a letter-case a roll of bank-notes. Otway, who was standing near the two men, said to Major O'Callaghan:

"I need hardly point out that this lad is not in a fit condition to play poker for any considerable stakes."

Howard immediately swung round toward the lad in question.

"You hear that, Curtis? Your friend, Mr. Lennard, says that you're incapable of playing poker."

Curtis banged his fist against the table.

"Incapable of playing! Who says I am incapable of playing? You sit down there, Lennard, and I'll show you if I'm incapable of playing."

Howard struck in:

"I would prefer that Mr. Lennard should do nothing of the kind. Since he evidently has been drinking, I would suggest that he withdraw."

"Let me advise you, Mr. Howard, that I have no intention whatever of leaving this half-intoxicated lad at your mercy, no matter what form your suggestion may take."

The major endeavored to play the part of pacifier.

"Come, come! we've all of us been having a drop, that's about the truth of it; let's calm down a bit before we talk of playing. I tell you what I'll do, I'll introduce the soothing influence of ladies. I'll ask my wife to join us, and a young lady. My dear David, the most charming girl you've ever encountered, though she's a little——"

He finished his sentence by touching his forehead with his forefinger.

"Do you mean she's crazy?"

"Not crazy, my dear David, anything but that; only she was the victim of rather a singular accident, of which she is still feeling the ill effects. But I will fetch her, and you shall judge for yourself."

So soon as the major was out of the room, Curtis, who had seated himself at a table, began fingering a pack of cards.

"I don't want to see any girls. I want to play poker! Here, give me some more to drink!"

"Not only shall you have no more, but you shan't drink what you have."

Taking the glass from the lad's unresisting hand Lennard emptied the contents onto the carpet. Curtis stared.

"What did you do that for?"

"Haven't you palate enough to perceive that the stuff's doctored? I suspect the soda, not the whisky, because I notice that your friend the major serves us out of one siphon and himself out of another."

If looks could have scorched, judging from the glances with which Mr. Howard favored the speaker, that gentleman would have been pleased to see George Otway turned into tinder.

"Only the fact that we both of us are guests in my friend's house prevents me from breaking every bone in your body, Mr. Lennard."

"Then how fortunate it is for you that we happen to be in your friend's house, Mr. Howard!"

"Now no fighting, no fighting! Don't I tell you that I want to have a little game?"

Just as Mr. Curtis—for the twelfth time—was proclaiming this fact in tones which were considerably above a whisper, the door opened, and there stood the major, ushering in two ladies. The first was a plump, black-haired, dark-eyed lady, who, although not in her first youth, still had not inconsiderable pretensions to good looks. The second was Elsie Thornton.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The Sound Machine

By Everard Jack Appleton

Author of "Mr. Hinvisible 'Iggins," "The Sea Serpent Syndicate," Etc.

The host of readers who have enjoyed following Mr. Appleton's quaint characters through their various amusing adventures will doubtless be deeply interested in this account of how another of the partners' cherished "good things" goes wrong

"WHAT I need," says Billy Martin, wiping the mud off his shoe with a bunch of grass, "is a rich uncle to die and leave me a fortune."

"What you'll need if you spring that old gag on me again," says I, "is an ambulance. Every time we've gone broke at the track this way, Billy Martin, you've worked that one off some time durin' our perambulations back to civilization. I'm getting so good and tired of it I can taste it comin'. You want somebody to give you a new line of thought more'n you need a rich uncle—and you're more likely to get it, too."

The plank Billy was walking on upended and he soshed into another hole. That's one thing the track managers don't look after right—accommodations for the walkers back. It was getting dark, and we was still in Milldale, a long way from home. While Billy was cussing the mud and his luck and his friend I goes on ahead of him.

"You talk about that uncle that never lived, like you could reach up in the sky and pull down the money," says I. "You're older than me, Billy, but you ain't any stronger on philosophy than if you'd been born yesterday. If you had paid less attention to your feed-box tip, and more——" And that was as far as *I* got. The next minute I was rooting up real estate, one foot tangled in a piece of clothes-line. Billy laughed when I cut loose with a few remarks about careless washerwomen, and then he stops and commenced pulling on the line.

It wasn't hanging from a post or tree; it went straight up into the air until it was out of sight.

"That's funny," says he to himself.

"It would have been funnier still," says I, "if I had sprained my fool ankle and you had to carry me home. What are you doing?"

"Nothing," says he, pulling on the line sailor fashion. "I'm just curious to see what's on the end of this here rope."

"Perhaps it's the rich uncle," says I; "unless you don't think he went in that direction when he died."

Something that looked like a buzzard came swooping down on me from the sky at the other end of the rope just then. It had got dark now, so we couldn't see exactly what it was; but Billy struck a match and held the light long enough to show that it wasn't no bird. The best we could make out of it was a little balloon, with a lot of wires and boxes and levers and things on a piece of tin, hung below the gas bag.

"Well," says Billy, "name it and it's yours."

"Not for me," says I; "it's some sort of an invention, and if there's one thing I'm leery about it's inventions. Keep it yourself, with my regards. Merry Christmas, Billy—and I hope you know what to do with the flying machine!"

He was already wrapping the rope

around it, and I see by the way he done it that he was going to carry the thing home.

"If that is your uncle," says I, "of course you've got the right to bury him where you like; but if it happens to be that some oroide inventor is looking for it I don't know you, and never saw you before, when he gets wise to who stole his air-ship. Understand?"

Billy kept on wrapping the bundle up. "Finders is keepers," says he; "especially when you find things in the sky. Mebbe we *have* reached up there and pulled down a fortune, after all, Jimmy Raines; you can't tell."

"And neither can you," says I, "until the coppers nab you for swiping some angel's plaything. Carry it home if you want to, but don't ask me to help nurse the thing."

"Don't worry about that," says he; "if I need help I'll pick out somebody with something besides scrambled eggs and sure-thing tips that forget to win lining their skull. Come on!"

And as I hadn't got the rope loose from my foot yet I came on.

"Don't try to frisk me for my plaything," says Billy, feeling me sawing at the rope with my knife; "you didn't want it at first and now you can't have it."

"Any old time," says I, giving the rope a last swipe, "that I try to lift one of the inventions that you go crazy about, send me to Longview and lose the key! You can have all the medals coming to us on that score, and welcome."

I hears somebody talking excitedly. behind us in the dark, but Billy was grumbling about the sidewalk, and didn't stop. And knowing we had a long walk ahead of us—we hadn't even held out car fare—I let him go on.

When we got home the gas was all out of the balloon, and there wasn't enough left in Billy to answer me when I asks: "Where will your adopted relative sleep? In your bed or mine?" He just shoved it into a corner and commenced to shuck his clothes; and seeing he was in a bad humor I didn't pursue the subjeck, as the side-show spieler used to say.

I come to the next morning, thinking I'd dropped into a clock store overnight and all the alarm buzzers was working overtime. The racket didn't come from our room, but as soon as I got my eyes open enough to see that Billy wasn't in bed, I figured the noise was his. Whatever Billy Martin does he does heartylike; and if he wanted to raise the shingles off the roof with a poker and a piece of sheet iron, nobody in that neighborhood would try harder than him to get the most noise out of the combination.

I sticks my head out of the back window. Down in the back yard he had the balloon filled with gas, floating about over his head. He was sitting cross-legged on the end of the rope, and hammering a rag-time with a broomstick on a stove zinc, that would have put a boiler factory all to the bad. He'd look hard at a little machine sitting beside him and then up at the tin platform hung onto the balloon, and he seemed so happy and unconcerned you might have thought him leading Sousa's band for five dollars a number. I took a bellows full of air and yells: "Billy!"

He stops and looks up at me.

"If you have to break all the windows and tear the house up just to keep that out-of-the-sky uncle of yours awake," says I, "why in creation don't you use dynamite, and get it over with? Ain't he up yet?"

"Who?" says Billy, dreamylike.

"That fake uncle. He couldn't stay dead with that hullabaloo going on."

"I'm not trying to wake my uncle," says Billy, very dignified; "I'm generating power."

Well, it had come at last! Many a time I'd warned him not to fool with patents and inventions, or he'd get a flat wheel; and now he'd got it. Poor Billy was loony—that was sure.

"Generating power?" says I, reaching for my clothes. "He'll be generating a straight-jacket for himself if I don't get that thing away from him;" and I hustles into my day harness any old way I could. When I reached the

yard I expected to find Billy with a wild look in his face, babbling baby talk to himself; but he wasn't. He'd softened up his Indian war drumming so it didn't jar your back-bone to hear it, and before I could make up my mind how to hold him till the police got there he turns around and says: "Jimmy, this is no angel's plaything; it's a model of a power engine—it's a sound machine."

"From what I've heard," says I, getting my suspenders on right, "it certainly sounds like it! But don't you mind, Billy! We'll get you to the hospital and they'll give you nice medicine, and you'll go to sleep, and when you wake up it will be all right again. I'm your——"

"Cut it out," says Billy, as natural as if he hadn't lost his mind. "I'm not dippy. I was just experimenting. Look at the little engine right there in front of you; you can see I'm telling you the straight of it. This balloon is a combination of a telephone and graphophone, and a lot of other phones I don't know about. When it is sent up in the air, the noise from the streets and the factories rises till it hits them sensitive plates. They commence to wobble just like the telephone receiver does, and that starts the wire trembling. It is connected with the engine you're nearly stepping on, and—see the wheel go round?"

Foolish as his talk seemed, the wheel he pointed at *was* running. It slowed up now and stopped; but when Billy rapped the zinc with the broomstick a couple of times it commenced to whirl again. Billy was in his right mind, after all.

"Well," says I, "what's it to you? You've got a sound machine, as you call it, but what'll it do? Make hokey-pokey or mend umbrellas? I don't see no fortune in whirling a two-inch wheel around with the racket you gather up free of charge out of the air. Show me the graft."

"You're always shy on imagination," says Billy, very snappish; "can't see anything till I throw it in your face. This machine is only a model, mutton head. When the big one is made it will have enough power to run real machinery—a house full of it. Multiply the sound machine by a hundred, and you've got all the power you want to operate a dozen manufacturing plants. Pretty soon the sky will be full of these things—big ones—all soaking up vibrations from the streets and handing it over to the machines in the factories. The wheels go round—and you don't have to buy coal or electricity. It's a great idea."

"Yes," I says, trying to head him off, "it's hot stuff, all right, but I ask again where do *we* get in? If you build a bigger sound machine and hitch it up over the city and sop up a lot of noise and turn it into steam and electricity, somebody'll come along and claim——"

"That is my machine!"

We both ducked; a quiet looking gray-haired man was standing back of us, pointing at the contrivance Billy had kidnaped.

"Youah stole it from me, across the river last night," he says, his voice trembling, "but I followed! And I'll have the law on you."

"Hold on a minute," says Billy, smooth as butter, as I give him credit for being when it looks like rain, "we didn't steal your balloon; it tripped my friend, Mr. Raines, and trying to get him free from the anchor rope we pulled it down. Not knowing where it had come from, and you not being there, we carried it home, intending to advertise it in the papers. I was just giving it a try-out to see what sort of an invention you have; and I must say, sir, you have opened up a wonderful field! This will revolutionize all power generating the world over!"

Ain't it funny what a little Mexican salve will do when it's spread right? Billy surely knows that game, and before he had finished the blood had gone out of the old fellow's eye, and he was smiling as proud as a boy with a new lockjaw pistol. "If that is the case, suh," says he, "and youah did not intend to appropriate my property, I accept your explanation, and will take the machine and depart."

"Certainly, certainly," says Billy, "but I see you are hot and tired. Jimmy, get that bottle out of the closet and some ice and sugar; Mr.—Mr.——"

"Tesledy, suh; Colonel John Harmsworth Tesledy, of Kentucky."

"Colonel Tesledy," says Billy, "I would consider it an honor if you would mix a small julep for yourself."

That did the business! Before Colonel Tesledy left us him and Billy had framed up a company to build the machines, and had their fortunes all made and ready to spend. They took me in as vice-president—so's to keep me quiet, Billy said—and the next day we went over to the colonel's house and finished up the work of organizing the company. When Billy Martin gets a start on a thing of that kind he moves some; and it wasn't a week before we had a machine of the regular size built.

The colonel did a good part of the work himself, of course, because that was his secret, but Billy and I helped, and when the machine went up into the air and the engine commenced to run it certainly began to look good, even to me.

We hitched it onto a lathe, and there was nothing to complain about as far as it went—it did the work. I never was strong on machinery, a wheelbarrow being about my limit in this line, but I could see there wasn't nothing wrong with that bunch of wheels and levers.

While we stood watching the lathe buzzing, Colonel Tesledy says to me, as proud as if he'd won his first race: "It would appeah, Mr. Raines, that we are closely approaching perpetual motion, suh. We simply place our machine where it gathers and concentrates the vibrations that are filling the air; we transmit them to the lathe; it runs, casting off other vibrations; these, added to the noise of the street cars, teams, factories and pedestrians, float upward again to the collector and condenser, new power is generated and transmitted to the lathe once more—and there youah ah, suh!"

He shoves his cuffs up with the backs of his hands and smiles. If ever a man was pleased he was wearing the colonel's moccasins that day! And Billy was almost as proud himself.

For a week we worked like roustabouts getting the new factory over in Cincinnati into shape. But the day we opened up is one I hate to think about! Just when we could see the world coming to us and begging to be taken in out of the wet; when we was planning where to spend all the money we was going to make, and getting ready to buy dress-suits for the banquets kings and dukes and lords was going to give us, we had a crimp put in us that is never been ironed out to this day.

I was attending strictly to my duties as vice-president, I remember, when it come. I had fixed all the blotters clean and nice, and was smoking my third cigar, with my feet on the desk, when the wild man from Borneo drops into the office and spills himself over the railing.

"Colonel Tesledy!" he yells, like a calliope out of tune, "you've stole *my* idea! You have no right to the sound machine. Give up this plant to me or I'll take your life!"

My feet came off the desk, and if I didn't swallow the cigar it wasn't because I kept my mouth shut.

"Excuse me!" says I, loud and positive. "You've got the wrong party. I'm not Colonel Tesledy, and I need all the life I've got in my own business. If you're looking for the colonel step into the machine shop; out that way, and two doors to the right."

He starts, and I makes a break to get in the back way to tip him off to the colonel. But I've took notice that your Kentuckian don't need no one tipping off trouble to him. He smells it coming—and goes to meet it with a smoke wagon. Before the wild man could say the colonel's name he was covered by a gun with a muzzle as big as a sewer pipe; and he wasn't wild enough to keep on going when the colonel says "Stop!

"Sit right down where youah ah, suh," says the colonel; "and when youah ah sufficiently composed to make youahself understood, youah may explain the reason for this visit."

Mr. Wildman sits down. "You've stole my machine," says he again, "and you'll give it back to me or I'll wreck you!"

"Mr. Raines," says the colonel, calm as a frog pond, "will you be kind enough to promulgate a little of that select Bourbon this way? I think our visitor would be more intelligible if he were to join us in a julep or a high-ball."

I steps over to the colonel's desk and gets the bottle out.

"Don't try to put me off," says the wild man, "you cannot escape me! I demand my rights. Unless you give up those sound machines by to-morrow morning, I'll wreck you. I swear it!"

The colonel took the bottle from me and passed a glass across the table to Mr. Crazy. "Wreck us?" says he, raising his eyebrows. "And would you mind telling me how, suh?"

The trouble hunter leans across the table hissing like a rattlesnake. "You don't know the power I have in this town," says he. "I'll have every street paved with tanbark! I'll get an ordinance through the council to make everybody wear rubber heels! The wagons shall be rubber-tired; the street-car wheels shall be the same; the factory windows shall all be closed. In a week, Colonel Tesledy, Cincinnati shall be known as the Silent City. There will be no noise to run the sound machine! That is how I will wreck you. See here!" and he pulls from his pocket a bunch of papers that would have choked a hippopotamus. "Here," says he, "are the ordinances, drawn up. Look at the names signed; they mean that they will become laws without delay, for I tell you I have the power, and I will use it!"

The colonel, who was pouring out a glass of his favorite Bourbon, stops, and I notice his face begun to get frosted. As for me, I had cold feet then and there. If that wild man could do half he said, we was playing a horse that was running the wrong way, and that's no dream! That thought hit me hard, and I could see, easy enough, that with little old Cincinnati doing a sleep-walking act, dressed in mackintoshes and sneaks, we wouldn't be one-two-six with our sound machine. We had to have a noise to get it going—and Mr. Stakeclaimer was going to see that we didn't get it.

The colonel's hand shook while he turned the fizzy water into the whisky in his glass, and I knew he was thinking ninety miles an hour. "Before we go any further, suh," says he, at last, "suppose we irrigate. Regards!" and he drank his down. Mr. Nuts did the same—and then he makes a face that would have put Pat Rooney, the old monkey, all to the bad. "Your ideas of irrigating," says he, "are about as bad as your ways of acquiring machines. That stuff is vile."

Colonel Tesledy stops with his second glass on the way to his mouth, and if he had any blood in the rest of his body it was because his face couldn't hold it.

"Will you say that again?" he asks in a voice that made the window panes crack with the cold.

"I says," repeats Mr. Bughouse, easy and confident, "that's the worse stuff I ever drank. What do you call it? Wood alcohol?"

"What!" says the colonel, talking to somebody up in Columbus, judging by his voice. "What! That, suh, is some of the very oldest, most choice, most perfect Bourbon ever made in Kentucky. From my own county, suh, in a distillery that has been in continuous operation for sixty-five years. That whisky is wuth its weight in gold, suh, and I tell youah——"

"I tell you," says Mr. Batty, pushing the bottle away, "that you are no judge of whisky."

The colonel rose to his feet, and the red in his face turned green and purple. He tried to say something, and then he tried to get his gun out again; but before he could do either he clasps his hands to his head, and slap! bang! he goes to the floor. I makes a fireman-jump for him, and the wild man starts to sneak, but the door opens in his face, and there was Billy Martin, with two huskies in gray uniforms.

"That's the man," says one of them, while Billy hot-foots across the room to see what I was doing. Then I hears the husky say to our visitor: "Come along with us, Harney; the wagon's out here, waitin' for you. We'll go back with you, and talk about your machine all the way."

The wild man grinned. "All right, Fred," he says; "I was just selling my rights to these gentlemen when you came in. I'll be worth a million dollars to-morrow, and I'm going to get you both new suits of clothes—pretty ones, all strung with diamonds and pretzels and gold dollars."

I was loosening the colonel's collar and pouring water in his face, but I stopped long enough to ask Billy: "Which asylum?"

"Longview," says he. "Escaped last night, and they traced him here. Did he hit the colonel?"

"Yes," says I.

"Where?" asks Billy, turning to go after the bughouse boy and soak him.

"In his pride," says I; "but it won't be fatal. Bring him to, and explain that the guy was a nut, and he'll be all right."

But he wasn't. Billy says that it's a phishislogical fact, whatever that means, that a great shock on a man's nerve often does what that did to the colonel. He come to all right, and he talked as good as ever; but when we went back to the machines he'd clean forgot how to put the finishing touches to 'em. Try as he would, he couldn't get that last kink into the blamed things. He done his best all that afternoon, but it wouldn't come; all he could remember when he tackled them was, "You're no judge of whisky!" And with them words burning into his heart and ringing in his ears he'd sit down and cry like a two-year-old.

It looked sort of ridiculous, that's true, and Billy and me had to button our faces up to keep from laughing; but when the next day and the next passed without the colonel being able to connect with his ideas, it come over us that we'd never get both trolleys back on the wire again.

And we never did. Every other way the colonel was able to toe the mark; but when he tried machine thinking he run wild. Me and Billy talked it over one night, and decided to hook up with the proposition ourselves; but every man's got his limits, and if mine is a wheelbarrow, Billy's don't get much further than a lawn-mower. Inside of two hours we had ruined all the sound machines—ruined 'em good and proper and for all time, too; and when Billy come out of the last mix-up, grease on his hands and oil on his face, he says:

"This, James, is where we transfer. We've played the sound machine for all it's worth, and backed it off the board, but I know when I've got enough; do you?"

Did I? Ask me! That vice-president job was a good one, as long as the cigars lasted and the blotters was handy; but I had a sneaking idea there'd be other visitors from the foolish factories—and they're the kind of playmates I never did get enthusiastic about.

I wipes my hands and takes my coat off the hook.

"Billy," says I, "I moves that this Sound Machine Corporation dissolves here and now. What do you say, colonel?"

The old gentleman nodded; he was too near leaking tears to say anything, for he knowed we was nosed out at the finish of our race, by his falling down on us.

"Agreed," says Billy; "it looks like a shame to give up all this good machinery to the scrap pile, but there ain't no use projecting around with it. Billy and I can make some kind of a living picking twenty-to-one shots, colonel, and I know you are well fixed down home in your own country. You go back there and take it easy; if you ever remember the combination again you know where to find us, and we're game to try it again; but now I think we had better dissolve the Sound Machine Corporation, Limited—in one of your unequaled mint juleps. if you're willing!"

And we was all willing!

The Adventures of Felix Boyd

By Scott Campbell

Author of the "Below the Dead Line" Series, Etc.

This is the first of a new series of stories dealing with the exploits of Mr. Campbell's famous character, Felix Boyd. In this series, however, the operations of the detective will no longer be confined to below the "Dead Line," but he will be seen in a much broader field. We believe that this new series will prove even more popular with our readers than did the old, which is saying a great deal.

I.—THE CRIMSON FLAME

(*A Complete Story*)

H, yes, Peterson knew her to be all right—or he thought he did!

This, in so far as Peterson was concerned, amounted to very nearly the same. And since it is in the nature of most men to act upon what they think, rather than really know, the rascally affair developed and came to a head in a perfectly natural way.

It was close upon three o'clock when Mr. Felix Boyd appeared upon the scene. He sauntered into the magnificent jewelry store with the air and aspect of one quite aimlessly impelled, rather than conscious that only some very serious occasion could have evoked the hurried summons to which he was responding.

It was an hour when Fifth Avenue is thronged with the carriages of the wealthy and fashionable, when the famous street is astir with much of the beauty and culture of metropolitan life, when select shoppers are out in full force and modish attire, and when retail stores are thronged with their most desirable patrons.

The noted jewelry store into which Felix Boyd had sauntered was no exception—a house known the country over, with branch establishments in London, Paris and Berlin, with business connections in nearly every foreign country, and a firm whose dealings in precious stones and rare art treasures easily surpass those of any competitors at home or abroad.

Yet Mr. Felix Boyd appeared to have no interest in the gorgeous display in the vast store: the glittering contents of magnificent wall cabinets and elaborate show-cases; the tables of rich European and Oriental porcelain, *faience* and *cloisonné*, rare pieces of Limoges, Satsuma, Arita and Ninsei, many worth thrice their weight in gold. With no eyes for the splendid exhibit of gold and silver and gems and jewels, of curious carvings in ivory and stone, of priceless specimens of the lacquer ware of Kajikawa, Ritsuo and Korin, of stands of ancient armor and arms, with curious Turkish simitars and wicked Japanese swords—with eyes for none of these, nor for the persons gathered at many of the tables and counters, obviously people of wealth and cultured discrimination, Mr. Felix Boyd proceeded toward the rear of the deep store and approached the man to whose telephone summons he had promptly responded.

"Well, Jimmie, what now is the trouble?" he quietly asked, a faint smile lending a curve to the firm line of his thin, red lips.

The man addressed was Detective Coleman, of the Central Office, whose relations with Boyd during the latter's professional engagements in the New York banking district are readily recalled by those familiar with Boyd's remarkable detective work below the famous "dead line." Months had passed since those eventful days, however, and though the bond of friendship between these two had by no means relaxed the habits and vocation of each had somewhat changed.

With the extermination of the notorious gang of criminals with which the banking district long had been infested, Felix Boyd had canceled his contracts in that locality and relinquished his office in Pine Street. Firmly refusing repeated requests that he would unite with the Central Office, where his rare acumen and peculiar methods were keenly appreciated, Boyd now had established himself up-town as a private detective, available for advice or consultation, in which unofficial capacity only could he be engaged.

Naturally enough this departure of Boyd from the banking district, where Coleman long had been stationed, was not without serious effect upon the Central Office man. It had left him lonely, depressed and discontented, a condition which soon resulted in his threatening to throw up his commission unless he was assigned a more general line of outside work, which change finally had been sanctioned by the powers that ruled in Mulberry Street. Thus, to his infinite satisfaction, Coleman was enabled to renew his relations with Felix Boyd, to whom he since had frequently turned for aid and advice; and it was to such an appeal that the latter was responding at three o'clock that February afternoon.

Coleman's countenance lighted upon seeing him approach, and he presently introduced him to the group of men to whom he had been talking.

"The trouble may be told in a nutshell, Felix," he quickly answered, with a semisubdued growl. "A valuable diamond has been stolen, or lost under deucedly suspicious circumstances, and I'm on a fence as to which. You know Mr. Ellery, here, one of the firm; also Mr. Dillon, I think, who is general supervisor on this floor. This young man is Mr. Peterson, chief clerk at the diamond counter, who was showing the missing stone to a lady."

"A valuable jewel, Jimmie, did you say?" Boyd indifferently inquired, with a nod and glance at the several gentlemen mentioned.

They were grouped near the closed door of a private office, somewhat removed from any of the counters, and out of hearing and general observation by the visitors then in the store.

"Valuable—I should say so!" Dillon quietly exclaimed. "The stone is a famous one, none other than the wonderful Crimson Flame."

"The Crimson Flame?" echoed Boyd, with an inquiring glance at Mr. Ellery.

"I will explain," the latter hastened to rejoin, with some agitation. "Though it is not a large one, only a trifle over two carats, we value the stone at about four thousand dollars. It is perfectly white and without a flaw, yet it derives its great value chiefly from a very remarkable radiance which it possesses, the like of which we never have discovered in any other diamond."

"You interest me."

"When viewed at a certain angle this jewel so refracts the light that the stone appears to emit a single dazzling red gleam, which scintillates with extraordinary brilliancy, Mr. Boyd, and is curiously suggestive of a bright, wavering flame."

"From which, I infer, the stone derives its name."

"Exactly," bowed Mr. Ellery. "It is a remarkable gem, very remarkable, and it was obtained for us with some difficulty and expense by our agent in Brazil. I venture to say that a duplicate of it does not exist."

"No, no, none like it," declared Dillon, with an impressive nod at Boyd.

"We have had it on exhibition in one of our windows for some weeks, and it has been greatly admired," Ellery continued. "For the past week it has been locked in the vault back of our diamond counter, from which Peterson took it to show the lady mentioned. Aside from its intrinsic value, Mr. Boyd, we are seriously disturbed by the loss of it."

"When was it lost, Mr. Ellery?"

"Less than an hour ago. Having perfect confidence in Peterson's honesty, I feel sure that the jewel has been stolen, and that he was victimized by some crafty trick, the nature of which——"

"One moment, Mr. Ellery," said Boyd, now turning quite abruptly to the Central Office man. "What are the circumstances, Jimmie, stated in a breath? Time may be worth something, you know."

"Oh, we have the woman, Felix."

"Ah, very good!"

"The jewel was lost at the diamond counter, at which she had called to examine some unset gems. Peterson was serving her, and at her request he showed her this curious diamond. It was in a small velvet case, and both case and the diamond were, either by accident or design, knocked from the counter. When Peterson hastened to pick up the case, he discovered that it was empty, and the diamond cannot be found. If the woman has it——"

"Stop a bit, Jimmie. What has become of her?"

"She's in there," Coleman tersely answered, with a jerk of his thumb toward the closed office near the door of which they were standing.

"Under arrest?" queried Boyd.

"Not as yet. Despite her indignant protests, however, I am having her thoroughly searched by a woman detective whom I hurriedly summoned from headquarters."

"A wise move, I think."

"We may depend upon Nell Murray to find the jewel, Felix, if my lady has it hidden upon her person."

"Is the lady known, Jimmie?"

"Here's her card, or the one she gave me," growled Coleman, tendering a dainty slip of exquisitely engraved cardboard.

Felix Boyd took it and read:

MLLE. ESTELLE GERVAIS

M. FRANCOIS LOUBIN
Rue de la Paix, Paris

Such was the engraved card. In the lower right-hand corner of it, however, two words had been inscribed with a pen, in a dainty, feminine hand:

The Waldorf.

A subtle fire was beginning to glow in the depths of Felix Boyd's gray eyes. His brows had knit closer while he read. Retaining the card, from which he glanced up at Coleman, he drew off his gloves, dropped his voice a trifle and said pointedly:

"Give me free rein, Jimmie! This looks a bit off color!"

The Central Office man merely nodded.

"How long has Miss Murray been engaged in searching this woman—Mademoiselle Gervais?"

"About ten minutes. She'll do it thoroughly, Felix, trust her for that."

"Knock on the door, Jimmie, and quietly instruct her to prolong the search until she hears you rap again," said Boyd, scarce above a whisper. "Tell her you wish this woman detained in there pending further investigations. I think she will understand."

"I'll make sure that she does."

"Unobserved by Mademoiselle Gervais, I wish to look a little deeper into this affair before she is allowed to depart."

"I see the point, Felix," nodded Coleman, hastening to comply. "Leave the two women to me."

Boyd glanced again at the card, then his eyes sought those of Peterson, with a momentary scrutiny so searching that a swift wave of red imbued the blanched face of the distressed and agitated clerk.

"What do you know about this woman, Peterson?" he abruptly demanded.

Peterson pulled himself together with an effort and quickly shook his head.

"Nothing at all reliable, Mr. Boyd," he replied a bit huskily. "No more than her card states."

"Is she living at the Waldorf?"

"I think so."

"For any reason except that the card so states?"

"I twice have sent rings to her there, which she had left for alteration or repairs."

"Ah, then she has called here before?"

"Half-a-dozen times or more during the past month."

"As a purchaser, or merely to look about?"

"She has bought two diamonds of me, Mr. Boyd, for which gem she appears to have quite a passionate admiration," Peterson replied, with the eagerness of one anxious to square himself. "She seldom visits any of the other counters, but has spent much time looking over our display of diamonds."

"Did this awaken no distrust of her on your part?" demanded Boyd quite sharply.

"No, sir; I cannot say that it did," protested Peterson decidedly. "If that were reasonable grounds for distrusting her I should distrust hundreds of ladies who visit this store. On the other hand, Mr. Boyd, Mademoiselle Gervais impressed me most favorably. She appeared perfectly honest. She came from the first hotel in the city and invariably in a carriage. She appears to have ample means, dresses superbly, is irresistibly handsome, vivacious and fascinating——"

"All of which, Peterson, may signify something to which you apparently have been blind," Boyd dryly interrupted. "Her name indicates that she is a French woman, and I think that this card was engraved abroad. Do you know anything about the man whose name appears in one corner, François Loubin, of the Rue de la Paix, Paris?"

"I know all about that," nodded Peterson. "I was informed by Mademoiselle Gervais herself."

"Well?"

"Monsieur Loubin is a noted Paris dressmaker, and Mademoiselle Gervais is in New York as his representative. She has been here about a month, at the Waldorf, not exactly to solicit orders for her employer, but to influence with her own elaborate costumes the wealthy and fashionable women whom she naturally meets in such a hotel, many of whom frequently visit Paris. In this way she aims to increase the American patronage of Monsieur Loubin."

"Ah, yes, I see! Briefly put, Peterson, she is a sort of walking advertisement, eh?"

"Well, one might put it that way, Mr. Boyd."

"Humph!" ejaculated Boyd, with a rather quizzical smile. "For a man who knew nothing at all reliable about this woman, Peterson, you certainly have done very well. Your fund of information indicates that Mademoiselle Gervais, possibly with a design to captivate and more easily hoodwink you, has been unusually communicative."

"Well, I will admit the latter, Mr. Boyd."

"Possibly she has gone so far, Peterson, as to tell you how it happened that she failed to see this diamond in the store window, during the several weeks it was on exhibition," added Boyd, with rather caustic dryness.

"Yes, sir, she has," admitted Peterson, with a dubious attempt to smile.

"Ah, is that so, then? What has she said about it?"

"Only that, when entering from her carriage, she had not happened to notice the articles in the store windows. Yesterday, however, she heard the diamond described by a friend at the Waldorf, which led her to ask me to show it to her."

"Take me to the counter where the stone was lost. Wait here, Jimmie; I'll presently rejoin you. Mr. Ellery, you and Mr. Dillon may come with me."

An ominous ring had crept into Boyd's crisp voice. With a settled frown about his eyes, with a furtive

glance at the numerous clerks and customers in that part of the store, from all of whom the loss thus far had been concealed, he accompanied Peterson to a side counter some yards away. The top of it was covered with dark baize, a long table rather than a counter; while back of it, built into the wall, were two large safety vaults, the doors of which were closed.

Peterson stepped back of the table and said, there being no other clerk or visitors within hearing:

"Here is where I was standing, Mr. Boyd."

"And the woman?"

"She was seated in that chair in front of the table. Besides the case containing the Crimson Flame, I had out of the vault a package of small diamonds, one of which Mademoiselle Gervais had been thinking of having set in a ring with an emerald, which she possesses. I had just tied up the package of small gems when the accident occurred."

"State just how it occurred, Peterson," said Boyd indifferently, seating himself in the chair mentioned and drawing it nearer the table.

"The jewel-box, with the diamond in it, was lying here near the inner edge of the table," Peterson proceeded to explain. "Suddenly, while Mademoiselle Gervais was thanking me for my services, we both were startled by the crash of a breaking vase on one of the tables near the front of the store. Naturally we both turned in that direction, and then I heard the jewel-case strike the floor near my feet. When I picked it up, which I immediately did, the diamond was gone."

"Well, what next?" demanded Boyd, without a change of countenance.

"I was filled with immediate alarm," Peterson earnestly continued. "I at once began a search for the stone, in which Mademoiselle Gervais, also greatly disturbed, assisted me. She asserted that I had, when turning upon hearing the noise of the breaking vase, accidently struck the jewel-case with my sleeve and knocked it to the floor—an assertion which, as a matter of fact, I cannot positively deny."

"Not an unusual accident," Boyd tersely remarked. "Did the case fall on your side of the table?"

"Yes, it did, nearly at my feet."

"There appear to be no cracks, corners or crevices into which the stone could have rolled," said Boyd, bending to peer under the table and about the floor.

"Oh, no, indeed!" exclaimed Peterson quickly. "We are very guarded against anything of that kind, because of the danger in handling quantities of unset gems. The vaults, as you may see, are flush with the floor, and there is absolutely no crack or crevice into which the stone can have rolled. I quickly notified both Mr. Ellery and Mr. Dillon, and we have searched every inch of space into which the stone possibly could have gone. Its disappearance is a mystery to me, sir—unless Mademoiselle Gervais has stolen it, and as to that, Detective Coleman appears quite confident."

Still the thin, inscrutable countenance of Mr. Felix Boyd underwent no change. With his gaze lingering steadily on Peterson's pale face, he asked:

"Did you see Mademoiselle Gervais make any movement in the direction of the jewel-case, Peterson, just as the vase mentioned was broken?"

"No, sir; I did not."

"Were there any other clerks or any customers near this table?"

"Not one, sir. The nearest person was at least twenty feet away."

"Then it is not probable that the stone was seen and picked up by any stranger," observed Boyd, adding, with a glance at Mr. Ellery and Dillon, who were attentive listeners: "Were either of you gentlemen near the table on which the vase was broken?"

"Mr. Ellery was in his office, but I was a witness of the accident," replied Dillon. "A gentleman upset the vase with his arm while attempting to pass a lady in the aisle between two tables. He promptly offered to pay the damages, but the vase was not an expensive one, so I accepted only his profuse apologies. Peterson sent for me a moment later, and the stranger departed."

"He was a stranger, then?"

"I do not recall having seen him here before."

"Humph!" grunted Boyd, with a shrug of his shoulders. "On the face of it, gentlemen, this looks to me as if——"

There he abruptly stopped. For the bare fraction of a second, with an utterly indescribable light in his suddenly lowered eyes, he hung fire over expressing his opinion—and ended by not expressing it at all. Instead, with an indifference in startling contrast with his grim asperity of a moment before, he turned to the jeweler and said:

"If you have a paste stone, Mr. Ellery, or a cheap brilliant about the size of the lost diamond, I would like to borrow it."

The jeweler stared surprisedly, while Dillon fell to wondering what this extraordinary request might presage.

"I think I can provide you with one," said Ellery, after a moment.

"If you will be so good," replied Boyd. "It possibly may aid me to trace the missing gem. I will wait here while you get it, or send for it."

He had not moved from the chair in which he was seated—nor did he do so for some time after the jeweler returned and handed him the desired brilliant. For several moments he examined it attentively, then, still retaining it in his hand, he continued discussing the various features of the case, now further questioning Peterson, now making some remark to Mr. Ellery or to Dillon, at times quite irrelevant; and not till fully five minutes had passed did he rise from his chair.

"I think that is all, gentlemen," he curtly anounced. "I now want a word with Detective Coleman."

He did not wait for any reply from his disappointed hearers, who had hoped for something more from him. Presently followed by them, however, he strode quickly back and joined the detective, still waiting near the closed door of the private office. With a single significant glance, with his voice dropped to a forcible whisper, he hurriedly said:

"Not a word, Jimmie! The search in there will prove vain! Let the woman go—but arrest Peterson the moment Nell Murray makes her report! I'm in the background, mind you!"

If Coleman felt any surprise over this startling move by Felix Boyd, which very well exemplified the latter's peculiar methods, he in no way betrayed it. With a quick nod, as Boyd drew somewhat aside, he stepped to the office door and rapped twice on the panel. It was opened almost immediately, just as Ellery and his companions approached, and the woman detective from the police headquarters appeared on the threshold.

"Well, Nell, what have you found?" Coleman frowningly demanded with grim bruskness.

Though her strong, dark countenance was a sufficient answer, before Miss Murray could utter any reply she was thrust violently aside from behind, and Mademoiselle Gervais swept haughtily out of the office—a tall, superbly formed woman of thirty, a figure that might well have served any *modiste* for a model.

Boyd caught his breath for an instant when he beheld her, and did not much wonder at the impression she had made upon the jeweler's clerk. She was clad in a very handsome street costume, with an elaborate hat to match; while the remarkable beauty of her expressive face appeared only accentuated by the resentment that filled her. White to the lips, with eyes ablaze, with her fine figure shaken with passionate indignation, she glared from one to another of her startled observers and cried, in tones imbued with mingled rage and scorn:

"What shame! What humiliation! You have the audacity to subject me to—oh, the outrage! the cruelty of this affront! You shall pay for it, Monsieur Ellery—I say you shall pay for it. I will have redress—you shall pay for it in your American courts. I am shamed—dishonored—crushed. Monsieur Ellery, you shall pay for it. You are one—monster!"

For a moment her passionate indigna-

tion silenced every hearer. Though her enunciation of English was nearly perfect, her phraseology plainly evinced her nationality; and when, with blazing eyes, she poured her wrath upon the disturbed jeweler, Ellery shrank under the bitter denunciation.

"Really you must not blame me, Mademoiselle Gervais," he hurriedly stammered. "I but gave the case to a detective. It was by his order, not mine, that you were searched. I left the matter entirely to him, and——"

"And I have handled it in my own way and should do the same again," Coleman bluntly interrupted, with a threatening growl and the frown of one not wisely opposed. "You hold your tongue, my lady; and you, Nell, what did you find in there?"

"Nothing at all, Detective Coleman."

"No trace of the lost gem?"

"I'll swear this lady has not got it about her."

"There! Have I not said——"

"That's enough from you, my lady," snapped Coleman, with a snarl of impatience. "You may go. Get out as soon as you please—the sooner the better! But you, Mr. Peterson, now are under arrest!"

"Arrest! I under—arrest!"

The startled clerk shrank for an instant, echoing the one word with a cry of dismay, then appeared about to resent this utterly unexpected action.

It was precisely what Mr. Felix Boyd had anticipated. With a sudden bound he sprang at the startled clerk and seized him by the collar. Then came a flash of polished steel in the air, a sharp metallic clicking, and Peterson stared wildly down at his wrists and beheld them confined in manacles.

"Arrest—yes!" cried Boyd, with ringing austerity. "A very nasty trick on your part, Peterson, that of stealing a stone and attempting to foist your crime upon the shoulders of an innocent lady. Though we've not got the stone yet, we have you, my man; and I wager that a night in a prison cell will evoke the truth from you. An officer, Jimmie, and away to the Tombs with the rascal!"

There are moments when amazement and consternation silence every tongue, and this was one of them. Ellery, Dillon and the manacled clerk stood as if turned to stone. Coleman neither moved nor spoke. A crowd of people, hearers of the last few words, were surging toward the scene.

Impulsively, as if averse to further publicity, Mademoiselle Gervais, with her black eyes gleaming brightly, with her white features more composed as the tempest within her waned, gathered her skirts about her and swept haughtily away from the scene, passing quickly through the gathering throng, then out of the store and into her waiting carriage.

"Well, Felix," Coleman perplexedly growled as the two departed a little later, Peterson already having been sent to headquarters; "I'm blessed if it doesn't floor me! Why have you made this move, and what sort of a game are we up against?"

Boyd's keen eyes had a curious glint as they came round to meet those of the speaker.

"A gum game, Jimmie," he dryly declared, with a rather quizzical smile.

"But I fail to see——"

"Bah! You see that we have the thief all right, that's obvious enough. But that's not sufficient, old chap. It now is all important that we should land—the thief's confederate!"

II.

A mystifying obscurity, well calculated to mislead if not completely blind his observers, almost invariably characterized the work of Mr. Felix Boyd; and that done in the case brought to his notice that afternoon was no exception. It had left the Central Office man perplexed, Ellery and his employees dumfounded, and Mademoiselle Gervais—ah, well, the sentiments of Mademoiselle Gervais, whatever they may have been, were rather accentuated by a brief interview accorded an

unexpected visitor an hour later that Friday afternoon.

The stranger's card, which was brought up to the door of her elegant apartments by a bell-boy, bore a fictitious name, one Joseph Palfrey; while a line written upon it with a pencil informed Mademoiselle Gervais that the stranger was a reporter, who solicited an interview with her in behalf of one of the very sensational New York newspapers.

Mademoiselle Gervais read the card aloud to her only companion just then, an imposing, dark-featured man above forty, who was lounging in an easy chair near one of the windows.

"Had I better receive him, Cliquot?" she familiarly demanded, with her black eyes reflecting a feeling of vague distrust. "Had I better receive him, eh?"

The man demurred only for a moment, then indifferently rejoined, with a low, resonant voice:

"Why not? No harm can come of seeing him, Estelle. It may be well for us to learn, in fact, just what sends him here."

"Show the gentleman up," commanded Mademoiselle Gervais curtly.

He entered a few moments later, his thin lips veiled with a flowing dark mustache, his dark hair concealed under a tawny wig, his keen eyes somewhat masked by gold-bowed glasses, his fashionable garments changed for a suit of rather rusty plaid—but, all the same, Mr. Felix Boyd.

"Mademoiselle Gervais, how very good of you!" he glibly exclaimed, with oily suavity, bowing and scraping before her, with barely a glance at her companion. "I have ventured to call, yet hope I may not offend you by——"

The French woman checked him with a gesture, and drew herself up while looking him over.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Palfrey?" she asked, with a second glance at the card. "You are a reporter, eh?"

"Yes, on the *Searchlight,* Mademoiselle Gervais, the foremost of metropolitan newspapers, largest circulation, most read abroad, and the one and only reliable journal published in——"

"Yes, but your business, sir, if you please?"

"Ah, pardon!" smirked Boyd, with repeated bows. "The police blotter, Mademoiselle Gervais, has informed me of the little episode in which you so unfortunately figured—most deplorable, I'm sure! Only fools or boors could have attributed the paltry theft to you. But, faugh! that was about on a line with the work of a Central Office apprentice. I have learned most of the facts from the detective—a deuced misnomer, by the way; and if you, Mademoiselle Gervais, would now consent to make a brief statement for publication——"

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Gervais, half frowning, half laughing. "Do I understand that your paper intends publishing a story of that shameful affair?"

Boyd bowed lower, rubbing his hands, then bowed and bowed again.

"The American public, Mademoiselle Gervais, insists upon having all of the news," he glibly answered, in accents of oily apology. "The high standard of my paper requires, moreover, that we should print only the truth, not the garbled story that may appear in other much less trustworthy sheets. So I appeal to you, Mademoiselle Gervais, and hope that you——"

"But you told me you had learned all of the facts from the detective," the woman again interrupted, with a distrustful flash in her luminous eyes.

"Only his side of the story," protested Boyd, with an insinuating smirk. "It now is yours, Mademoiselle Gervais, that I would like to obtain."

"Has that clerk—Peterson is his name, eh? Has he been arrested?" asked Mademoiselle Gervais, with a crafty curiosity now betrayed in her voice.

"Yes, he now is in custody."

"Guilty, eh? How about that?"

"There is no doubt about it, Mademoiselle Gervais, though he protests the contrary. Detective Coleman, who made the arrest, feels sure of his guilt."

"It was he, too, who had me searched —the incubus!" snapped Mademoiselle

Gervais, with vicious asperity. "But the stone, eh? Have they found it?"

"Indeed, no!" said Boyd. "When that is found, the case against Peterson will be complete. I hope you will consent——"

"To be interviewed, eh?" The woman now laughed, with a captivating toss of her finely poised head. "And suppose I consent—what then, eh?"

"The Sunday edition!" cried Boyd, quite as if it was he conferring the favor. "A full page, Mademoiselle Gervais, with half-tone illustrations, your own statement double-leaded, and your picture—ah, I hope you will favor me with your photograph, Mademoiselle Gervais. I will insure its prompt and safe return, and will——"

A ripple of laughter from the woman's lips interrupted him. She turned away with a flashing glance at her companion and vivaciously demanded:

"What do you say, Cliquot? Shall I let him have it, eh? Shall I submit even to more—to this interview, eh?"

Mr. Cliquot, who had been grimly listening and staring, drew up his powerful figure a little and rejoined, with cynical dryness:

"Well, if he's like most reporters, he'll publish an interview, Estelle, whether you give him one or not. So you'd better insure his story by telling it yourself."

That readily settled the matter, and when he departed Felix Boyd had in his pocket not only a decidedly striking photograph of Mademoiselle Gervais, plainly indicating that, after all, she was not averse to publicity, but also the spirited little story with which she had favored him. It does not much matter of what the story consisted—since it already had served the purpose of Mr. Felix Boyd.

The loss of the famous diamond occurred on Friday.

On Saturday morning, Peterson being unavoidably absent, his place at the diamond counter was filled by a new clerk—a tall, dapper man with crimply hair and a Vandyke beard.

It was barely ten o'clock when his first customer appeared—a fellow with rounded shoulders, with an awkward air of gentility, rendered obviously lame by his embarrassment—and a Sunday suit of ready-made clothes.

The new clerk served him courteously, however, when the stranger fished out of his vest pocket a small brilliant, placing it upon the table previously mentioned, and saying, with a dry, hesitating voice:

"I'd like to learn whether this is a diamond or not; and if 'tis, what it's worth. A party wants to sell it to me——"

"I presently will inform you, my man."

"Thankee, sir."

The new clerk took up the bit of glass, turned somewhat aside, pretended to examine it through a lens, yet his furtive eye saw the stranger's hand glide lower than the table top and presently disappear. A momentary gleam of perplexity appeared in the watchful eye, yet when the clerk reverted to his customer he said, with a smile:

"No, my friend, this is not a diamond. It is only a brilliant, worth about thirty cents."

A grin crept over his hearer's face, despite that it was quite pale.

"A fat thing to ask me thirty dollars for," he said rising. "It's lucky I called, and I'm obliged to you."

"Not in the least, sir."

The stranger already was departing, slightly increasing his pace as he approached the street door.

The new clerk crept rapidly back of the counter till he had covered some twenty feet, then ducked quickly beneath it, and presently appeared in the aisle outside. But the crimply hair and Vandyke beard had vanished, leaving only—Mr. Felix Boyd.

At nearly the same moment a man who had, from behind a table stacked high with valuable French clocks, been darkly watching the stranger with the brilliant, hastened out of the store in pursuit of him.

Boyd caught a fleeting glimpse of his face, as threatening and malignant as well could be imagined.

"Cliquot, by thunder!" he muttered. "What the devil lies back of this?"

As he emerged from the store, two men loafing on the curbing hurried across his path.

"Careful, Jimmie!" hissed Boyd, in warning whispers. "There's something wrong."

"Wrong?"

"I've gone awry in some way! Follow me, both you and Akerman. Yonder's Cliquot, in pursuit of that fellow in black."

"I know him," growled Coleman. "He's a plumber, named Doherty."

"That helps none! I can only guess—cautious! they're bound east! At my heels, both of you, till I discover the whole truth!"

These hurried remarks, addressed to Coleman and a brother detective, had required but a few moments, and terminated just as Cliquot strode swiftly across the avenue after the fellow in black. Neither so much as glanced back, and Boyd, closely followed by the two detectives, shadowed both men over to the East Side.

Presently Doherty, with Cliquot almost at his heels, entered a narrow court; and when Boyd rounded the corner after them both had disappeared into one of the several doors giving ingress to a row of low tenement houses.

"I don't know which house they entered, Jimmie," he impatiently muttered, with an ugly light in his eyes as the detectives joined him. "This phase of the case fairly knocks the pins from under my theory that Cliquot and the woman—hark! Was that a cry for help? It sounded as if—cautious! This way—not a word!"

Boyd's strained ears had caught the sound of heavy steps down a flight of bare wooden stairs, evidently in the house in front of which he and his companions were standing. With his last words of caution, Boyd seized both by the arm and drew them to concealment in the next doorway.

A moment later Cliquot bounded out of the adjoining house, with his handkerchief half hiding his face, and walked swiftly away.

"Into that house, Akerman, and see what the rascal has done," Boyd forcibly whispered. "Arrest Doherty on sight—if you find him alive, poor devil! I see light in the darkness! You, Jimmie, come with me!"

Akerman rushed into the house, dashed up a flight of stairs, then bolted through the first door that met his gaze—and there, prostrate on the floor of a low lodging-room, he found Doherty senseless and bleeding.

It was close upon eleven o'clock when the three men, pursued and pursuers, arrived at the hotel to which Cliquot had hastened. He took the elevator; Boyd and Coleman took the stairs.

At the door giving ingress to the rooms of Mademoiselle Gervais Boyd halted and listened, significantly gripping his companion's arm. From within the voice of the woman, then that of the man, both imbued with excitement, fell upon their ears.

"A strange man——"

"The plumber that was here! He must have overheard. I discovered him cautiously securing the spark—tracked him to his lodging—beat out his brains with my gun and escaped unseen!"

"*Mon Dieu!* you did not kill——"

"Bah! I had to secure the jewel! Behold it—still soiled with gum and——"

A half-suppressed scream, of indescribable intensity, interrupted him.

"Not this—surely not this! Are you mad, Cliquot? Eh, are you mad? This is but paste—a brilliant—worthless! You are mad, Cliquot!"

"Steady, Jimmie," muttered Boyd. "Wait here and be ready."

He thrust one hand into his pocket, rapped once on the door, then coolly stepped into the room.

Cliquot, ghastly with consternation, stood glaring at a soiled gem on the cloth-covered table.

Mademoiselle Gervais, clad in an elaborate morning-gown, with her jeweled hands crushed to her breast, with eyes ablaze and her hueless features

haggard with sudden dread, turned swiftly upon the intruder.

"Pardon!" said Boyd, bowing. "I come from the newspaper office to return the photograph which——"

"You lie!"

The interruption, a hiss as sibilant as that of a snake, came from Cliquot. With features convulsed, with murder in his eyes, he had darted between Boyd and the door, whipping out a revolver from his pocket.

"Not a move—not a sound!" he cried, livid with desperation. "You're a detective! I will kill you like a dog if you try to detain me! I'll fire upon you if——"

"You'll do nothing of the kind!"

Cliquot, backing with frenzied haste, had backed only into the brawny arms of Jimmie Coleman, which closed around him with a grip like that of a vise.

Felix Boyd, who had not moved from under the threatening muzzle of the leveled weapon, now coolly turned to the horrified woman shrinking nearly to the wall behind her.

"May I trouble you, Mademoiselle Gervais?" said he, with indescribable suavity. "Both hands, if you please, and I will fit you with a new pair of bracelets."

The arrest was made almost without the slightest disturbance, and both culprits were speedily secured in irons; whereupon Coleman, with a curious look on his face, hastened to pick up the brilliant still lying on the table.

"Paste, Felix, did I hear her say?" he cried perplexedly. "Yes, by Jove, it is—only a brilliant!"

"True, Jimmie; the one I borrowed from Ellery," Boyd dryly answered, with a smile at the other's rising consternation and disgust. "Here, however, is the stolen jewel, the valuable Crimson Flame. I have had it in my pocket since yesterday afternoon."

III.

An expression broader than a smile, yet far less foolish than a grin, lighted the grim countenance of the Central Office man when, the following Monday morning, he entered the handsomely appointed office of Mr. Felix Boyd, in Union Square. Without speaking he dropped into one of the elegant leather chairs near the latter's desk, whereupon Boyd dryly remarked:

"Well, Jimmie, out with it. Evidently you have something to say."

"No, something to hear," declared Coleman roundly. "I expect you, Felix, to do most of the talking. I wish to know how you discovered that diamond, and the sort of a game we were up against."

Boyd laughed indifferently and tossed his head.

"It was a gum game, Jimmie, just as I told you," said he, with a quizzical smile lingering about his keen gray eyes.

"A gum game! What do you mean by that?"

"Just what I say, Jimmie; for the term, though itself trite enough, exactly fits this case," Boyd more gravely answered.

"I wish you'd explain," growled Coleman impatiently.

"So I will, Jimmie, since you really wish it," laughed Boyd. "As you rightly inferred, the evidence at the very outset of the case indicated that Mademoiselle Gervais was the thief. It appeared in that she denied having seen the jewel in the store window, yet had asked Peterson to show it to her, and in that she was the only person near him when the gem was lost."

"Yes, yes, all that was plain enough," nodded Coleman. "It was for that I immediately had her searched."

"I could have told you there would be nothing in that, Jimmie," smiled Boyd. "If the woman had formed some design by which to steal the diamond, it was long odds that she would not hazard hiding the stone on her person. I was convinced of the existence of such a design, moreover, when informed that a vase on one of the tables had been broken at the very moment the diamond was lost."

"You reasoned that it had been broken only to divert Peterson's attention?"

"Exactly, Jimmie, and that the man who had broken it was Mademoiselle Gervais' confederate. With the open jewel-case lying near her, it then would have been perfectly easy for her to seize the stone and deftly knock the case to the floor behind the table."

"That's true enough, Felix."

"I was compelled to proceed cautiously, however, lest her confederate had remained in the store and might be watching me. I looked about, and saw at a glance that the stone could not reasonably have been lost on the floor. Then while seated I cautiously searched with my hand, not on top of the table and around it, where others had sought for the stone, but—under the table top."

"Under it, eh?"

"And presently, well up in a corner near the leg, I discovered the missing jewel, securely stuck there with a piece of gum which Mademoiselle Gervais had taken from her mouth."

"Oh, ho, I see!" cried Coleman, with a loud laugh. "That's what you mean by a gum game."

"Nothing more, Jimmie," smiled Boyd.

"And then?"

"I then saw my way quite clearly. I knew that Mademoiselle Gervais would not venture to return for the stone, but would leave that part of the job for her confederate, who would not be likely to attempt it before the following day."

"Surely not, Felix. So you planned to land him, leaving the woman until later."

"Certainly," nodded Boyd. "Yet, lest I should err in any way and the valuable stone be lost, I borrowed a cheap brilliant from Ellery and, unobserved, substituted it in the wad of gum in place of the Crimson Flame, which I took away with me."

"Ah, I see! Clever, too; very clever."

"With a view to relieving Mademoiselle Gervais of any alarm, I next had Peterson arrested. Later I called upon her as a reporter, as I have told you, to further dispel any fears on her part, and to get, if possible, a look at her confederate. I succeeded in both, Jimmie. I hardly think, however, that her story now will appear in print, though her photograph will grace the Rogue's Gallery. Had no attempt been made to get the stone on Saturday, I should have been compelled to publish the story."

"Yes, of course," growled Coleman. "It must have queered you a bit, Felix, when that man Doherty showed up and nailed the hidden diamond."

"So it did, Jimmie, for a spell," laughed Boyd. "I was not expecting him, but Cliquot. It now appears that this plumber, while repairing a pipe that connected with one in Mademoiselle Gervais' room, overheard her and Cliquot planning the crafty job. So he let them turn the trick, and on Saturday morning he put in an appearance to secure the hidden jewel for himself."

"The rascal!"

"It was a coincidence only that Cliquot arrived about the same time and saw him get away with it. I was compelled to let him go, I was left so in the dark. I began to see light, however, when I discovered Cliquot and saw that he was shadowing Doherty. Poor devil, he had paid a high price for his dishonesty, though I'm told that his life may be saved."

"Humph! Better let him glide over," growled Coleman grimly.

"As for Cliquot, whose record before was none of the best, he will go up the river for a long vacation. And Mademoiselle Gervais—well, well, her return to the Rue de la Paix will, I imagine, be indefinitely postponed. She should have chosen better company than Cliquot, the knave, who, I'm told, designed the rascally game. And a gum game it was, Jimmie," Felix Boyd added, with a laugh. "A gum game. Jimmie; nothing more, nothing less."

The Mysterious Heathwole

By Howard Fitzalan

Author of "The Blucher of Wheat," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

At the time the story opens, Baltimore has fallen into the hands of an unscrupulous political gang, to whom the mayor, Osgood Paca, is subservient. Paca announces his intention of signing a certain bill, by which the people will be defrauded, but before he can do so he suddenly drops out of sight. The bill is vetoed by his substitute, the acting mayor, after which Paca reappears, and tells how he was kidnaped by an unknown man in a marvelously fleet motor boat. At first his story is disbelieved by many, who suspect that he has adopted this means of evading responsibility, but when, not long after, O'Donnel Hawks, a political leader, is also stolen away, and mulcted of twenty thousand dollars, people begin to put faith in it. Thomas Jephson, a young society man—who tells the story—has a shrewd suspicion that the marauder is a man named Heathwole, for whom he himself secured membership in the fashionable Westview Country Club; for he knows that Heathwole, who is a man of enormous strength and great wealth, has some peculiar ideas for reforming certain existing evils, and that he is the avowed enemy of O'Donnel Hawks. Heathwole has befriended Jephson in various ways, in one instance giving him ten thousand dollars to save the good name of Holliday Parlessor, with whose sister Eleanor both men are in love. Finally, one evening, while Jephson himself and his uncle, James Lessington, are out boating on the Chesapeake, they are made prisoners by the mysterious stranger.

CHAPTER XIII.

O'DONNEL HAWKS REDIVIVUS.

UNCLE JIM LESSINGTON was very calm, I remember, and inclined to take the matter as a novel experience. "So you're the motor-pirate, eh?" he said in the way one might speak on meeting a famous man for the first time. "We've heard a great deal of you, and I'm sincerely glad to know you."

The heavy bass voice rumbled out: "From Mr. Lessington that is indeed a compliment." It was quite easy to see that the voice was assumed, and that it was not at all natural; but so well assumed was it that no one could have sworn who the speaker was. His disguise, too, while very commonplace, was such as to foil the scrutiny of any one, for the rubber coat was shapeless and concealed the figure, the peaked cap and goggles completing the uselessness of attempting identification.

"Oh, you know me, eh?" asked Uncle Jim in some surprise. "Well, then, I suppose I have the honor of your acquaintance. Really, I don't recognize you."

"How unfortunate!" came in the deep tones. "But I didn't stop you, gentlemen, to exchange felicitations. You were going by, and I saw an opportunity to get rid of a guest who has been importuning me to allow him to go. As I have no real reason for keeping him, I will turn him over to you. He is not a pleasant man at all."

The heavy tones never varied; nor was there the slightest inflection which would give a clue to the person's identity.

"Ah!" said Uncle Jim politely.

"I hope you don't mind if I shift the gentleman over to you. I have no quarrel with you, gentlemen, and must apologize for stopping you in such a summary way. But," he con-

This story began in the November number, which can be obtained through any newsdealer. Price ten cents.

tinued whimsically, "I seem to have so unfortunate a reputation that my friends as well as my enemies flee from me."

In the distance the lights of an approaching brig twinkled. The motor-pirate noted them, evidently. "I must cut this affair short," he said. "You will take over my guest, won't you?"

Uncle Jim turned to me. "Why, yes," I replied.

Our interpellator took something from his pocket and fitted it into what seemed to be a keyhole at the back of his seat. We now had an opportunity of surveying his craft. It was of black and had but one apparent opening, and that where the pirate sat. The key grated in what seemed to be a lock, and a compartment shot backward.

"Come out, Hawks," said the motor-pirate.

A silence followed; then a body shot out of the compartment and gripped the speaker by the neck. For a moment there was the sound of a brief conflict as the two bodies ground together, and the mask half fell from the pirate's face. He loosed one hand, and pushed it back, then with a mighty heave he tore the other man from him and flung him far into the water.

The red lights of the approaching vessel were nearer now; and the pirate hastily whirled the steering-wheel and grated on the lever. "Pick him up, please. Thank you, gentlemen. I'm glad to have seen you," and without more ado the black craft shot away and toward the shore.

The sound of splashing water recalled us to the fact that the man who had the brief encounter with the pirate was still floundering about. By this time he had seized the gunwale of our boat, and we had the pleasure of looking on the countenance of O'Donnel Hawks, wet though it was, his collar torn and his hair in his eyes.

"It's Mr. Hawks!" cried Uncle Jim in some amazement. "Yes, Mr. Hawks, bless my soul!"

O'Donnel Hawks swore and clambered into the boat, wet and dripping. "There he goes!" he sputtered. "Why don't you go after him and catch him? Are you in with him? Are you helping him to steal money, eh? I'd like to know that."

Hawks' mother had been a very decent sort indeed, but his father was not at all the kind of man he should have been. I had known Hawks for some time, and for his age—thirty-five years—I don't think there was a man who knew as much of rottenness and sharp dealing, corruption and boodling, as did O'Donnel Hawks. He was a short, chunkily built person, with a fat face and fishy eyes, but with a forehead that showed brains and a jaw that indicated will-power.

"Look here, Hawks!" I cried, "it strikes me you'd better put a check on your tongue, my fine fellow."

"Check be——" he went off into a rhapsody of profanity. "Why don't you chase him—get after him—find out where he goes? I've lost a small fortune through that man—a small fortune through him and that idiot Paca. I tell you——"

"Now, see here," I said, "you're in this boat, and you've got to be decent. A nice chance we'd have of catching him, wouldn't we? And what could we do, eh? Don't talk like a fool."

Uncle Jim had been eying Hawks in great distaste. "After all," he said, "this pirate is only more courageous than you are, Hawks. He steals without the sanction of the law, while you——"

"Oh, I'm a thief, am I?" cried Hawks. "I call you to witness that, Jephson. That's libel, that's what it is. I call you to witness——"

"Nothing of the sort," said I loudly. I turned on the power, and began to guide the boat toward Heathwole's place. Meanwhile the black boat had faded out along the shore-line without the slightest indication of where she had gone.

"Oh, you're a pretty pair of socialists, you are!" went on Hawks. "I know you and your lot. You're too lazy to work, and then if a man gets ahead of you you call it robbery—that's libel, and I call you to witness——"

"There's nobody who's going to witness anything for you," I observed. Uncle Jim had drawn within the shell of his reserve and was ostentatiously avoiding contact with the dripping Hawks.

He looked at me in helpless rage, and I laughed in his face. "This is funny, Hawks," I said. "What's the use of taking your spite out on us? We haven't done anything to you. We were held up just as you were, apparently, and forced to take you on board. I assure you," I added pointedly, "that we should not have invited you to come with us."

My words seemed to inflame him more and more. "Oh, yes," he cried with another outburst of profanity. "I know. You're the sort of people who make this kind of outrage possible—inflaming the masses into thinking that financiers are robbing them, when they're only using their brains—yes, I know. And you think you get back at us with your petty little innuendoes. I call you to witness——"

"Hawks," I said, "I wouldn't witness your will even if there wasn't another man in a radius of a hundred miles. You see here. You were forced on us, and we've got to take you ashore. But if you imagine you can sit there and pour out insults you make a great mistake, my fine fellow, for even though I can't fight much I imagine I can do as well as you when we get ashore."

"Fight!" he snarled. "I've had all the fighting I want. Who wants to fight? I've lost enough—I want that man and I want him in jail. I'll teach him to——"

"By the way," I added casually, "the newspapers seemed to be much worked up over your absence. It appears that a check for twenty thousand was cashed for you——"

He tore at his dripping hair. "Twenty thousand," he howled. "Yes, twenty thousand. Oh, if I could get my hands on the fellow!"

"You got your hands on him a few minutes ago," I observed. "But it didn't seem to do much good."

"Oh, yes; oh, yes," he cried. "You think you're very smart, don't you? What chance did I have?" His tone became almost pathetic. "There's no mistake about that, then? The check was cashed?"

"For twenty thousand," I replied promptly. "Cashed on the afternoon of your disappearance."

"What do the papers say—the people say?" he almost shrieked. "Haven't they sent a gunboat down to blow this infernal thief off the face of the earth? What do the papers say?"

"The papers," I returned, quoting, "seem to think that you 'got all that was coming to you'—no more."

"Do you mean to say that they sympathize with this thief?" he shouted.

"I do," I returned promptly. "They haven't forgotten about the Riverside Park deal yet, Hawks."

He sat silent for a few minutes and seemed to be meditating. When he spoke it was in a more subdued voice. "How do they account for the affair?" he asked.

Then briefly I retailed Paca's return and Carey's finding the letter. The cashing of the check and the finding of his motor-boat with the note followed. "Your motor-boat is safe at the club," I added.

"Damn the motor-boat!" he exclaimed violently. "Well, you may be surprised to know that what you've guessed at comes pretty near being correct. I got down here to Mound-Hill Rock and found this man waiting for me. I opened my mouth to speak to him, asking him where Carey was, and the next moment I got a blow on the head from his fist that knocked me down and out." He caressed an abrasion on the lower part of his forehead, fingering it carefully. "When I came to I found myself in some sort of a boarded-up room and this man was prodding me in the ribs. He was holding a revolver in his hand."

Hawks paused and glared malevolently in the direction that the pirate had taken. "I started to raise a howl, but he fingered the revolver, and said: 'Mr. Hawks, there's your check-book. Make out a check to bearer for twenty

thousand dollars. And make it out quick.' I made a rush for him and he knocked me down. Then he backed off and began shooting around my head. One shot took a piece off my ear and another went red-hot along the side of my head. Then he said: 'I'll send the next one through your arm,' and I knew the devil meant it, too. So I wrote the check." He eyed us sullenly.

"Then," he continued, "he made me write a note to Cunningham of the Municipal Bank, identifying the bearer and asking Cunningham to seal up the money. What was I to do—hey? I did it," he replied, answering for himself. "He said that it was to pay back the people who lost money on the Riverside business—as if I had anything to do with that! Because fools lose their money that's no reason why I should fork up. Say, where are you two fellows going?"

We had arrived at Heathwole's boathouse, and I was not surprised to see the man himself, lolling in a hammock swung from two of the piles of the dock, smoking his pipe and caressing the huge bulldog which lay in his lap.

"Oh! So you brought it down, did you, Tommy? Just run her inside and come up the landing-steps, will you?" He blew some clouds of smoke upward, but did not get up. I drifted the boat in and let down the bar, after which I helped Uncle Jim out of the boat and let Hawks follow as best he could up the landing-steps.

When we emerged on the dock Heathwole seemed to note Uncle Jim for the first time as he got up. "Glad to see you, Mr. Lessington," he said. "What do you think of my boat?"

"She's a beauty, Heathwole, my boy," said Uncle Jim. "But there's a swifter one—that pirate craft. We've been held up."

"Nonsense!" cried Heathwole, sitting bolt upright. He, as usual, looked as though he had just emerged from the bath. He was in light flannel trousers, tan shoes and white silk shirt and scarf. As he got out of the hammock he noted O'Donnel Hawks. In a moment he was across the dock and facing him.

"Get off," he said harshly. "Get off—and get off quick, Hawks. This is my property."

Without a word of warning Hawks struck out and caught Heathwole below the waist. Our man went down with a mighty groan, but the next moment he was up and after Hawks, who started to run. Heathwole caught him by the shoulder and deliberately swung him around, landing with his left fist as he did so and sending Hawks sprawling on the hard planks.

Heathwole towered over him, panting for breath, his eyes gleaming hate. What he would have done further I don't know, for Uncle Jim Lessington caught his wrist.

"Hold up, lad," said Uncle Jim. "He's no match for you."

I think that Heathwole respected Uncle Jim. Most men did. At any rate, he nodded. Then he reached down and pulled Hawks to his feet.

"Now, you get away as quick as you can," he said. "Or I might be tempted to really hurt you. Come, now, get a move on yourself."

Choking and panting with rage, O'Donnel Hawks shambled a few steps away. "You've got a heavy hand," he almost hissed. "I'm glad you reminded me of it. It made me wonder how I could have been such a fool as to forget you. You've got a heavy hand, but there's a heavier one, you thief—the hand of the law."

Heathwole started toward him, but Uncle Jim caught him protestingly. In the interim Hawks disappeared in the darkness.

CHAPTER XIV.

SOMETHING OF LOVE AND OTHER THINGS.

O'Donnel Hawks had evidently decided that the wisest course to pursue was to get out after what he had said, for we saw no more of him that night. I understand that he showed up at the

club an hour or so later, got washed and donned dry clothes, and went back to the city in order to be fresh and on hand to take up the threads of his rascality where he left off.

As for Uncle Jim and myself, we remained behind with Heathwole, took some supper with him later and listened to his tales of land and sea. He was in a peculiarly communicative mood that night, and he told us stories of adventures in the Orient—always in the third person and about some friend of his called "Benton"—a mythical person, in my mind. The stories were all flavored with the true local color of the man who had been there, and I had strong reason to believe that "Benton" was no other than Heathwole himself.

Later in the evening he had Meh Ling drive us over to the club in his trap, and on the way back, with the spell of his personality on us, we talked considerably about the man. I was back to my former allegiance now, and I believe I recognized the futility of combating him for Eleanor. For I could hardly stand the comparison between us.

With O'Donnel Hawks back in town the papers burst out into fresh stories about the wonderful motor-pirate. It was quite easy to see that they had taken their cue from the letters that poured in to them and were published in their correspondence columns; all commending the pirate and his enterprise. Several clever reporters had been at work during Hawks' absence, rooting up discreditable things about him, and when he came back they flung them at him in large type, and were at no pains to conceal the fact that they were rather glad than otherwise that the motor-pirate had succeeded in wresting some of his ill-gotten gains away.

In short, Hawks, who had the opinion that he was to be a popular hero, found that he was a notorious scamp, and he knew quite well that he had the motor-pirate to thank for it. Stock declined in the companies in which Hawks was known to be largely interested, and it was rumored that he would be asked to resign or sell his seat in the Chamber of Commerce.

So, knowing what the pirate had done for him, he set to work to revenge himself; and how well he succeeded in this you shall presently hear. For the time is near at hand when I must resign the privilege of telling only the things that I saw or heard myself, and try to give you a picture of the events which led to the beginning of the end. Hawks was a crafty plotter and a shrewd reasoner, and with revenge at the back he would work quite as well as with money the goal.

Perhaps it might be well to state that Hawks had once tried to become a suitor of Eleanor Parlessor's, and he had been tolerated at a time when the Parlessor fortunes were in a very bad state, and Hawks' financial backing meant a great deal. But when old Barton Parlessor's sister Maria died and left her fortune to her brother, except for the legacies to Eleanor and her brother, the largest of the debts had been paid, and Eleanor, seeing no reason for having about her a man whom she detested, had abruptly dismissed him.

I mention this here, for everything must be counted when one endeavors to dissect a motive. By and by I shall try to put myself into Hawks' place and show you how he thought and planned, and all that I tell will be what I have gleaned from others on very good authority indeed.

What I shall now recount, however, I got at first-hand. It was through no desire to eavesdrop that it came to me. The rose-garden I had thought my own peculiar property, in a way, for I had discovered it, and had even gone to some pains to make it more cleanly and well-appearing. It was on the Randolph estate, deep in the forest, a crimson diamond in a setting of green; and built, I suppose, by some dead and gone Randolph as a background for some lovely Randolph bride. I imagined I could see her walking there; some stately lady in silken brocades and powdered hair, tapping her lover's

hand with her fan, and smiling at him from half-closed eyes.

It appealed to me, this rose-garden; appealed to that sense of romance and poetry which underlies everything in me; and which finds its vent sometimes in the verse and prose that by the grace of editors occasionally get into the magazines. Trifles all of them, with nothing very deep or convincing about them except the flavor of olden days.

Oftentimes I came here, and once surreptitiously I brought down a hammock, which I swung in the summer-house, and there I had drowsed through many hours, listening to the hum of the bees, the chirp of the crickets, and the melody of the song-birds. The sun found its way here only infrequently, and when it did it was a golden-green coming through the interlaced branches of the trees that hid this little spot of romance from the world.

From a marble nymph's mouth gushed water, and its pleasant drip-drip on the greenish marble basin formed part of the tune of the place; and as I lay there endeavoring to get the rhythm of the drip-drip into harmonious meter the sound of heavy feet trampling through the woods recalled me to the world of to-day.

I lay quite still in my hammock, and threw away my cigarette for fear I might be found there—and incur the ridicule of those who did not understand. After awhile I heard voices, and I knew that the feet were those of horses.

The light spring to the ground which could be only a woman's made me wonder if, after all, the old place had come into its own again and was to be once more the garden of love.

Peering out from the shelter of the vines I saw them coming into the garden; and presently they stood before the marble nymph, the man striking his boots nervously with his riding-crop, the girl holding her skirt daintily and pushing back her veil.

"How perfectly lovely!" she said, and I knew her for Eleanor, for she dropped her skirt and clasped her hands about her breast in just that way which had sent the blood whirling to my head many times. "Doesn't it seem as though we'd gone centuries back?"

"It is too much like that for me to feel that we really are living," I heard in deep low tones, a note struck in them which I had not known existed. But I had ceased to be surprised at Heathwole. "It seems somehow as though we'd come back from another age, doesn't it? And had come back here to wander in this garden." Then in his abrupt way: "Don't you feel as though you belonged here—as though you had been here before?"

"Yes," she said softly, and sank down to the moss as gracefully as a bird might have folded its wings and descended to earth. "Yes, somehow I do feel that way. It's silly, isn't it, Strong-man?"

He stood over her, beating his boots with the crop and looking down at her. "There doesn't seem to be any necessity for working or striving here," he said. "Just to live and be happy. As though there was any such thing!" His voice took on a harsh sound. "Yes, it's all well to feel that way here. But there's no happiness—we only deceive ourselves for a moment to regret it for an age. No, there's no happiness."

Her eyes looked into his, large, sad, almost frightened, and unconsciously she seemed to shrink into a soft, fluffy person, needing protection. "Why do you say that, Strong-man?" she asked. "Can't you just take things as they come and be happy for the moment, anyhow?"

"And then regret," he said.

"Isn't it worth while? We have to pay the price for everything we care for."

"Yes," he returned. "But why? I've been fighting since I was too young to remember. Nothing came to my hand. I fought for it all—fought hard; but there was only joy in the fighting, and not joy then, but just a resolve to win—a certain fierce joy, perhaps. But after winning—nothing. Why must we fight and fight and gain nothing?" His eyes turned and met hers. "Ah!" he said suddenly.

"Sometimes we do gain—but sometimes we do not," she said sadly. "Perhaps it is harder to desire a thing and not get that thing than it is to feel hopeless when one has won."

"What do you know of desiring things?" he asked half banteringly. "You've had no struggles. You've had what you wished. You've had men at your feet most of your short life as a woman. What do you know of struggling and fighting? Of the ugliness and harshness of a world turning upon you and rending you unless you are able to stand up, a wall of adamant against it? What do you know of all that—eh?"

"No, a woman knows nothing—you men take into account nothing except the tragedies of the flesh. Perhaps there are tragedies of the mind—you forgot that, didn't you? A woman always holds her secret sorrows close to her, and tells no one. Maybe she's gay and seems happy, but there's always some other woman who knows that she isn't. But the men don't know—ah! they don't count those things."

He sat down beside her. "You seem changed somehow by this old rose-garden, Princess Beautiful," he said softly. "You're not exactly the same—are you?"

"And you?" she turned on him quickly with a smile curving her lips. "What of you, Sir Knight? I hadn't heard you complain before. I had thought you went along in your stony path crushing obstacles out of your way, remorselessly thinking of nothing except the end to be gained. But you don't seem to be that here, after all." She sat very still and looked into his eyes.

"Don't I?" His hand touched hers and he drew it away suddenly, as though it had burned him. "Well, maybe, after all, our true natures come out when there's no stress. Maybe we show ourselves as we are under the proper conditions. Here, I might almost imagine that I lived in that poet's Elysia—that garden of the soul. Things seem possible here that don't seem so out there." He waved his hand in the direction from whence they had come. "And I have to remember that place. It isn't well to dwell in Elysia, Princess Beautiful. The contrast is too great, and the great ugly world is grinding along just the same, while Elysia fades away with our dreams! 'Into that bourne from which no traveler returns'—that's where Elysia goes, along with the stuff that dreams are made of. And we go back to the stones and husks of real life." He twisted his hands until they were mottled red with checked blood. "And the stones and the husks are our portion—which we must take."

"But—why"—her voice rang out despairingly—"why do you say that? Perhaps you haven't tried—Elysia—long enough!"

His face went red and his shoulders shook. "Oh, Princess Beautiful, if I could reconcile what I know of myself with it all! But I'm not that way when I think of certain things—not certain things, but just one thing. I thought it was my right to take all I could get—if I were stronger than the other person. To fight and get what I wanted, that's what I believed. But it isn't exactly that way when I think of—something else. Because I care too much for it, maybe, to wish to smirch it. And—I'm not the best sort. You see, there are things—things that would matter to you; things that I believe, perhaps; things that I have done for the best. But they would be very ugly to you—would make you shrink away. That's why I'm afraid of Elysia. I wouldn't want you to shrink away from me—after what might happen. For you don't know these things—now. But they'll come out some day; and you will know of them. And then when you think of me it will be with disgust and loathing, maybe—and I'd rather that you hadn't been deceived into thinking I was what I was not——"

He stopped. Her eyes were on the ground, her long eyelashes sweeping her cheek. "I don't think it would matter," she said softly. "For it would be you—*you*, don't you understand? And I know the real 'you' so well—know that nothing mean, nothing petty could come from you. And knowing that—

what more?—maybe you don't trust me. Maybe you don't know the real 'me.'"

He caught both hands in his suddenly and pressed them to his cheek. "Eleanor—my Princess Beautiful," he said. "You—you——" And then I did not hear anything more for awhile, and I closed my eyes, not wishing to see what was not my own to see.

Presently he spoke: "You will believe, Eleanor, no matter what happens, that I love you. You see, I've only had you really in all my life. I haven't had anyone to care before, and knowing that no one did care, I was hard and cruel, maybe, sometimes. And there's something I've got to tell you—but I can't tell you now. It seems so out of place—but I will tell you. I've made myself one promise; there's one thing yet that I've got to carry out. It's all wrong according to the world's ideas, and all wrong according to yours, maybe, but you'll know of it soon enough through the world—and then I'll come to you for forgiveness."

I heard her murmur something.

"You see, it all began before I loved you—now that I love you, it's different. But I'd made this promise, and I've got to keep it—because I'm true to myself, anyhow—and then, we'll go somewhere—but no! We must wait for that——"

It was growing dusk; the rays that came through the interlaced branches were ruddy green now—everything seemed hushed and still. Somewhere in the distance a bird sang; and the scent of the roses came on the wind of the evening.

In that they whispered to one another, told one another things that folks who are happy do tell one another, but I did not hear them. My fingers were in my ears, and my body was stretched out to its full length in the agony of losing forever something that I cared for just as much as the man who had succeeded. But I was weak and he was strong, and the weak have no place—except perhaps in Elysia.

Somehow it seemed to me that when I opened my eyes and took my hands from my ears the bird was nearer and was singing something that was very mournful. And the sun was setting—almost behind the horizon it was now.

Perhaps it was the song of the bird that made moisture in my eyes.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PLOTTING OF O'DONNEL HAWKS.

What Hawks planned and worked for did not come to me until after the affair was long over; and then it was told to me by Carrol Caton, who entered into the matter with him. But I set it down here, where it belongs, that those who read may have the events in the order of their sequence; and will tell the story as I got it from young Caton.

It appears that Caton went to Hawks almost immediately after his return. Shrewd enough was young Caton not to tell Hawks all he thought, for he wanted the glory of the affair for his very own. He found Hawks in his office only after a great amount of trouble, for Hawks had refused to see any more newspaper men.

Caton he knew personally, and when that young man managed to gain admittance he eyed him sourly.

"Well," he said, "what do you want, I'd like to know! You're on the *Herald,* aren't you? It's a beastly sheet—scandalous, libelous. I'll have a suit against it yet. I call you to witness I will."

"Oh, that's all right!" said young Caton. A spruce, well-set-up, handsome youngster was Carrol, with an engaging smile and long eyelashes.

"Oh, is it all right?" said O'Donnel Hawks. "Well, you'll see about that, my young cock-a-hoop! Now, you go to your office and write any scandalous stuff about me, and I call you to witness that I'll have the law on you."

"Oh, rot, Hawks!" said Caton. "A whole lot too much has been written about you—more than you're worth. We're not anxious to have any more about you. We want more stuff about this pirate. That's what we want."

"Oh, you do, do you?" sneered Hawks. "Well, I suppose you're in sympathy with him—I suppose you're glad he succeeded in getting my money away from me. I suppose you——"

Caton waved his hand. "Cut out the supposing and get down to facts, Hawks," he said. "My sympathies don't enter into the matter at all. I want to locate this pirate and get hold of him; and I suppose you want to, also."

"I want to put him in jail, that's what I want to do," frothed Hawks.

"Well, I suppose that's got to be done," returned Caton regretfully. "But in order to put him in jail you've got to find him, haven't you? Now, my paper has been kind enough to give me the job of finding him, and I want to know if you're at all keen about helping me."

Hawks eyed him suspiciously. "So you want to find him, do you?" he growled. "Well, so do I. Now, look here, do you mean that you're going to get hold of him and put him behind bars?"

"If I can. That's the only way we can get hold of the story," answered Carrol Caton. "Besides, it will be a great scoop for the paper, if I do. The police here aren't worth a tinker's dam, because they haven't got any brains."

"Right! right!" interjected Hawks.

"Now, I've got an idea," said Carrol Caton. "And I want you to loan me your motor-boat in order to verify my suspicions. But first I'll tell you the idea."

Hawks breathed fatly and Caton went on:

"My idea is that this pirate is a man whom we all know quite well; that he is a member of the Westview Country Club; and that we see him from day to day. I haven't any definite suspicion." Caton told me that this was not true, but he didn't want to give the game into Hawks' hands. He knew full well that Hawks would make an excuse of having heard Caton say so to give his idea intact to the town at large.

"Well, *I have* a definite suspicion," said O'Donnel Hawks savagely. This pleased Caton.

"Who is he?" he asked.

But O'Donnel Hawks was wary. He feared exactly what Caton feared. "It's a suspicion, that's all," he growled. "I'm not going to be dragged into any libel suits by your newspaper."

"Between you and me—word of honor," urged Caton.

But as Hawks thought very little of his own word of honor, he consequently thought less of that of any one else. So he refused to be drawn.

"You fire ahead with your own theories," said Hawks; "and I'll keep mine to myself."

"Well," continued Caton, "I wanted your motor-boat to use in prowling up and down the coast to keep an eye on this pirate person."

Hawks sniffed. "Your idea," he said, "is mighty poor. In fact it's no idea at all. Now, Mr. Caton, I don't know that I particularly like you, but as you seem to be keen on catching this pirate I'll take you up on the matter. I have a real scheme to catch my pirate-bird. You know that John K. Peterson is on his way from Palm Beach, and will get here by to-morrow night. He's traveling on his private yacht, the *Sylph*—you know that. Also you know that Peterson carries about fifty thousand in ready cash with him most of the time. Keeps it in his safe, so as to be able to pick up bargains any place he goes where they don't understand checks and all that."

Caton nodded. "But what's that got to do with——"

Hawks leered evilly. "You don't happen to know that the man I suspect has a private grudge against Peterson and me. I'm not saying who the man *is,* but the man I *think* it is came to us several years ago with a patent, and we got the best of the deal. Now, he's said to several persons that he was going to square things with me. He beat me up once." Hawks touched a scar on his forehead. "That wasn't long ago. Then came this abduction,

and I lose twenty thousand dollars. Besides, he's hurt my reputation——"

"Impossible!" interjected Caton satirically.

"Cut that out. Now, this man's swore to get even with Peterson. Besides his private grudge, he's after people that he calls 'the robbers of the poor.' Of course he thinks Peterson is one. Well, now"—he rubbed his hands together gleefully—"everybody knows Peterson is coming up the bay to-morrow. Everybody knows he's got that money aboard. Well, if the motor-pirate don't take this chance to get even—to hold Peterson up—then I'm a bum prophet, that's all! See?"

In a twinkling Caton saw: saw columns for his paper and a good deal of personal renown for himself—"a big beat," in newspaper parlance, and a chance to shame the New York pressmen. He gasped.

"My idea is," said Hawks, "to be at the Capes when the *Sylph* comes through, and to follow in her wake until our friend the pirate shows up; then to wait for him and to nab him while he is attending to the folks in front—we creep in from the rear, you see—and there you have it. We can seize his boat, can't we?"

And from that time on Caton began to take a keen interest in the thing. Hawks explained rudely that he wasn't taking him along because he liked either Caton or his paper, but in order that there would be a fair, unprejudiced account of the thing in the press. "Besides, I've got to have some one to help me," he added.

Hawks had arranged with some friend of his in New York to have sent to him the motor-boat belonging to the winner of the Long Island motor-boat races; and the boat was expected in Baltimore, by rail, the following morning.

The arrangements were made with all secrecy; and when the motor-boat arrived at Camden Station it was put on a dray and carted down to a secluded dock belonging to one of the firms in which Hawks was interested. Here it was launched and overhauled. It was a beautiful craft—some sort of aluminum sheathing flashing bright in the sun's rays.

"Infernally unfortunate it's that color!" said Hawks. "It's sure to attract attention." And he grumbled on for some little while about it. The expert workman who was fitting it up told him that it was all shipshape and could be utilized immediately, if necessary.

Hawks and Caton lost no time. They had brought down enough provisions to last them through the day; two Smith & Wesson revolvers and two Colt pistols, with about one hundred rounds of ammunition. Then about ten o'clock in the morning they set off for their cruise down the bay.

It was about six in the evening when the yacht of John K. Peterson, monopolist and "robber of the people," "poisoner of children"—so styled by the press—came looming out of the lower reaches of the bay. The motor-boat in which Hawks and Caton sat waiting expectantly was lying near Crisfield, in Tangier Sound, an outlet of Pocomoke Sound.

There was evidently a merry party aboard the *Sylph*. The decks and saloons were lighted up, and there came the sound of music from the yacht. As soon as she had passed, the wheel of Hawks' boat revolved, and they started after her, keeping at a convenient distance.

It was a moonless night, with quite a bit of fog in the air; just the night for their purpose, for neither the folks on the yacht nor any one else could distinguish the boat very well in such a light, so well did the shining metal conform to the dull gray of the night. Hawks and Caton did not exchange many words. The former sat at the wheel, his lips compressed and an evil look in his eye, while Caton, his arms folded, mentally sketched out the story for his newspaper and wondered whether or not he would ever write it.

They passed Todd's Point, Upper Marlborough and the West River. Off Annapolis they were nearly run down by an excursion steamer, which loomed

up on them suddenly out of the mist and narrowly missed them in consequence of their having no lights. Somebody on the boat yelled: "Look at the whale!" and there was a rush to the side, but by that time the motor-boat had streaked away in its arrow-like flight.

They found no difficulty in keeping up with the yacht, using only their second speed to do so, for the *Sylph* was not making more than twenty knots an hour on account of the dangerous navigation of the bay. It was evident from the cautious way in which the yacht went ahead that she had not shipped a pilot at Cape Charles.

It was in that part of the bay between St. Margaret's and Centerville that the thing happened. Hawks and Caton did not comprehend exactly what it was when they heard a megaphone shrieking out: "Come about, there—yacht ahoy! Quarantine doctor wants to come aboard. Heave to!"

"It's the pirate," said Hawks grimly, after a moment. "That came from the starboard side, didn't it? Get around to larboard, Caton." Carrol was steering now. "We've got our fine gentleman this time. Yes, sir, we've got him sure."

"I want to come aboard," shrieked the megaphone. "Lay to, there, you fools! Is that the yacht *Sylph?* Well, you've got to go through the quarantine. There was yellow fever in St. Augustine when you left."

They could still make out nothing, but it was evident that the engines were backing down and that the yacht was laying to. Presently the swirl of the water ceased, and they heard the grinding of the anchor-chain against the stanchion. A little later the heavy piece of iron floundered into the water with a great splash.

Hawks and Caton were now well over on the larboard side. They made out the yacht quite plainly, but the pirate was on the other side. They were not particularly anxious to see him yet.

It was not their game that he should see them before he had made his intentions clear to the people on the yacht.

The two sat very quietly in their craft and it rocked dangerously near to the side of the *Sylph;* then Hawks put over the wheel and sent it whirling away again, and kept up the darting about for some little time. He was afraid to shut off his motor power and then turn it on again for fear that the noise of it might attract the attention of the people on board the yacht and—what was more important—of the pirate himself.

They could hear the voice through the megaphone again:

"Let down the accommodation ladder, you fools! Do you expect me to climb aboard with my teeth?"

"Well, of all the nerve!" murmured Caton in intense admiration. Hawks grunted: "Oh, he's got nerve, all right. But he ain't so clever as he thinks he is."

"I call that dodge of impersonating the quarantine surgeon clever," replied Caton.

Hawks grunted again.

They could hear chains creaking, and presently the accommodation ladder dropped into place. From the sounds following they judged that a man was going down the steps.

"Fling me a rope," came the rude tones again, but this time without a megaphone.

"That's wot I'm a-doing," growled out somebody, and a rope fell into the water with a splash. It was secured, evidently, and the listeners heard the swish-swish of a smaller craft being drawn nearer to the bow. Following the sound was a light spring on the steps, as thought some one were going up them.

Still the listeners waited and listened. The man had gone up the ladder by now and was on deck. The strident tones again broke out on the stillness of the night.

"Where is Mr. John K. Peterson?" they boomed.

There was a short pause, then some one said in irritated and crushing tones: "I am Mr. Peterson, and if my

name still holds good I'll see that you lose your position in the quarantine service, my good sir. What in the devil do you mean by holding up my private yacht in this summary fashion? I wish to know your name."

There was a provoking laugh. "You'll know that soon enough, my fine fellow," was the reply. "What are you trying to do—intimidate me? I suppose I should tremble before the king of the Poison Trust?"

There was a dead silence, followed by a few broken "Ah's" from the women of the party and an indignant exclamation from one of Peterson's henchmen: "Kick the infernal scoundrel off, Mr. Peterson," he said.

"No, Judson," returned Peterson; "I will not do that. This person represents the Government of the United States, no matter how badly he represents it."

"Sanctimonious old scoundrel!" muttered Caton from his place in the boat.

"Now, sir," said Peterson, turning to the man who was supposedly facing him, "you have stopped my yacht and delayed my plans. You say that there was yellow fever in St. Augustine—perhaps there was, but you have overlooked the fact that we did not stop at St. Augustine. We came here directly from Palm Beach. What have you to say to that?"

Caton says that on the high wave that caught Hawks' boat at the time he got a good view of the deck and the people on the yacht. But Caton is a professional phrase-turner, and I suppose he hit off the description better than I can do.

The deck was lighted up by electric bulbs of a rose-pink hue, and back near the saloon the women stood watching with little interest, the rose-pink light on their bare shoulders and pretty gowns flashing back glorified rays from the gems that they wore. The men, who were in evening clothes of white serge formed a plain background for their partners' charms, and the sailors who had gathered near the stern looked on interestedly from the rope they were supposed to be coiling.

The man, Judson, was standing smoking a cigar, one arm clasped about a rail—a cool, elegant figure, calmly sneering at the affair; while the center of the deck was occupied by the two men in black—John K. Peterson in his dinner clothes of that material, the only suit of that color on board; and the figure in the long, black motor coat his coat pockets bulging out and both hands in them.

He withdrew one hand, and in it something glittered. But this was a false alarm. He simply had a cigarette-case in his hand. He lit one of the cigarettes and, dropping the box back in his pocket, flicked the burned match overboard and turned to the master of millions.

"I don't care whether you stopped at St. Augustine or not. This boat is going to be held up as long as I desire——"

He stopped short and blew a cloud of smoke almost in the face of the millionaire. Peterson started back, fuming and sputtering; then turned on the motorist in mighty rage.

"You'll pay for that. You know who I am, perhaps—John K. Peterson. You'll pay——"

"You mistake, Mr. Peterson—*you'll* pay," rumbled out the answer; and the motorist's hands came out of the rubber pockets of his mackintosh, revealing two black Luger pistols, that pointed squarely on the millionaire.

"Hands up," he said briefly.

"What——" began the millionaire. The weapons menaced him.

"Hands up, I say, or I'll perforate that bald, shiny head of yours. Quick, now. I'm no quarantine doctor. You've heard of me, perhaps. 'Robin Hood the Second' they call me—some 'Blackbeard.' Keep those hands up, Peterson, or I'll find a billet for one of these bullets. I've got ten cartridges in each gun——"

Fat, bediamoned Mrs. Peterson gave a scream and fell into a faint. Several other women gasped. Men bit into their cigars. Peterson put up his hands.

"This outrage——" he trembled.

"Rubbish!" said the outlaw. "Now, see here, Peterson, you make a move and I'll bore you. If one of your people makes a move I'll bore him—understand? Now some one chase down to the safe and bring up those bags of money you keep there, Mr. Peterson. I can use them very readily. Mind, folks!" he turned his head to take in the others. "One move at me with a weapon or in a body and I'll shoot Mr. Peterson."

"You—you'd better stay where you are," faltered Peterson. "This—this man is desperate. I've—I've heard of him. Per—perhaps you'd better do as he says——"

"No 'perhaps' about it," rumbled the motor-pirate. "Somebody go into Mr. Peterson's pocket and get out his keys. His secretary will do. Very well, young man. Take them out. Bring up as much of the money as you can carry—notes preferred. I'll keep Mr. Peterson covered until you do."

"Now's our time," breathed Hawks to Caton.

While the yachtsmen trembled and the women were near to swooning, O'Donnel Hawks brought his craft about and caught a rope hanging from a port-hole. "Stay there, Caton," he whispered. "When you hear shots rush the boat around to the other side and cut the pirate boat away. Quick."

He clambered up the rope like a monkey, his fat form shaking like jelly, and threw one foot over the rail. Cautiously he wormed himself forward and along the deck, his motion unperceived by the pirate whose back was turned to him.

Then with a sudden bound he cleared the space between them and landed on the pirate's back. Totally unprepared for the onslaught, the pirate rolled over and over. Had there been spirits in the lot who were capable of grasping an opportunity they would have flung themselves on the two and secured the pirate. O'Donnel Hawks had torn the mask from the pirate's face, and it stood revealed to them all.

"Ah!" he gasped. "Ah! I thought it was you."

The next moment the pirate had flung him away, and Hawks' gun spoke out sharply. When the smoke drifted away, the pirate had sped for cover, one arm limp. Then his right hand, clutching the trigger, revolved, and a spurt of yellow fire came twice. O'Donnel Hawks with a great cry dropped both revolvers and fell to the deck, writhing.

Some one rushed forward to seize his guns, which had fallen, but a shot from the pirate sent the person flying back to cover. At that instant the chug-chug of the second motor-boat was heard, and the pirate dashed madly to the rail. What he saw there did not give him time to pause. Caton was cutting and hacking the hawser that bound the motor-boat to the bigger craft. The pirate half fell, half tumbled, down the steps, and into the arms of Caton.

In the frail motor-boat they grappled, the pirate's gun still in his hand but unused. "I don't want to kill you, you little fool," he hissed in Caton's ear; but Caton had seen his face.

"I'm not letting you off—I know you," shouted back Caton.

He was no mean antagonist, this slim, athletic youngster; but slowly he felt himself turned in the strength of this giant, even though the giant's left arm was useless. Then with a lurch the motor-boat collapsed, and both went into the water.

With a heave the pirate sprang upward and caught the gunwale of his own boat, pulling himself in. His revolver spoke out cleanly, severing the rope. Four sailors sprang at him, but he beat them back with the butt of his pistol and shoved down the lever with his foot. A sack of flour fell on him, and two pistol shots cracked.

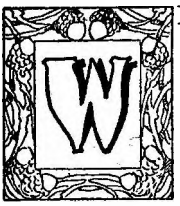
But the next moment saw the long, black craft shooting toward the shore. Intermittently they fired, but still the boat kept on, its occupant apparently unharmed.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

An Affair of State

By George Gibb

Two wrongs may not make a right, but there are very few of us who are not ready to sympathize with the man who does wrong that good may come of it, even if the wrong is done in the peculiarly high-handed way described in Mr. Gibbs' story



HEN Ross Burnett had squandered his patrimony in Wall Street with heart of lead and hope of wax he took the yoke of clerical martyrdom in the office of Colket & Gray, the very brokers through whom his own substantial fortune had been dribbled into the voracious maw of monopoly. And the life that had proved his own undoing and the undoing of the judicious labors of his frugal forbears was a perpetual reproach.

The fact that there were others about him, young and old, who shared his misfortune did not lighten his load. The wild craftiness of the one or the irremediable resignation of the other taught him his lesson in penitence in every function of the daily round, and filled him, mind and body, with soulful repugnance for this predatory science which men euphemistically called finance.

By the grace of the senator from New York he obtained from the President an appointment as consular clerk, an office, which if it paid but little at home carried with it some dignity, a little authority and certain appreciable perquisites in foreign ports.

He had chosen wisely. At Cairo, where he had been sent to fill a temporary vacancy caused by the death of the consul general and subsequent illness of his deputy, he found himself suddenly in charge of the consular office in the fullest press of business, with diplomatic functions requiring both ingenuity and discretion.

To his own great satisfaction he was enabled to conserve the interests of his home government in such a manner as to win cordial letters from the heads of the diplomatic and consular bureaus, and in due course an instruction to proceed to Peking to fill a vacancy there.

After all, it was very simple. The business of a consulate was child's play, and the usual phases in the life of a diplomat were to be requisitely met by the usages of gentility—a quality Burnett discovered not too amply possessed by those political gentlemen who sat abroad in the posts of honor to represent the great republic.

That heritage of an excellent lineage at least remained to him, and he took pains to turn it to account; to the end that after three years in the service he found himself with a creditable record in seven foreign capitals and an ambition further to distinguish himself.

He thought that if he could get a post, however small, with plenary powers, he would be happy. But, alas! He had been away from home so long that he didn't even know whether his senator was dead or alive; and when he reached Washington, a month or so after the inauguration, he realized how small were his chances for such preferment.

The President and secretary of state were besieged daily by powerful politicians, and one by one the posts he coveted, even the smallest of them, were taken by frock-coated, soft-hatted, flowing-tied gentlemen whom he had noticed lounging and chewing tobacco in the Willard Hotel lobby. It was apparently with such persons that power

took preferment. His roseate dreams vanished. Ross Burnett was a mere state department drudge again at twelve hundred a year!

He spoke to the chief of the diplomatic bureau in despair.

"Isn't there any way, Crowthers?" he asked. "Can't a fellow ever get any higher?"

"If he had a pull, he might—but a consular clerk——" The shake of Crowthers' head was eloquent.

"Isn't there anything a fellow—even a consular clerk—could do to win promotion in this service?" he continued.

Crowthers looked at him quizzically.

"Yes, there's one thing. If you could do that, you might ask the secretary for anything you wanted."

"And that——"

"Get the text of the treaty between Germany and China from Baron Arnim."

Crowthers chuckled. He thought it a very good joke. Baron Arnim had been the special envoy of Germany to China, accredited to the court of the eastern potentate with the special mission of formulating a new and secret treaty between those monarchs. He was now returning home carrying a copy of this document in his luggage.

Burnett laughed. It *was* a good joke.

"You'd better send me out again," he said, hopelessly. "Anything from Arakan to Zanzibar will do for me."

And he walked toward his modest room in G Street, wondering whether, after all, the game had been worth the candle. Perhaps by this time a little capital and a lucky turn in the Street would have regained him part if not all of his vanished fortune. He wondered now that he had put the past so completely behind him. He had eaten of the lotus, and the spell of the Orient was upon him. Wall Street and he were miles asunder. And yet he could not have hoped to do more than other fellows had done. But one man in his service had bettered himself, and that man's father was cousin to the President.

There was a sound from a passing hansom. There sat Mortimer Crabb, immaculate in white flannels. It was four years since Burnett had seen him, and then their circumstances had been rather different.

"Ross Burnett!" said Crabb, gladly. "I thought you were dead. Have you dropped from heaven, man?"

"No," laughed Ross, "not so far, only from China."

Crabb made room for him alongside and insisted on driving him to the Metropolitan Club. There he quickly learned the facts of his quondam clubmate's history. Mr. Crabb was bringing the *Blue Wing* up from St. Augustine to Newport, and had run up the Potomac to see Washington in the loveliest of Mays.

"So you've been out and doing in the world, Ross Burnett?" he said, languidly. "While we—*eheu jam satis!*—have glutted ourselves with the stale and unprofitable. How I envy you!"

Burnett smoked silently. It was very easy to envy from the comfortable vantage ground of fifty thousand a year.

"Why, man, if you knew how sick of it all I am, you'd thank your stars for the lucky dispensation that took you out of it. Rasselas was right. I've been pursuing the phantoms of hope for thirty years, and I'm still hopeless. There have been a few bright spots"—Mr. Crabb smiled at his cigar ash—"a very few, and far between."

"Bored as ever, Crabb?"

"Immitigably. To live in the thick of things and see nothing but the pale drabs and grays. No red anywhere. Oh, for a passion that would burn and sear—love, hate, fear! I'm forever courting them all. And here I am still cool, colorless and unscarred. Only once"—his gray eyes lit up marvelously—"only once did I learn the true relation of life to death, Burnett; only once. That was when the *Blue Wing* struggled six days in a hurricane with Hatteras under her lee. It was glorious. They may talk of love and hate as they will; fear, I tell you, is the Titan of passions."

Burnett was surprised at this unmasking.

"You should try big game," he said, carelessly.

"I have," said the other; "both beasts and men—and here I am, in flannels and a red tie!—I've skinned the one and been skinned by the other: to what end?"

"You've bought experience."

"Cheap at any cost. You can't buy fear. Love comes in varieties at the market values. Hate can be bought for a song; but fear, genuine and amazing, is priceless—a gem which only opportunity can provide; and how seldom opportunity knocks at any man's door!"

"Crabb the original—the esoteric!"

"Yes. The same. The very same. And you, how different! How sober and rounded!"

There was a silence, contemplative, retrospective on both their parts. Crabb broke it.

"Tell me, old chap," he said, "about your position and prospects."

Burnett smiled a little bitterly.

"I'm a consular clerk at twelve hundred a year during good behavior. When I've said that I've said it all."

"But your future?"

"I'm not in line of promotion."

"Impossible. Politics?"

"Exactly. I've no pull to speak of."

"But your service?"

"I've been paid for that."

"Isn't there any other way?"

"That's what I asked my chief the other day."

"And he denied you?"

"He did; explicitly. Oh, yes, he named a condition!"—Burnett laughed—"an impossible one. You see, there's been a treaty made between Germany and China. I happened to know something about it when I was out there. It has to do with neutrality, trade ports and coaling stations; but just what, the devil only knows; and his deputy, Baron Arnim, won't tell. Arnim is Germany's envoy. He's now in Washington, ostensibly sight-seeing, but really to confer with Von Schlichter, the ambassador here, about it. You see, we've got rather more closely into the Eastern question than anyone supposes, and a knowledge of Germany's attitude is immensely important to us."

"Pray go on," drawled Crabb.

"That's all there is. The rest was a joke. Crowthers wants me to get the text of that treaty from Baron Arnim's dispatch box."

"Entertaining!" said Crabb, with clouding brow. And then, after a pause, with all the seriousness in the world: "And aren't you going to?"

Burnett turned to look at him in surprise.

"What?"

"Get it. The treaty."

"The treaty! From Baron Arnim! You don't know much of diplomacy, Crabb."

"You misunderstand me," he said, coolly; and then, with lowered voice:

"Not from Baron Arnim—from Baron Arnim's dispatch box."

Burnett looked at his acquaintance in amaze. Crabb had been thought a mystery in the old days. He was an enigma now.

"Surely you're jesting."

"Why? It oughtn't to be difficult."

Burnett looked fearfully around the room at their distant neighbors. "But it's burglary. Worse than that. If I, in my connection with the state department, were to be discovered tampering with the papers of a foreign government, it would lead to endless complications and, perhaps, to disruption of diplomatic relations. Such a thing is impossible. Its very impossibility was the one thing which prompted Crowthers' suggestion. Can't you understand that?"

Mr. Crabb was stroking his chin and contemplating a well-shaped boot.

"Admit that it's impossible," he said, calmly. "Do you think, if by some chance you were enabled to give the secretary of state this information, you'd better your condition?"

"What *is* the use, Crabb?" began Burnett.

"It can't do any harm to answer me."

"Well—yes, I suppose so. If we weren't plunged immediately into war with Emperor William."

"Oh!" Crabb was deep in thought. It was several moments before he answered, and then, as though dismissing the subject: "Can't you dine with me on the *Blue Wing* to-night? he asked. "She's off Georgetown. There's a lot you'd like to know. If you say so, I'll stop for you at your rooms. You can sleep aboard or come off—just as you like."

Ross Burnett accepted with alacrity. He remembered the *Blue Wing*, Weckerly, and Valentin's dinners. He had longed for them many times when he was eating spaghetti at Gabri's little restaurant in Genoa.

When they parted it was with a consciousness on the part of Burnett that the affair of Baron Arnim had not been dismissed. The very thought had been madness. Was it only a little pleasantry of Crabb's? If not, what wild plan had entered his head? It was unlike the Mortimer Crabb he remembered.

And yet, there had been a deeper current flowing below his placid surface that gave a suggestion of desperate intent which nothing could explain away. And how illimitable were the possibilities if some plan could be devised by which the information could be obtained without resort to violent measures! It meant for him at least a post at the helm somewhere, or, perhaps, a secretaryship on one of the big commissions.

The idea of burglary, flagrant and nefarious, he dismissed at a thought. Would there not be some way—an unguarded moment—a faithless servant—to give the thing the aspect of possible achievement? As he dressed he found himself thinking of the matter with more seriousness than it deserved.

Valentin's dinners were a distinct achievement. They were of the kind which made conclusive the assumption of an especial heaven for cooks. After coffee and over a cigar, which made all things complete, Mortimer Crabb chose his psychological moment.

"Burnett," he said, "you must see that treaty and copy it."

Burnett looked at him squarely. Crabb's glance never wavered.

"So you did mean it?" said Burnett.

"Every word. You must have it. I'm going to help."

"It looks hopeless."

"Perhaps. But the game is worth the candle."

"But how? A bribe to a servant?"

"Leave that to me. Come, come, Ross, it's the chance of your life. Arnim, Von Schlichter and all the rest of them dine at the British embassy to-night. There's to be a ball afterward. They won't be back until late. We must get into Arnim's rooms at the German embassy to-night. Those rooms are in the rear of the house. There's a rain spout and a back building. You can climb?"

"To-night?" Burnett gasped. "You found out these things to-day?"

"Since I left you. I saw Denton Thorpe at the British embassy."

"And you were so sure I'd agree! Don't you think, old man——"

"Hang it all, Burnett! I'm not easily deceived. You're down on your luck; that's plain. But you're not beaten. Any man who can buck the market down to his last thousand the way you did doesn't lack sand. The end isn't an ignoble one. You'll be doing the administration a service—and yourself. Why, man, how can you pause?"

Burnett looked around at the familiar fittings of the saloon, at the Braun prints let into the woodwork, at the flying teal set in the azure above the wainscoting, at his immaculate host and at his own conventional black. Was this to be indeed a setting for Machiavellian conspiracy?

Crabb got up from the table and opened the doors of a large locker under the companion. Burnett watched him curiously.

Garment after garment he pulled out upon the deck under the glare of the cabin lamp; shoes, hats and caps, overcoats and clothing of all sizes and shapes from the braided gray of the coster to the velvet and sash of the Niçois.

He selected a soft hat and a cap and two long tattered coats of ancient cut and style and threw them over the back of a chair. Then he went to his state-

room and brought out a large square box of tin and placed it on the table.

He first wrapped a handkerchief around his neck, then seated himself deliberately before the box, opened the lid and took out a tray filled with make-up sticks. These he put aside while he drew forth from the deeper recesses mustachios, whiskers and beards of all shapes and complexions. He worked rapidly and silently, watching his changing image in the little mirror set in the box lid.

Burnett, fascinated, followed his skillful fingers as they moved back and forth, lining here, shading there, not as the actor does for an effect by the calcium, but carefully, delicately, with the skill of the art anatomist who knows the bone structure of the face and the probable pull of the aging muscles.

In twenty minutes Mortimer Crabb had aged as many years, and now bore the phiz of a shaggy rum sot. The long coat, soft hat and rough bandanna completed the character. The fever of the adventure had mounted in Burnett's veins. He sprang to his feet with a reckless gesture of final resolution.

"Give me my part!" he exclaimed. "I'll play it!"

The aged intemperate smiled approval. "Good lad!" he said. "I thought you'd be game. If you hadn't been I was going alone. It's lucky you're clean shaved. Come and be transfigured."

And as he rapidly worked on Burnett's face he completed the details of his plan. Like a good general, Crabb disposed his plans for failure as well as for success.

They would wear their disguises over their evening clothes. Then, if the worst came, vaseline and a wipe of the bandannas would quickly remove all guilty signs from their faces, they could discard their tatters, and resume the garb of convention.

Ross Burnett at last rose swarthy and darkly mustached, lacking only the rings in his ears to be old Gabri himself. He was fully awakened to the possibilities of the adventure. Whatever misgivings he had had were speedily dissipated by the blithe optimism of his companion.

Crabb reached over for the brandy decanter.

"One drink," he said, "and we must be off."

Weckerly rowed them ashore and landed them at the coal wharves. There Crabb gave the captain his final instructions. He was to drift downstream to the foot of Twenty-third Street and await the signal between two and three o'clock.

The night was very black and thick. The thin mist which had been gathering since sunset now turned to a soft drizzle of rain. Crabb, hands in pockets and shoulders bent, walked with a rapid and shambling gait up the steep hill, across the canal and lighted thoroughfare, and into the quieter, darker streets of the ancient town.

"We can't risk the cars or a cab in this," muttered Crabb. "We might do it, but it's not worth the risk. Can you walk? It's two miles at the least."

It was after one o'clock before they reached Highland Terrace. Without stopping they examined the German embassy at long range from the distant side of Massachusetts Avenue. A gas lamp sputtered dimly under the *porte-cochère*. Another light gleamed far up in the slanting roof. Crabb led the way around and into the alley in the rear. It was long, illy lighted and ran the entire length of the block.

"I got the details in the city plot-book from a real estate man this afternoon. He thinks I'm going to buy next door. I wanted to be particular about the alleys and back entrances." Crabb chuckled.

Burnett looked along the backs of the row of N Street houses. They were all as stolid as sphinxes. Several lights at wide intervals burned dimly. The night was chill for the season, and all the windows were down. The occasion was propitious. The rear of the embassy was dark, except for a dim glow in a window on the second floor.

"That should be Arnim's room," said Crabb.

He tried the back gate. It was un-

locked. Noiselessly they entered, locking it after them. There was a rain spout, which Crabb eyed hopefully; but they found better luck in the shape of a thirty-foot ladder along the fence.

"A positive invitation," whispered Crabb, joyfully. "Here, Ross; in the shadow. Once on the back building the deed is done. Quiet, now. You hold it and I'll go up."

Burnett did not falter. But his hands were cold, and he was trembling from top to toe with excitement. He could not but admire Crabb's composure as he went firmly up the rungs.

He saw him reach the roof and draw himself over the coping, and in a moment Burnett, less noiselessly but safely, had joined his fellow criminal by the window. There they waited a moment, listening. A cab clattered down Fifteenth Street, and the gongs on the car line clanged in reply, but that was all.

Crabb stealthily arose and peered into the lighted window. It was a study. The light came from a lamp with a green shade, turned low. Under its glow upon the desk were maps and documents in profusion. And in the corner he could make out the lines of an iron-bound chest or box. They had made no mistake. Unless it was in the possession of Von Schlichter it was here that the Chinese treaty would be found.

"All right," whispered Crabb. "An old-fashioned padlock, too."

Crabb tried the window. It was locked. He took something from one of the pockets of his coat and reached up to the middle of the sash. There was a sound like the quick shearing of linen which sent the blood back to Burnett's heart. In the still night it seemed to come back manifold from the wings of the buildings opposite. They paused again. A slight crackling of broken glass, and Crabb's long fingers reached through the hole and turned the catch. In a moment they were in the room.

The intangible and Quixotic had become a latter-day reality. Burnett's spirits rose. He did not lack courage, and here was a situation which spurred him to the utmost.

Instinctively he closed the inside shutters behind him. From the alley the pair would not have presented an appearance which accorded with the quiet splendor of the room. He found himself peering around, his ears straining for the slightest sound.

A glance revealed the dispatch box, heavy, squat and phlegmatic, like its owner. Crabb had tiptoed over to the door of the adjoining room. Burnett saw the eyes dilate and the warning finger to his lips.

From the inner apartment, slow and regular, came the sound of heavy breathing. There, in a broad armchair by the foot of the bed, sprawled the baron's valet, in stertorous sleep. His mouth was wide open, his limbs relaxed. He had heard nothing.

"Quick," whispered Crabb; "your bandanna around his legs."

Burnett surprised himself by the rapidity and intelligence of his collaboration. A handkerchief was slipped into the man's mouth, and before his eyes were fairly opened he was gagged and bound hand and foot by the cord from the baron's own dressing gown.

From a pocket Crabb had produced a revolver, which he flourished significantly under the nose of the terrified wretch, who recoiled before the dark look which accompanied it.

Crabb seemed to have planned exactly what to do. He took a bath towel and tied it over the man's ears and under his chin. From the bed he took the baron's sheets and blankets, enswathing the unfortunate servant until nothing but the tip of his nose was visible. A rope of suspenders and cravats completed the job.

The Baron Arnim's valet, to all the purposes of usefulness in life, was a bundled mummy.

"Phew!" said Crabb, when it was done. "Poor devil! But it can't be helped. He mustn't see or know. And now for it."

Crabb produced a bunch of skeleton keys and an electric bull's eye. He tried the keys rapidly. In a moment the dispatch box was opened and its contents exposed to their avid gaze.

"Carefully, now," whispered Crabb. "What should it look like?"

"A foolscap-shaped thing in silk covers with dangling cords," said Ross. "There, under your hand."

In a moment they had it out and between them on the desk. There it was, in all truth, written in two columns, Chinese on the one side, French on the other.

"Are you sure?" said Crabb.

"Sure! Sure as I'm a thief in the night!"

"Then sit and write, man. Write as you never wrote before. I'll listen and watch Rameses the Second."

In the twenty minutes during which Burnett fearfully wrote, Crabb stood listening at the doors and windows for sounds of servants or approaching carriages. The man swaddled in the sheets made but a few futile struggles and then subsided. Burnett's eyes gleamed. Other eyes than his would gleam at what he saw and wrote. When he finished he closed the document, removed all traces of his work, replaced it in the iron box and shut the lid. He arranged the precious sheets into an inner pocket and was moving toward the window when Crabb stopped him.

"Wait," he whispered. "We haven't burgled him yet." And walking over to a side table he took a handsome silver brandy flask.

"Can't you omit that, Crabb?"

"Do you want him to know what you've been about, Ross?" said the other, coolly. "We *must* take something." While Burnett rather dubiously watched him Crabb brought all the small silver things from the two rooms piece by piece. Some of them he put in his pockets; the others he bundled into a towel.

"Leave them as they are. It's enough, Crabb. Come, for God's sake, let's get out of this."

Crabb was smelling at a whisky decanter. "I'm devilish thirsty," he said.

Now that they had so far succeeded, Burnett was trembling for his precious information.

"Drop it," he whispered, angrily. "They may be about our ears at any minute."

He had already raised his hand to the closed shutter when there was a step in the hallway without, and the door opened. There, stout and grizzled, his walrus mustache bristling with surprise, in all the distinction of gold lace and orders, stood Baron Arnim.

For a moment there was no sound. The burglars looked at the baron and the baron looked at the burglars, mouths and eyes open alike. Then even before Crabb could display his intimidating revolver the German had disappeared through the door screaming at the top of his lungs.

"Quick, out of the window," said Crabb, helping Burnett over the sill. "Down you go—I'll follow. Don't fall. If you miss your footing, we're ruined."

Burnett scrambled out, over the coping and down the ladder, Crabb almost on his fingers. But they reached the yard in safety and were out in the alley running in the shadow of the fence before a venturesome head stuck forth from the open window and a revolver blazed into the vacant air.

"The devil!" said Crabb. "They'll have every copper in the city on us in a minute. This way." He turned into a narrow alley at right angles to the other. "Off with the coat as you go—now, the mustache and grease paint. Take your time. Into this sewer with the coats. So!"

Two gentlemen in light topcoats, one in a cap, the other in a hat, walked up N Street arm in arm, thickly singing. Their shirt fronts and hair were rumpled, their legs were not too steady, and they clung affectionately to each other for support.

Il y avait une petite fille
Qui s'appellait Marguerite——

went the song.

A window flew up and a tousled head appeared.

"Hey!" yelled a voice. "Ther' burglars in the alley."

"Burglars!" said one of the singers; and then: "Go to bed. You're drunk."

More sounds of windows, the blowing of night whistles and hurrying feet.

Still the revelers sang on:

Elle demeurait dans la ville.

A stout policeman, clamorous and bellicose, broke in.

"Did you see 'em? Did you see 'em?" he cried, glaring into their faces. Bleary eyes returned his look.

"W-who?" said the voices in unison.

"Burglars," roared the copper. "If I wasn't busy I'd run ye in, ye soaks." And he was off at full speed on his vagrant mission.

"Lucky you're busy, old chap," muttered Crabb to the departing figure. "Do sober up a little, Ross, or we'll never get away. And don't jostle me so, for I clank like a bellwether."

Slowly the nefarious pair made their way to Thomas Circle and Vermont Avenue, where the sounds of commotion were lost in the noises of the night.

At L Street Burnett straightened up. "Lord!" he gasped. "But that was close."

"Not as close as it looked," said Crabb, coolly. "A white shirt front does wonders with a copper. It was better than a knock on the head and a run for it. In the meanwhile, Ross, for the love of Heaven, help me with some of the bric-à-brac." And with that he handed Burnett a gold pin tray, a silver box and a watch fob.

Burnett soberly examined the spoils. "I only wish we could have done without that."

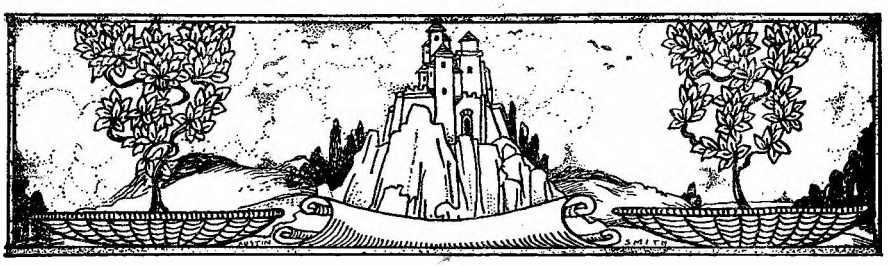
"And had Arnim know what we were driving for? Never, Ross. I'll pawn them in New York for as little as I can and send Schlichter the tickets. Won't that do?"

"I suppose it must," said Burnett, dubiously.

Weckerly was waiting at the river. By three o'clock they were on the *Blue Wing* again, Burnett with mingled feelings of doubt and satisfaction, Crabb afire with the achievement.

"Rasselas was a fool, Ross, a malcontent—a *fainéant*. Life is amazing, bewitching, consummate." And then, gayly: "Here's a health, boy—a long life to the new ambassador to the Court of St. James!"

Mr. Ross Burnett did not go to the Court of St. James. But in the following winter, to the surprise of many, the President gave him a special mission to prepare a trade treaty with Peru. Baron Arnim, in due course, recovered his bric-à-brac—all but a silver brandy flask. That article of virtue and necessity adorns a locker in Mr. Crabb's private stateroom on the *Blue Wing*, and contains a very choice vintage of Armagnac, which would do no discredit to the taste of its former owner. Meanwhile Emperor William, mystified at the amazing sagacity of the secretary of state in the Eastern question, continues the building of a mighty navy in the fear that one day the upstart nation across the ocean will bring the questions complicating between them to an issue.



The Trials of Commander McTurk

By Cutcliffe Hyne

Author of "Captain Kettle, K. C. B.," "McTodd," Etc.

VI.—THE SULTANA

(*A Complete Story*)

"IT'S a mighty bad bar," said Commander McTurk, peering at the spouting tumble of beer-colored waters when the surf-boat heaved up on a wave. "I bet two dollars and a half we get swamped if we try anc run in."

"It's a jolly sight worse beach," Brigg commented; "and I'm open to betting all eternity to a tin tack we get smashed to the smallest kind of smithereens if we try and force a landing there. Why, I doubt if even a Kru-boy could swim in through that surf, and, anyway, I'll swear that an ordinary Yankee and an ordinary Britisher can't, however much they may fancy themselves in the water."

"The tornado will be here in an hour sure, and may be less. Look at the way it's banking up. The sky's like ink already."

The English trader wiped his wet forehead with a white drill sleeve. "Yes, the air's pretty breathless and stale, isn't it? Well, a West African tornado's a great thing for clearing the air and rearranging the landscape and sweetening things up generally. I wish I was back among the bad smells of Malla-Nulla factory, enjoying a nice racking fever."

The Kru-boys at the paddles had broken off their song some time since and were chattering anxiously over the outlook; and presently the head-man, who straddled on the stern thwart, sculling thoughtfully with the long, steering sweep, gave voice to their wishes.

"Oh, Brigg!"

"Well, Brass-Pan," said the Englishman, "what is it now?"

"We no fit for stay here."

"You no fit for lib for beach?"

"Savvy plenty."

"And you no fit for run dem bar?"

"Savvy plenty."

"Then keep your yam-box shut unless you've got something sensible to say."

Brass-Pan grinned. "Lib for drown the whole jim-bang if we stay, Brigg."

"Confound you, yes! You're just like the Opposition in Parliament; you can only criticize; you've no constructiveness."

"No savvy."

"You wouldn't. Well, Brass-Pan, in the blessed language of the coast you say bar no good, beach no good, sea no good. D'you savvy nother palaver?"

"Savvy another plenty-too-good. We lib for shelter Ju-ju River one-time."

"Oh, the devil!" said Brigg, plainly startled. "Is that unholy ditch near here? I didn't know. But what chance is there, I wonder, of getting out again?"

"Suppose," said Commander McTurk, "you come down to my level and speak plain United States, and tell me what all this is about."

This series began in the September issue. The back numbers can be obtained through any newsdealer. Price, ten cents.

The surf-boat swung skyward on a wave, and Brigg thrust out a finger toward the place where the river bar sent up yellow fountains between the two low, green, mangrove shores. "That's White-Post River that you wanted to visit and that you hired me to take you to. Well, there my accurate geography of this part of the coast ends."

"You only know of this Ju-ju River that your head-man talks about by hearsay?"

"Just hearsay." The Kru-boys had settled themselves on the gunwales of the surf-boat and were stabbing rhythmically at the water alongside with their trident-headed Akkra paddles; the great muscles under their backs and shoulders gleamed under the sweating skin; the head-man crammed on his bowler hat and sculled his best with the steering oar; and the huge Atlantic swell rolled in abeam as the course changed. "But I suppose we shall know more of the infernal place presently, if the bar down there doesn't happen to be as bad as this. You see our gentle savages have made up their minds we're going there, and I suppose we're right to try. Anyway, it's our only chance—— Hey, you, Brass-Pan, tell dem canoe boys I fit for dash one case of gin if they get us in before the breeze comes. Tell 'em it's much warmer to be chopped than drowned any day—especially if you're stewed up with peppers."

The joke was translated, and the paddlers roared with ready laughter. The Kru-boy has a keen sense of humor, and if his jests have a gristly and a personal flavor he likes them all the better. Moreover, he has not sufficient brain to carry him more than a few hours into the future, so his merriment is not dimmed by thoughts of possible happenings on ahead.

"I wish," said Commander McTurk irritably, "you'd tell me what's before us."

"The unknown, I guess, and certainly the unexpected. You see, this Ju-ju River the boys are talking about is in German territory, and it always did run to a very ugly reputation, even before the white man discovered it, and that is not so very long ago. It's just a hotbed of secret societies and ju-ju."

"What's ju-ju?"

"General West African term for something you don't understand—sort of things like charms, taboos, poison, magic, witchcraft, or finding powdered glass in your porridge. It's invariably unpleasant, and nine times out of ten you can't make out how or why it works. Understand?"

"I don't know that I do, but go on. I say, Brigg, if this boat swings about much more I shall disgrace the United States Navy and be seasick. I think it must be that infernal parrot pie at your factory that disagreed with me."

"Don't apologize. A surf-boat in a bad roll has been known to upset the stomach of a pot idol. Well, to continue: You can imagine that ju-ju priests and past provincial grand masters of secret societies would scarcely approve of the German official who thought he knew how to colonize, and didn't. They stood it for a bit after they were annexed—hadn't heard of mailed fists, and didn't know they were annexed, I guess—and the Germans got badly on their nerves, and so they set to work and gave them a particularly fancy time of it. Their pet ways of torturing prisoners are things you can only talk about to men, but if you'd care to hear——"

"No," said McTurk, "you can skip that." He took a small tube of pills from his pocket and swallowed about a third of its contents. Brigg watched him with open dissent.

"Those Blue Shield Febrifuge Pills aren't worth a little tin hang, and I ought to know. I've been a coaster eight years now, and I've swallowed at the very lowest computation four tons seventeen hundredweights of medicine—most of it patent—and I know the exact value of each of them. But I tell you, captain, there's nothing like this where we are going. Look"—he whipped out a bottle of quinine, tapped a dose of the feathery powder onto a cigarette paper, rolled it into a

ball, and swallowed it with a click of the tongue—"now, that stuff gets to the spot and fights the little fever devils without any delay whatever, and shan't I have a head on me like a concertina in two hours' time! Hello, captain!"

"Precisely. I told you that parrot pie was going to win out. I'm feeling pretty pale."

Brigg looked at Commander McTurk's red face and laughed. "May you never be paler!" he said, and sniffed at the heavy air. "Do you notice the smell of crushed marigolds has gone? That means we are out of the water stream brought down by White-Post River and are in plain salt sea again. Well, if we don't hurry up and get to the stink of Ju-ju River pretty quick, we shall catch that blessed tornado out here in the open. Hey, you, Brass-Pan, you tell dem boys dey bushmen. Dey no fit for canoe-boy. You tell dem hurry one-time, and if we lib for river I fit for dash two cases of gin. Savvy, Brass-Pan? Two cases."

"Savvy plenty," said the head-man; and translated the news of this further votive offering. Whereupon the reeking negroes stabbed their paddles with fresh energy, and the heavy surf-boat fled still faster from the blackness which swept down toward her stern.

Bleached Madeira chairs stood on the floor boards amidships for the two white men, and Commander McTurk sat in his and glared at Africa from puckered eyes. At last the United States Government seemed to have shaken off their distrust of him, and the secretary of the navy board at Washington had entrusted him with a definite commission. It certainly was a secret commission, and one that had been refused by every officer who could wriggle out of acceptance.

"If you win out," the official had said when the matter was talked through, "and do what's wanted, of course you won't be patted on the back publicly. Quite understand that? But the job will be marked up to your credit, and I will see that the navy department does the right thing. You shall have a ship, anyway, and when there's the next excuse you shall be posted. But if there's any trouble over the job, don't look beyond yourself for help. The United States will have to repudiate you, anyway."

"I don't think," mused Commander McTurk, as he watched the furious surf smash along the beach, "that luck is very fair to me just now. I know men make luck; I've made it myself a hundred times; but handling the thick end of an Atlantic swell with a West African tornado thrown in is outside my weight. There's White-Post River and the quarter-deck of a United States ship dropping out of sight astern, and what there is ahead, even if we do contrive to run into this Ju-ju creek without getting swamped, Glory only knows."

"By Jove!" said Brigg presently. "See that point we've just opened out? My quinine's beginning to act, by the way, and I can see three points quite distinctly. There's our river tucked in at the back. Lordy! what a bar! But it's better than the one we've left."

McTurk turned to the head-man. "Can you take your boat through into that creek?" he asked sharply.

"No savvy," said Brass-Pan.

"You plenty fit for make dem boat lib for river?" Brigg translated.

"Small-small fit," said Brass-Pan doubtfully.

"I dasb you three boxes gin if we lib for river."

The Kru-boy showed two rows of excellent teeth. "I fit for get dem gin," he chuckled, and gave further directions to his crew.

Again the uneasy waters around them grew beer-colored, and again there came that acrid smell of crushed marigold so inseparable to some West African rivers. The surf-boat, as soon as she had rounded one of the flanking sandspits, turned sharply at right angles to her former course and stood boldly in toward the spouting waters of the bar. Behind them the tornado loomed up in a tremendous wall of blackness that bumped and grumbled with uneasy thunder. And with them

always they carried the pungent aroma of sweating negro.

They were already in the roaring noise of the bar when Brigg shouted his last piece of advice. "If the boys jump, you jump, too. If you don't, you'll have the boat over on top of you, and probably get a broken thigh."

"All right," McTurk yelled back. "It isn't exactly the first time I've seen a surf-boat, but I never tackled as ugly looking a river bar as this. Wup! but that was nearly over."

The surf-boat reared and plunged and stood on its head and stood on its tail; the Kru-boys paddled for naked life, and Brass-Pan at the steering oar performed a miracle regularly every fifteen seconds; and all around them the beer-colored water spouted and creamed and roared in its turmoil.

There were two bars, it appeared, an outer and an inner, and when they were shot into the space between the two, water-logged and gasping, they stopped the paddles for a moment to bale and draw a breath.

It was here that the tornado burst upon them with a rattle and a bang. The wind came in a blast that seemed solid as the end of a house; the rain and the spindrift in it beat them cruelly; they were chased by vivid lightning and deafened by the continuous bellowing of the thunder; and before they very well knew how it happened they had been blown bodily through or over the inner bar and were thrown with other unconsidered raffle and wreckage into riparian mangroves.

Beneath them was obscene mud, dotted with more obscene land-crabs; around were the swaying wire-like stems of the mangroves; and overhead the solid wind swept through the gloom like some titanic planing machine. There was no more fight left in any of them. They were battered, gasping, breathless, dazed, deafened; and they cowered on the floor of the surf-boat, the whites sandwiched in among the blacks.

Then of a sudden the swept mangroves stood up again, swaying gently. The sun came out with cheerful smile and got to work at thawing their chilled bodies. The roar dropped, and the heads bobbed up with an instinctive sigh of relief.

"And thus passes," said Brigg, "the West African tornado. I always like to picture the particular devil who drives these hurricanes as standing at an ordinary main steam throttle and taking a professional pride in jumping to full speed ahead and easing to a stop; both instantaneously. I say"—he giggled—"excuse me, but what the dickens is the matter with your collar?"

Commander McTurk put a hand gingerly up to his throat. His collar had become disarranged during the tornado, and to his furious annoyance one end was now lovingly resting over his right ear and the other end sprawled over his back.

"Haw, haw, haw," laughed the Englishman.

"Mr. Brigg," the American rasped. "I'll break your infernal neck if you don't stop that row. I brought you along to render me certain services which you have failed in so far. I did not bring you to criticize my toilet."

"Oh, all right," said Brigg cheerfully. "Don't get stuffy. With this quinine inside me I can see three McTurks distinctly, and maybe I noticed the wrong one."

"I also object to your use of the word stuffy or to any other familiarities."

But here Brigg's temper gave way also. "If you don't like my neighborhood or my manner, Captain McTurk, you've my full permission to go. I was promised some of your almighty dollars for services rendered, and I'd like to remind you I haven't seen the color of them yet."

"You'll have to wait. My wad's at your beastly factory."

"I don't quite know what a wad is, but if it's something one could cram down the throat of an American eagle when it screams I wish we had it here."

The last shred of Commander McTurk's temper went. "I'll teach you," he snarled, "to chuck your nasty British sneers at anything American!" and reached out his long, powerful arms,

and gripped the Englishman with the quickness of a professional fighter.

But Brigg had been long on the coast; his strength was sapped with quinine and malaria; and the American, feeling the want of fighting balance on the instant, eased his grip and threw the man with contemptuous gentleness against the mass of the Kru-boys.

Then the game changed with suddenness. There were fourteen paddlers to the boat, and Brass-Pan made up the fifteen. They promptly proceeded to show their resentment in a practical manner. They belonged to the strongest race on earth, and when McTurk put in his sledge-hammer blows on their heads he merely barked his own knuckles without inconveniencing them in the least. He was as much outclassed as Brigg had been, and when he went down to the floorboards with most of the wind and sense jolted out of him, if there had been no interference, murder undoubtedly would have followed.

But Brigg was a white man and followed the instincts of his color. "Let him alone, you," he shouted. "My palaver. You let dem white man alone, you bushmen. I tell you dis not your palaver, now. Captain McTurk, get up and congratulate yourself on having an unslit throat. Got your wits all there, eh? Good and well! Now, if you please, twist your collar back into position again, and either apologize or go to the devil."

"I'll not apologize to you at any rate," said McTurk furiously.

"Well," said Brigg, "I've offered you an alternative."

Commander McTurk straightened his disheveled clothes. Then he looked at the interlacing mangroves which hazed away into solidity a bare score of yards from the boat, and looked also at the foul mud below them. He showed no hesitation. When he had made his person neat again he deliberately stood up on the surf-boat's gunwale and swung off among the wire-like branches, passing from one to another, and keeping well above the mud.

"Come back," Brigg shouted, "and don't crawl about there like a gigantic lunatic. Come back here and don't be a fool."

"Thanks, but I'm full up on British hospitality!"

"Then," snapped Brigg, "I hope you'll enjoy the fever which you'll get certainly, and the land-crabs which will start in to chop you before you peg out." He continued to shout angry sarcasms and insults till the other man was out of sight and earshot.

Now there were three things which made Commander John Kelly McTurk lose his temper, and cheap witticism about his personal appearance was one of them. His rage had been genuine enough, but it was not altogether aimless. Always at the front of his mind he carried a memory of the commission —the secret commission—which had brought him to West Africa, and while he was wrangling with the Englishman in the surf-boat an idea had suddenly come to him by which even now it could be carried to a prosperous conclusion.

To pass through the unfathomable slime and mud of a mangrove swamp is a thing impossible; to pass over the top of it among the desperately close fabric of the branches, in a stew of heat, in a maze of mosquitoes, is a feat generally accounted hopeless for a white man. But, in spite of his great height, Commander J. K. McTurk was a man of enormous strength and activity; and just then he was spurred by more than ordinary determination. He sweated and he struggled and he strained; he held on a course at right angles to the river, steering roughly by the sun; and on the edge of night came to the top of the tide mark, and the end of the mangroves.

But there is no twilight in the latitude of Ju-ju River, and the hot night snapped down like the shutting of a box. By a happy chance the mangroves were not backed by bush—that dense West African bush that even machetemen can cut through only at the rate of a couple of miles a day. A savanna lay behind and already yielded the mist wreaths of early evening. The grass on it was five feet high, and here and there was an occasional ragged nut-palm.

Through this country McTurk made a slow way, keeping always parallel to the river.

It was not very dark. The unwholesome phosphorescences of decay glowed here and there among the grass stems, while in the great, vague night overhead heat lightning blinked quietly. One star alone was visible; a great flare hung low over the sea's horizon.

But after Commander McTurk had stared for a minute at this last, and wished much that he had a canvas and some oil colors on which to note down his impressions of it, he turned his back on sea and yellow star and marched resolutely on, deeper and deeper into the most dangerous country in Africa. Insects bit him, and the mysterious night noises of the bush pinged and growled past his ear. The smell and the close heat would have unnerved a weaker man.

It was very little short of dawn when at last he hit upon a bush road and presently came upon cultivated land. There was a hut—a sound enough thing of swish and wattle—and the smell of wood-smoke still lingered in the ashes of the cooking fire. Inside were mats, a figured gourd chop-bowl and a couple of hoes; but it was evident that the farmer and his family slept in the security of his town house.

McTurk peered round the eaves of the hut and found a slab of heavy wet cassava bread and a square-faced gin-bottle filled with some sour palm wine. He made a doubtful breakfast from these, and left behind him twenty-five cents in United States currency as payment. Then he topped up with a rousing dose of Blue Shield Febrifuge Pills and took the most paddled road out of the farm.

Once more he wound through the bush, which now steamed under the morning sun, and then came upon more farms, and soon found himself being stared at by curious blacks in the outskirts of Ju-ju town itself.

At first his observers were children and women, but presently the males began to come out from the huts; and these changed from husbandmen into warriors with a quickness which said little for the Pax Germanica.

"I say, daddy," remarked Commander McTurk to a burly savage who stopped his advance, "I'd give a trifle to know how you materialized that ferocious-looking spear of yours out of nothing. A second ago you'd a hoe in your hand, and now, hey, presto! it's a spear. You're naked to the point of indecency, and so you couldn't very well have it concealed up your sleeve, conjurer fashion. But I want to know if you'll kindly make another quick change and turn it into a wand of peace—ah, would you?"

The black man snarled, uplifted his great right arm and made a sudden lunge. Commander J. K. McTurk with still more magic quickness stepped aside, seized the arm, twisted it over his shoulder and hove down upon it. The elbow joint snapped with the noise of breaking fagots, and the man screamed like a child.

Commander McTurk settled the disorder of his clothes, picked up the spear and felt its balance, then addressed the onlookers.

"Now, look here," he rasped, "I don't undertake to fight through the whole of this town, because I understand it's considerable big. But I'm an officer of the United States Navy, and I'm going to cut out the livers of the next sixteen able-bodied men who apply for attention. Any takers?"

Apparently there were not.

"Well," he said, "I'll not wait longer in this suburb. I've business at your government house, and as I suppose you, sir, there, who owned this spear, consider you've a grievance against me, I'll take you right along to lay your complaint in the proper quarters. Now, march."

The scowling black savage who nursed the bones of his broken elbow with his sound hand understood the order by intuition. There was something about this tall, strong, white man that was beyond his former experience. The Germans who said they owned the country could command—did command, in fact, with much copiousness—but

they were either too formal or too blustering to convince one that they could see their orders carried through. This present man with the wrinkled red face seemed somehow to carry a different flavor with him. He had broken the strongest arm in Africa, and if his desires were not fulfilled, he was perfectly capable of breaking the strongest bull-neck in Africa in his next moment of displeasure. So the savage mentioned that his name was Mn'John, and stated in pantomime his entire readiness to carry out all instructions.

"Well and good," said McTurk. "Show the way." And forthwith he marched forward through two rows of excited and dangerous natives, who glowered and stared, but forebore to touch him.

In Ju-ju town itself there were few evidences that it had ever been occupied even temporarily by the Germans. Their corrugated iron customs house still stood, but it was the residence of a practising ju-ju priest, and was ringed round by a horrifying row of damp human skulls. The place reeked of sacrifice and savagery. It was not one white man in a thousand who could have gone even to the borders of the town without meeting disaster.

But the atmosphere which J. K. McTurk carried with him was a sufficient protection even in these wild circumstances. His wounded guide led him on unfalteringly, and now and again threw a word of explanation to the more threatening groups, and at last they came to a squat, square building of mud and wattle, which was protected at its angles by low, square towers. From one of these towers peeped the water jacket of a machine-gun; from another there showed the chase of a German field-piece; and beside the gateway between them there lounged two naked sentries armed with Mannlicher rifles.

"Government house, evidently," commented the visitor; and to one of the sentries he added: "Here, you, go tell the king that Commander J. K. McTurk, of the United States Navy, has come to visit him on a special service matter."

The sentry apparently had some English. "No savvy United States. Is it alle-same German?"

"Not on your life. 'Way-up superior."

"Good as English?"

Commander McTurk's red face took on a deeper tint. "Don't you ever think of comparing them. The United States is the finest concern on earth."

"United States no fit for run steamahs on de coast," said the sentry thoughtfully.

"That's an enduring fact. Your old coast's a sickly place, anyway, and I guess Yankee ship-owners know enough to stay in out of the wet."

The sentry was clearly impressed. "Dem true," he admitted. "Steamah-palaver damrot." And he added simply: "I lib for stokehold once mineself. Now, you stay here. I fit for go say you come."

But while this parley had been going on outside the palace a local vested interest had become alarmed. From the corrugated iron house in the square three ju-ju priests saw the visitor, and did not wait to diagnose his nationality. "All white men," so ran their creed, "are the enemies of ju-ju." So forth they came, fantastic in horrible garnishings, blowing lustily on great ivory horns.

Like leaves swept down before a gale the clan gathered under the grilling sunlight of the square, and if the ju-ju priests had been men of action instead of men of explanatory speech Commander McTurk would have been marked for sacrifice, and probably torture. But the chief ju-ju man saw just the chance for a popular and impassioned harangue, and that fatal gift of oratory saved the sailor. The secular arm intervened. His friend, the sentry, appeared again in the blackness of the mud doorway and led him in among the domestic smells of the palace, and the crowd stayed yapping outside and made no attempt to follow. Evidently royalty in Ju-ju town knew how to make itself respected even when its views were at difference with those of the church.

"Now, my lad," said McTurk to his

guide, "just you trot me right along to your old king, and here's a nice soft five-dollar bill for your pains."

"Dem king he lib for die tree week back. Sultana palaver lib. Dem sultana say I bring you to her."

"By Glory!" muttered McTurk, "here's luck coming to meet me after all with both hands full. I bet two dollars and a half that's the woman I want. Just think: I shall carry out my commission without any further waiting, and I shall get a ship. Great Glory! to think of being done with these hole-and-corner jobs, and landing back once more in the United States Navy!"

The dark interior of the palace rustled with unseen life, and reeked with negroid odors. It was surprisingly large, and vastly squalid; a great piecemeal warren that could have tucked away two hundred men.

Twice as he wound his way down tortuous passages Commander McTurk heard the click of a gun close to his ear, as some fierce savage itched to shoot him. Once he was actually assaulted by three men, knife in hand, and warded off the blow of one by a buffet of his own most capable fist, while his guide calmly bayonetted another. The third man slipped away silently into the warm darkness.

With the exception of these incidents he arrived at the audience-room without interruption, and the sentry passed him in with a friendly push on the shoulder. "Dem female," whispered the sentry, "make herself sultana. Alle-same king. Plenty-much-fine strong. You fit for do touch-hat palaver."

After the savagery and squalor of the palace the audience-chamber itself came as a vast surprise. It was a courtyard, really, but the mud walls were hung with silks, and a tent of silk overhead kept out the blaze of the African sun. There was a divan at one end, and on it a woman sat cross-legged, with her head bound and veiled, after the Touareg fashion.

To her Commander McTurk, helmet in hand, advanced briskly and made his best bow and introduced himself with full naval formality. "I am wondering very keenly, your majesty," he added at the conclusion of his speech, "as to whether you are the lady who formerly had an address up White-Post River."

The ripple of a laugh came from behind the veil. "Have you come to offer her an alliance with the United States?"

"Well, your majesty, I could hardly go so far as that at this stage of the interview. We heard there was a white lady up there who—well, who was making war."

"Committing the usual West African atrocities?"

Commander McTurk frowned. "One makes proper allowance for climate. The main question which—er—interested my government was the report on the lady's color."

"And you'd like me to take off this head clothing right now so that you can see for yourself?"

"If you would be so gracious. I have been looking forward to this moment for many a thousand miles."

"I'm afraid, Captain McTurk, that you must keep on looking for the present. Let me put, instead, an ordinary Yankee question: How do you like my city?"

Now, somehow Commander McTurk got the idea that he was being hoaxed. The lady behind the veil, be her color what it might, spoke with such a surprisingly strong New England accent that the theory that she was what he had come so far to find vanished in a flash. So he answered with some tartness that the city was a savage abomination, and that he was surprised at any woman who could speak good United States staying voluntarily within its boundaries.

And then, hey, presto! there came a change over the scene. The lady stiffened; yes, indeed, seemed fairly to bristle with wrath, and cried out in some barbaric tongue what was evidently an order for her guards; the silken walls of the chamber exuded spearmen; and in an instant Commander McTurk was ringed with a bristle of steel.

He had the wit not to resist; and the pride of race and service saw to it that he did not wince—both of which points the lady noted, and nodded at approvingly—but on her tartly demanding a retraction he replied that he had none to make.

She nodded to the weapons. "If I say a word those spear shafts will stand out of your skin like quills on a porcupine."

"I am sure," said McTurk, "that a lady of your wit will quite weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of such an action."

"Well," she said thoughtfully, "perhaps there is no immediate hurry about the matter, and at any rate I always have them at hand to attend to you if need be."

She cooed out another order, and when the men had gone she gave Commander McTurk some plain advice. "You had better understand that I am sultana here by the best of all possible rights: the right of conquest. You may not appreciate West Africans, but I do. I dare not be anything short of supreme in this town, and yours is the only piece of criticism that I have not dealt with fatally."

"Does that meet with the German view?"

"The Germans left here before I came. Even the old king, who is dead, could deal with them. And as I beat the king why should I fear a few feverscorched Germans?"

"And you do not mind fighting for black men against your own color?"

The lady laughed behind her veil. "We will leave that color question alone and say that I fight for my own hand. Do you see nothing admirable in that, Captain McTurk? Here am I, a woman, and I have made myself absolute ruler of a million fighting men."

"We heard at Washington you were something pretty big, and you have evidently developed some since I left. I may take it, then, that you were the lady I was commissioned to call upon up White-Post River?"

"How could I say that," she evaded, "without knowing the exact terms of your commission from the United States Government? But we will leave your government alone just now. It is your own opinion as a man and a sailor that I ask for. Do you see nothing admirable in a conqueror?"

"I," said McTurk simply, "am an American citizen and a United States naval officer first, last and all the time. The advancement of my own country is the only thing that interests me in that way."

The lady threw up her head impatiently. "I almost fear that you are too narrow to be useful. But you may be turned yet, and in the meanwhile you undoubtedly have your points. Are you single, by the way—not that it very much matters?"

"Yes," said McTurk, "I am a bachelor," and unconsciously straightened his coat.

"Ah, well," said the lady coolly, "then you will probably hear without much shock that I am going to marry you. I have not had a husband so far, but since I took this town I have decided to try one. I have decided, too, that my husband shall be white and tall. I had some Germans in to look at, but fancied none of them. You, I think, will suit me. At any rate, I shall try you. And now you have my permission to go."

The guards rearrived on the moment like some trick of machinery, and Commander John Kelly McTurk was escorted away from the audience-chamber before he could think of a reply.

He was given two rooms, a sentry and a courtyard to himself, and was left with food, tobacco, German champagne and his thoughts, and, like the old campaigner that he was, he used all of them while the opportunity remained. Around him the savage palace hummed with life; overhead the sun blazed like a kettle of molten brass; and in the doorway the naked sentry, Mannlicher on knee, cleaned his teeth with a stick of fibrous wood.

"I hate being beaten," McTurk told himself, "but if I do get away clear to the coast—and the job wouldn't be an easy one—it would mean leaving undone

what I came for, and that would see me still on the retired list. Our navy department only pays for performance: they don't give fourteen cents for good intentions. On the other hand, to stay here means matrimony." He smiled grimly. "Well, I've contemplated matrimony before, but somehow Bridget or fate has always intervened. I wonder what my dear sister would say to the lady behind the veil. My Glory! it's quite on the cards she's a negress!"

He wiped his red face with a rather nervous handkerchief and saw complex visions of the negro problem of the United States being settled by a crew of snuff-and-butter colored young McTurks of princely rank. In the future he might be looked back at by his countrymen as one of their great patriots. But, in the present, as the husband of a West African dictatress he certainly would not be reinstated on the active list of the United States Navy. He opened a bottle of the German champagne, and drank to his next command in that service.

When night fell, cool and starlit, he was once more summoned to the royal presence and was asked in plain terms to commence a courtship. It was an operation in which previous practise had given Commander McTurk considerable skill, but here experience failed him. He was not frightened, he was not even awed; indeed, he was disposed to make the most of the present, to see what it might bring forth; but the bizarre circumstances of the case locked his tongue. The lady persistently withheld view of her face or hint at her color, and speculation on these two vital points balked all his might-have-been tender utterances. It would have been easier to pay court to an unknown charmer on the telephone. But, as it was, he could not take his eyes off the lady's veil, and saw beneath it the menace of a thousand horrid possibilities.

The sultana on her part, perhaps with small knowledge of the real thing, seemed well enough content with his halting efforts. "Go on," she said once when he stopped, "I can do the governing here, and I can conquer fresh country, but I want to have a husband who can talk of things outside."

"If I knew more where your outside interests lay I would go straight at them. For instance, I guess you came here from the States?"

"I guess not."

"I was judging from your accent."

"Well, John, I reckon I got that from the tutor who taught me. He had been an American missionary till my father took him."

"Took him what? Prisoner?"

The lady laughed. "You do want to know so much. We'll say my father had this good missionary come and stay with us, and I guess that before he died I had extracted all he had to teach. Are you proud of your wife's accomplishments?"

"I haven't got a wife at present," rasped McTurk, "and before I take one, I want to know——"

"La-la," she cooed. "There must be no case of what you want to know, dear John. You will hear just exactly what I choose to tell my consort. You say you have no wife at present; well, you know best about that, and I do not care. But I can guarantee that you will have one to-morrow morning. There! Do not talk back, John. I should hate to have you whipped on the eve of our wedding. Hush, sweet one"—she gave a call—"again you see my attentive guards. Captain McTurk, you have my permission to go."

Commander McTurk raged to himself when he got back to his room. How dared this woman play with him, make a mock of him, as she obviously was doing? And yet she intended to marry him: he was absolutely sure of that. There was a deadly something in her voice that told him that she would drive over anything that stood in the way of her wishes, and for the life of him he could not help admiring her for it. What a queen she would make!—with him as king—over a great West African territory joined to the North American Union!

But then there was the veil, and the thick lips and the black skin that might

be beneath it. No; even for the United States he could not venture the length of marriage.

The hot night drew on and the hum of the palace died away. The moon had sunk and only a few rare stars sprinkled the black velvet overhead. Commander McTurk piled furniture together and got to the top of the wall of his courtyard.

To his surprise he found himself on an outside wall. At the foot of a grassy slope, not a hundred yards away, the river gleamed faintly between tree stems. The faint crushed marigold reek of the water came to him plainly when he smelt for it. He dropped down from the wall and ran swiftly to the waterside. What he saw there on the trees quickened his eagerness to be gone. He had stumbled upon the horrors of the Ju-ju town fetish grove, and the items that caught his eye as he ran up and down the bank hunting for a canoe turned him sick and went very near to unnerving him.

And to think of marrying the ruler of such a place! But then, again, did the lady of the veil countenance these things? She had recently conquered the place, and for anything he knew she might be steadily putting down the ju-ju priesthood. If only he could have had one glance at her face he felt sure he could have read the answer there for himself.

So when at last he did find a clumsy cottonwood dugout and shoved out into the sluggish stream he had it in him to have cursed aloud in rage at having to leave so tantalizing a problem behind him. But if he had failed in the work for which he had been sent, and was feeling for the moment rather at odds with luck and the world in general, he had no mind to be overtaken and ignominiously hauled back either for marriage or sacrifice. So he pushed out to mid-stream and sent the dugout through the muddy water as hard as his long wiry arms could paddle her.

The way was not easy. Often the stream contracted and great trees joined in arch overhead, so that all was blackness underneath; and time after time he got into side tributaries and had to paddle back out of twisting *culs-de-sac*. Alligators inspected him and barked the news of his white man's scent to other alligators across the way. The invisible rustling night creatures of the woods stared at him with luminous, devils' eyes. Invisible bats blew little drafts of air at his face and hands as they skimmed past on their business journeys. And over and through all was the heavy crushed marigold scent of the river that made him cough and spit and long for a whiff of the crisp sea breeze beyond.

Then with a sudden spasm of chill the long, close night came to an end; the darkness thinned; the river bar showed on ahead, white and tumbling; and within five minutes a flare of sun hopped up lemon-yellow from behind a paling of nut palms, and it was staring day, and the heat was commencing to grow.

A hail came to his ears from some recess of the mangroves, and he dug in his paddle still more fiercely through fear of pursuit. But the hail was repeated over and over again, and it occurred to him that several voices were shouting his own name. He glanced round in the direction of the sound.

Up a canal of the mangroves a surf-boat—a green European-built surf-boat—was being driven toward him with lusty strokes from trident-headed paddles. The naked paddlers were keeping time to their swing with a sort of hail which ran: "Oh, McTurk—Turk—Turk—Turk!" and amidships, seated in one of the two Madeira chairs which the boat contained, a white man waved to him with a battered pith helmet.

Commander McTurk eased his pace, and the surf-boat shot up alongside. Brigg clapped on his helmet and held out a thin, yellow hand.

"By gum, captain!" he said, "but it does me good to see you again. I've pictured you as decorating the sultana's private crucifixion tree, and I've been telling myself it's all my fault. I'd no business to quarrel with you. You were fed up on those beastly Blue Shield Febrifuge Pills and didn't half know

what you were saying; and I was so full of quinine I understood about six times more than what you meant. It's a grand country, the West Coast, anyway. Here, get into the surf-boat and turn Noah's Ark adrift."

"Thanky! I don't mind if I do. She's an unwieldy brute to paddle. Hello, Brass-Pan! You've torn off all the rim of that derby hat of yours. You'll have to give it up for Sunday wear if you don't take more care of it."

"Have a good time up yonder?" Brigg asked when the surf-boat was heading once more for the bar.

"Oh, quite amusing in its way."

"Find the sultana all that could be desired? Keep up the end of the great United States?"

Commander McTurk turned round with a sudden frown. "Now, how in Glory did you know there was a sultana? Have you had this up your sleeve all the time, or have you had the news phoned to you while I have been away?"

Brigg laughed. "Now, don't you get mad, captain, with me any more, because I'm not going to quarrel with you again. You make me too plenty-much nervous when you run away on your own after a quarrel. No, nobody rung us up with the news. We've been hard at work for the most part digging the surf-boat out of those blessed mangroves. But I sent off Brass-Pan to forage for food, and he brought back news. Say, Brass-Pan, you tell dem cappie what you hear when you lib for find chop."

The head-man shivered. "I lib for bush very careful. Dam-bad country by dis Ju-ju River. Roads stopped. Plenty ju-ju everywhere. Den I see a mammy what run away an' hide. She say she old king's wife. He lib for die. New king come from Touareg country and make herself king and say she sultana. You savvy sultana palaver?"

"Perfectly. What's the sultana like? White or dusky?"

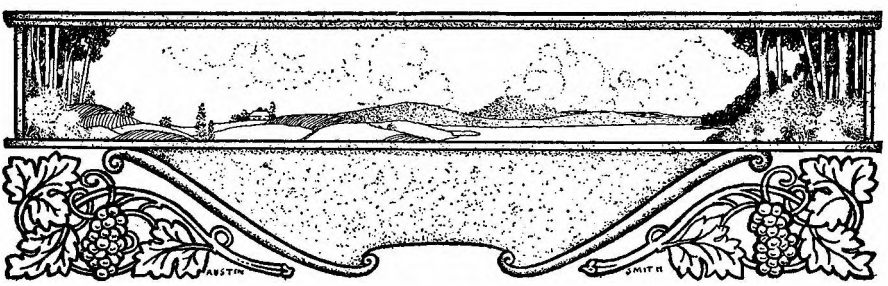
"Plenty-much fine red an' white lady," said Brass-Pan appreciatively. "I fit for got her photygraf."

"By Glory! now we're coming down to bed-rock facts. By Glory, Brass-Pan! I'd have given two dollars and a half for this twenty-four hours ago. You don't know what a trouble that woman's veil was to me. Here, hand over."

Brass-Pan, from inside his singlet, produced a parcel delicately folded in native cloth. Commander McTurk took it and unwrapped the cover with a jumping heart. He saw before him a gaudy oleograph from the top of a chocolate box. It was merely the pretty face of a well-known actress, and in his rage he would have torn it in pieces if with sudden snatch Brass-Pan had not plucked it away.

"Now, then, captain," Brigg expostulated, "play the game. That's Brass-Pan's best ju-ju that he'll say his nightly prayers to for the next six months. Besides, here we are just on the bar, and if you ruffle him he'll upset us as sure as I'm just starting my every-other-morning fever."

"By Glory!" muttered Commander McTurk, "I wonder if she planted that chocolate-box picture so as I should get it. She's equal to it. By Glory! I half wish I'd risked the veil and married her."



The Private War

Being the Truth About Gordon Traill: His Personal Statement

By Louis Joseph Vance

Author of "Terence O'Rourke, Gentleman Adventurer," "The Test," Etc.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SECRETS.

I CHOKED and strangled, sputtering. Liquid fire seemed to be calcining my mouth and throat, and I gagged convulsively, endeavoring to emit it; but powerful hands held me down as with a great weight, and I felt the intolerable heat burning my throat.

Gradually a faint warmth diffused itself through my person, even to my frozen extremities—a process attended by intense suffering. Without consciousness or comprehension of how I had been brought to such a pass or where I lay, yet by some strange subliminal action I figuratively stood aside and noted the process of my recovery.

My feet and legs, hands and arms felt as though pricked by a million white-hot needles; my heart labored mightily, aching as though it threatened to burst; a terrific ringing, as of an infinite concourse of church bells, sounded in my ears; my head swam and —ached; my lungs moved unwillingly, feeling as though they had been pressed flat—as though my breast-bone had lain against my spinal column; my eyes were like spheres of molten metal. I have no words adequately to express what torture I underwent.

I was being brought back to life. After many ages of this agony I understood that—knew that—the pricking, tingling, scorching sensation that pervaded my entire frame, running through all my veins, was the sting of returning life—life that once had seemed so priceless, that now seemed so worthless, not even worth the pain of resurrection. For it amounted to that.

Again liquor was forced between my teeth; a great, resonant sound vibrated through me—I moaned and shook my head in enfeebled protest. Why would they not let me die? My eyes opened mechanically.

I caught a transient glimpse of an unearthly scene, lit by a dazzling glare of light.

Against a dense background of unbelievable blackness a number of figures of men stood out as sharply as so many statues exhibited against a curtain of black velvet. Far, far above their heads a tiny light glimmered, swinging erratically. It held my gaze for a moment, until a clearer consciousness returned to me, when again I looked about.

My first definite recognition was of Von Holzborn. It seemed that the dead glare of his lusterless eyes was the first impression I received upon recovering —partially—my consciousness.

I seemed drawn by them, quite fascinated, and stared back, look for look, but half aware and wholly indifferent to that habitual, intolerant sneer that curled in the lines about his full, cruel lips.

He stood squarely facing me, leaning a bit forward, hands clasped behind his back, a long, frogged overcoat falling in straight folds from his

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This story began in the June issue. The back numbers can be obtained through any newsdealer. Price, ten cents each.

broad shoulders to his knees. Behind him glowed the lighted window of a deck-house, so that his shadow fell athwart me, cold and black.

The profound, brooding, enigmatic regard that he bent upon me, set my poor, bewildered wits awhirl. A violent storm of rage seethed within me, though I lay there helpless, inert, flaccid—limp as a jelly-fish—no more able to move than to fly. Yet I longed consumedly to have at him, hungering for his life, torn by a maddening desire to rise and take him in my two hands and savagely rend him limb from limb.

And the greatness of my rage sapped every other faculty. I felt myself sinking, slipping away from sentience, sliding back into a darkness as cold and forbidding as the shadow of him who towered above me—whose shadow, I thought, forever was to fall athwart my life and destiny.

My last thought was of him ere I lapsed into the long sleep that held me dreamless for many, many hours.

. . . . . .

I awoke, confused, conscious of stiffness and a cramped feeling in my limbs. It was barely daylight; above my head a faint glimmer filtered through the bull's-eye of a port-hole—but whether the twilight of morning or of evening I could not say.

Alone and unattended, I lay in the single berth of a small stateroom; there was nothing within its four walls to give me a clue to the identity of the ship, yet I had slight difficulty in surmising the truth—that I was aboard the *Myosotis,* having been picked up by one of the yacht's boats, half-drowned and clinging to a bit of the *Clymene's* wreckage.

For a long while I lay there without moving, striving to piece together the incoherent fragments of my memory of the past day's events, which rose to the surface of my consciousness as driftwood rises to the surface of a river.

Bit by bit it came back to me. The continuous story of that incredible day played itself over again before my mental vision. In retrospect it seemed outrageous and improbable; and, from the languor that possessed me, and the feeling of weakness, together with a certain and quite undefinable sensation of giddy light-headedness, I was more than half inclined to believe myself the victim of some monstrous hallucination, born of the febrile wanderings of a delirious mind. I half believed that I had lain ill for many days—out of my head and straying afar.

Yet—if that were so, how came I aboard the *Myosotis?* And why was my head bound with bandages that were stiff and caked with blood? I retained no recollection of the event, but it appeared that I had been wounded—how severely I could not tell.

After some time I lifted up my voice and called—and the strength of it, contrasted with my physical sensations, which I may only describe as making me feel as though emaciated both bodily and mentally, was a surprise to me.

But I received no answer.

I could hear the chug-chug-chug of the engines in the yacht's hold, and the smack and hiss of the waters outside the port-hole. Overhead, from time to time, would come the clatter of hurrying feet; and once I heard a long-drawn howl of command, hoarse and deep-throated, as one of the ship's officers—most likely the boatswain—stirred the seamen to activity.

In time there came from the apartment without the stateroom the clanging of a chime—either six or eight in the evening, I estimated, since now the light was dying and my room almost in total darkness.

I had noticed above my head an electric-light bulb. With some considerable effort I reached up and turned the key. Radiance flooded the room and enabled me to discover, presently, a push-button in the wall at the head of the berth.

This I pressed, becoming aware that I both hungered and was athirst. Far away, very thin and distant, I could hear the clamor of the bell; it shrilled and died, responsive to the pressure of my fingers on the button, but without result.

Again and again I tried, to no better effect. A dull rage smoldered within

me; surely it was enough that I had been used so hardly; it seemed a refinement of cruelty so to leave me to perish, tortured by hunger and thirst!

The stewards, I thought, must have been ordered to disregard my summons. In the end I conceived that I must look to myself, and myself alone, for aid and comfort. With a groan of weakness I rolled over on my side, and, after a struggle, managed to sit up on the edge of the berth.

My clothing, dried and pressed, was swaying from a convenient hook. By degrees I managed to dislodge it without rising to do so, and—I can scarcly imagine how—thrust my legs into my trousers, dragged a shirt over my head and got a coat upon my shoulders.

My own shoes were missing, but I found a pair of deck shoes, much too large, under the berth. With these I made shift to leave the stateroom.

By good chance, the door was not secured. I opened it and stepped out into the darkness of the yacht's main saloon. A number of chairs, lounges and tables obstructed my way, yet I had a fairly good idea of where the electric switch should be; and, finally, found it and lighted up the saloon.

It was quite deserted and in great disorder—something which, however, did not concern me greatly. What did prove of surpassing interest was a buffet against the forward partition, whereon stood a bottle, open.

I staggered to it and discovered it to be a half-emptied quart of champagne. A plate of crackers stood near by. I filled a tumbler with the generous, sparkling fluid and downed it at a draft; it ran like fire in my veins. Munching the hard crackers, I finished the bottle, conscious of such an immediate renewal of strength that I promptly searched for, found and opened a second bottle—a pint, this time. In ten minutes or so, during all of which time not a soul had entered the cabin, I had succeeded in swallowing enough fictitious strength to make me feel like a new man—a strong man, self-dependable, fit to cope with any emergency.

Yet—what was I to do now?

I made small doubt but that the *Myosotis* was flying northward, or toward the Baltic, to escape the inevitable pursuit which would be instituted by the authorities when the *Cobra* had returned to port—providing that the English destroyer had been able to do as much: a contingency wherein I was not placing much reliance, since I could not understand why, if seaworthy and able to take care of herself, the *Cobra* had not put out boats to pick up survivors of the two wrecks. If she had done so, I reasoned, Von Holzborn would have had too sincere a care for his own skin to have lingered in the vicinity.

But it was plain that—for what reason Heaven alone could say!—he had ordered the boats out from the *Myosotis,* had rescued the two men whom, most of any living, he had cause to fear as his most deadly and determined enemies.

But—the thought struck me with chill horror and dismay—had any been rescued save myself? What of Sevrance? Garvin? The others?

Sevrance lost?

I sank into a chair by the table, knitting my fingers in an effort to control my thoughts, aware that the wine had found the way to my head, that as yet I was not mentally clear.

But—Sevrance lost! I bowed my head and felt the tears start to my eyes. Ah, loyal and perfect gentleman! I mourned you as more than brother—you, my one true friend; whether living or dead at that moment I did not know, but the loss of you was like the lopping off of my right hand.

Abruptly I started to my feet, possessed by the idea that I must go on deck, search out Von Holzborn or De Netze, find for myself the truth concerning the man I loved with a love passing that of women.

A lurch of the yacht almost threw me to the floor. I grasped the table, steadied myself, and—at that moment a door opened on the side of the saloon opposite the room wherein I had rested and a woman came out.

At the sight of me she stopped with a little cry, holding herself as rigid and

still as though turned to stone. A glad light flamed in her eyes, then flickered and died; her color faded; she became of a deathly pallor, and there was terror, suddenly, in her eyes where there had been joy.

"Gordon!" she breathed.

I had started toward her, with arms outstretched; and so, I stopped.

"Ah, Heart's Desire!" I cried.

Still she seemed to fear me. She took a faltering step backward, her hands clasped upon her bosom, her lips moving without sound. Her beauty struck me with amazing force; it was unearthly, incomprehensible, marvelous! I thought me of my haggard and drawn features, of the stained bandage about my head, of the negligence of my attire, and found therein sufficient excuse for her agitation.

"Sweetheart, sweetheart!" I pleaded. "Don't"—my voice broke—"don't you remember me—Gordon?"

"Gordon!" she cried again incredulously.

And then, before I realized it, she had come to me, and lay in my arms, her dear head upon my shoulder, her pallid cheeks to mine, her tremulous scarlet lips—"Dearest, O my dearest!" she whispered. "But I did not know, I did not know!"

And, after a little time: "They did not tell me—they did not let me know," she answered my question. "All the evening they kept me locked in my stateroom, with only Mrs. Morchester for company. I knew nothing of what went on, for they had hung a piece of canvas over the port-hole, and we could not see. Only I could hear the thunder of the guns, and guessed—no, *knew* that you were in peril, O my heart! Tell me!" she begged piteously.

Haltingly—for at such times no man can speak connectedly—I told her the story in outline, while she shuddered and sobbed in my arms and held me all the closer to her, for that I had ventured so near the lip of the unknown for her dear sake.

Which was reward far greater than I deserved, God wot!

"I might have known," she blamed herself; "I might have known! Ah, had I but dared to warn you! Yet I did not dream that he"—she used the pronoun with loathing, since it stood for Von Holzborn—"would venture to such lengths."

"But why did you not tell me in the beginning?" I asked. "Why did you let me blunder on in darkness?"

"But I was afraid!" she protested. "I feared—ah, but you should know how I feared!"

"Feared what? Von Holz——"

"Hush!" She put her hand over my lips. "No, I did not fear him," she said, "but for you. He pledged me his word, dear heart, that, should I permit my love for you to stand between him and our marriage, he would have you killed—assassinated. And I knew him capable! He stopped at nothing, nothing, to attain his ends! From the very first day, when I promised to marry him——"

"Why?"

"Because I was weary, dearest, weary with longing and waiting for you to come—and you would not. I was—I am so sorry!—too proud to tell you to come, and *he*—he asked me and I liked him at first—until he began to threaten me. He—he had some papers—I don't know how to say it——"

"Don't say any more, dearest," I comforted her. "I know what to believe."

"But you must, you *must* not misunderstand, Gordon. It was something about Sir Henry—something foolish that he had done in India, in the army. It would have caused a terrible scandal if it had been published—and *he* said that he would punish it unless I gave him money——"

"My own dearest!" I soothed her.

"And then you came," she went on, "and there was this horrible affair with Monsieur de Netze. He—Captain von Holzborn—was in some way connected with the plot, and he held the papers over my head as a threat to compel me to lend him the yacht, and made me come with him in order that, he said, I might not talk too much. I *so* wanted to tell you! You remember that day you were to call—and I telephoned?"

"I remember——" I began.

A heavy tread sounded on the companionway; some one was descending from the deck. Quickly I released my Heart's Desire, and as quickly she slipped away; but not swiftly enough to escape the notice of the intruder.

He paused on the lower step, his dark face immobile, his quick, furtive glance traveling from one to the other of us. At first his brows contracted, a clouded scowl gathered about them; then, as we waited his opening words in silence—my sweetheart shrinking, I with some trepidation, I must admit—his face cleared. But still without opening his lips, he bent upon us that inscrutable glance, penetrating and baffling.

The silence, prolonged, grew unendurable. I looked to my Heart's Desire, and saw that she was trembling violently; her hands, at her sides—one gripping a table's edge—worked convulsively; and I saw, too, that she was fast losing her self-control, tottering on the verge of hysteria.

Without regard, then, for the German, I moved over to her, passing an arm around her waist. "Courage, sweetheart!" I whispered, and could feel that the support was welcome and grateful to her. Nor did she attempt to move away, but clung to me, rather, as to a tower of strength. Which I was not.

When I looked again at Von Holzborn he was laughing noiselessly, showing his teeth in a sardonic grin.

I steadied my voice, determined to force his hand. Unarmed, I stood at his mercy, even as, in the very fact of my presence there upon the *Myosotis,* my fate lay in the hollow of his hand.

"Well, sir?" I asked, as calmly as I could.

He made no response beyond an audible chuckle; but, striding across to the center-table of the saloon, he sat himself down heavily, without once removing his eyes from me. I believed him a bit afraid of me, and that belief was as the wine had been to me, affording me strength and self-reliance.

At length, without warning, he spoke—shortly, sharply, incisively.

"Sir," he said, with a little movement of his head—hardly could it have been termed a bow; a mere acknowledgment of my presence it was—"sir, you have lost."

"Lost?" I echoed.

"Lost," he reiterated, with the accents of one stating a settled fact. "According to our contract, sir, by the terms of which you bound yourself to take the *Clymene* to Libau—you have failed, and thereby lost."

A silence fell. I stared aghast. My dear one looked from one face to another inquiringly, not understanding; for be sure Von Holzborn had not let her into the secret of our compact.

For my own part, the rush and turmoil of battle and flight had driven that matter entirely from my mind; indeed, when I cast back, bewildered, into the past few days, beginning with my arrival in London and on through the pursuit to Saltacres, our weary vigil there, the arrival of the *Myosotis* and what followed, with the subsequent engaging of the crew for the *Clymene*—it all seemed very dim and far indeed in the past. I could scarce comprehend that the interval of time had been so slight—hardly twenty days since the first.

But I recollected rapidly—it all came back to me with a rush; and I had a particularly vivid memory of Von Holzborn, propped up with pillows in his bed at Saltacres, bickering with us over the details of the adventure which he was contriving, to bring about our undoing.

"So," I said slowly; "so you were not wounded, *mein Herr!*"

"*Ach,* yes!" he granted amiably. "But—oh, slight, my enemy. Yet it was sufficient to enable me to hoodwink you—you, the virtuous, the wise, the self-complacent!" He laughed grimly. "I pride myself that I took you in very neatly—you and your fellow-fool, the Herr Sevrance."

"Neatly indeed," I conceded. "Liar!" I commented.

He flushed.

"Strong language, sir!" he said, but without much apparent resentment. "Yet, I understand; you Anglo-Saxons

are what you call hard losers. Eh, I have won! And you have lost. I had thought, sir"—and here he assumed a temper—"that you were a man of honor."

"You should be the best judge of such matters, *mein Herr.*"

"You lose, you see," he explained ponderously, "yet go back upon your bargain. It was agreed that if you lost, you were to relinquish all claims to madame's hand, was it not, my welcher? Yet I find you with your arms about her, your lips to hers. Do you English call such conduct honorable?"

"At least," said I, "as much so as your conduct in this affair, Captain von Holzborn."

"All's fair in love and war," he interrupted, with a sneer.

"You have made the aphorism an axiom," I retorted. "But the fault is mine, I admit; had I known you for what you are—liar, coward, blackmailer——"

"Stop!" he cried furiously.

"The words sting, *mein Herr?*" I asked with mock courtesy. "I—fancied they would."

He looked me over without reply, then, in a surly tone, addressed her ladyship.

"Madame," he said, "you will please be seated—unless you would be fatigued. You, Mr. Traill, may please yourself."

He grunted and struck his knuckles sharply against a huge Chinese gong that decorated the center of the table.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HER LADYSHIP.

The mellow tones vibrated like distant thunder. Ere they had sung into silence a white-jacketted steward appeared, bowing deferentially.

"You will go," the German instructed him, after a moment of deliberation, "and ask Captain Keen to here join us; also Dr. Chine. If Monsieur de Netze is in his stateroom, tell him that I would like to see him. Ask the second mate to release from the lazaretto the men we picked up, and them bring here. I want also the man Grady."

The steward saluted and disappeared noiselessly.

"Grady!" I cried.

Von Holzborn turned to me. "Grady," he repeated. "Yes. You are surprised? Yet, what would you? It was necessary for me to get away from Saltacres without your being apprised of the fact. Your spy was in the way. We overpowered him, Fritz and I, and shipped him that same night, with ourselves."

"You were uncommonly considerate," I returned. "The wonder is that you did not knife him—in the back."

Again he colored darkly, but still he asserted his admirable control of self and held his wrath in check. He even commented upon the matter.

"I call your attention to the fact that I am treating you with great leniency, Mr. Traill," he said smoothly; "you would do well to avoid provoking me further. There are limits to all things—you verge dangerously near the insufferable. I have warned you."

"Your condescension shames me!" I laughed.

He nodded meaningly. "Your case will be attended to shortly," he announced. "For the present I would counsel you to silence. You but prejudice your own case by your free tongue."

A hot reply rose to my lips, but my Heart's Desire stilled me with a pleading look. "Be not afraid," I whispered to her. "Now, go, my dear."

She moved over to an armchair, as far removed from the German as the limits of the room would permit; and seated herself, facing him, chin in hand, elbow on knee, watching him steadily beneath her level brows. One small slipper tapped the deck nervously, impatiently, while we waited the advent of the others.

Somehow I had a premonition of the outcome of the business; a feeling as though I was about to stand trial, with my comrades and Grady, before a drum-head court-martial, for the crime

of standing in the light of Kurd von Holzborn.

What manner of sentence would be passed upon us—and especially upon me—I could hardly doubt. My sole speculation was concerning the shape in which death would be meted out unto me. Not for an instant did I conceive of life or liberty being accorded me; too well I knew the German's malignant nature by then.

It was but a moment ere the quick steps of Captain Keen were to be heard. He entered briskly, nodded negligently to his ostensible employer, her ladyship and briefly to me, favoring me thereafter with a cold and dispassionate consideration.

Von Holzborn silently motioned him to a chair. No words were passed on either hand. Chine entered next, raking the cabin with his quick, dark eyes. The state of affairs was evidently apparent to him at once. He bowed to me in not unfriendly fashion, shrugged his shoulders and sat him down—also in obedience to Von Holzborn's mute invitation.

There followed, after an interval, a scuffle of feet across the deck, a confusion on the companionway, and immediately afterward the appearance of a little party of men in all stages of dilapidation, both as regards clothing and physical condition.

They were a rough-looking crew that tumbled down the stairs, with three seamen of the *Myosotis* and the second mate armed, at their heels. Three had their forearms supported by loops—one wore splints; another limped painfully, and his hollow eyes spoke eloquently of the anguish movement caused him; still another was one mass of bandages, reeking of iodoform, about his head—quite effectually masked; and the last—how my heart leaped at the recognition of his tall, square-shouldered figure!—was Sevrance himself.

I jumped forward to greet him, but the mate shouldered me roughly aside. "Stand back!" he growled—an evil-visaged scoundrel; and prodded me with the point of a revolver.

I gave in with a laugh. Sevrance caught my eye, his own beaming with joy, to see me safe and practically sound, and smiled wanly. His lips moved noiselessly, framing some communication which I failed to read; and I shook my head despondently.

The six, by Von Holzborn's direction, were ranged shoulder to shoulder against the after partition, an armed man of the crew at either end, vigilant, one judged, to repress any attempt at outbreak. The mate stationed himself to one side, obediently to a gesture from the German, and kept a wary eye upon me—as if I was to be feared! The excess of precaution moved me to derision.

I laughed in Von Holzborn's face when he glanced my way.

"I congratulate you on your regard for your safety," I told him. "It is, to be frank, quite justifiable. Were I not held in leash by that revolver which you are fingering in your coat-pocket, *mein Herr,* I promise you that I would——"

"It is doubtful," he cut me short. "Be quiet."

Nevertheless, he wore a shamefaced air, half apologetic, and hastily took his hand from his pocket as he glanced toward her ladyship to determine whether or not she had caught my remark. The look he received in return would have withered any ordinary man.

But Von Holzborn was not ordinary; his conceit had toughened his Teutonic hide beyond the penetrating power of human contempt—even a woman's. He lifted his shoulders slightly, smiled, and sat back in his chair, dead eyes ranging the line of the rescued with an expression—if any—of casual speculation.

A silence fell in the saloon; we waited De Netze. A dry cough heralded his approach, and presently he appeared, stepping softly down the port passageway—calm, collected and smiling, as fragile of appearance as ever.

To her ladyship first he bowed, and deeply. His eyes next fell upon me, and he honored me with a look informed with wonder and compassion. Sevrance also he greeted, crossing the saloon to offer us each his hand and

say a few words of regret at the ill-success of our venture, in which his own hopes had been so bound. I barely recall what he said; doubtless the phrases themselves were conventional enough; it was the meaning, the sincerity, with which they were delivered that convinced me of the Russian's honest sympathy.

He at least, I believed, had had no hand in the business of the *Vistula*. That had been Von Holzborn's private venture, his own fell design.

And it struck me at once, and, oddly enough, for the first time, that he had been tricked, duped, even as had Sevrance and myself. It afforded me a ray of hope in the darkness of my despair—if he knew the truth, I made little doubt but that he would hold himself our ally. And Heaven knew we needed an ally!

Abruptly Von Holzborn broke the constraint, speaking without rising, his heavy head bent forward, his inscrutable gaze bent upon the hands which lay before him, clasped, upon the table.

"Gentlemen," he said, speaking with deliberation, "I have called you here to form what we may term a council of war." He paused, looking around from face to face of those whom he might consider of his party.

"We are, as you know, in peril of arrest, gentlemen. It is a certainty that already the affair of yesterday evening has reached not alone the authorities, but also the public. The withdrawal of the English destroyer without delay means but one thing—that she has sought the nearest port, in immediate and pressing need of repairs. It is, then, a foregone conclusion that her officers and crew will lose no time in spreading the account of the battle between the *Clymene* and the Japanese destroyer."

I started slightly. Von Holzborn, as he spoke, was scrutinizing us keenly; fortunately, at the moment, he was not looking my way and did not remark my agitation. As for the others, they did not show any signs of noticing aught amiss with the drift of his remarks.

"We have, therefore," he continued ponderously, "chosen and judged it advisable to get to the Atlantic with the least possible delay. In fact, we are now off the Hebrides.

"Our ultimate destination remains a moot question. It has been suggested, and I admit that I, for one, favor the suggestion, that we make for the South Pacific, avoiding the usual course of ocean traffic. The *Myosotis*, as most of you know, is provisioned for a long cruise, and she herself is a seaworthy craft. The project is one entirely feasible.

"Once in the South Pacific we can make for one of the Carolines, the Solomons, or the Ladrones—the field is large—and there lie in safety until this matter has blown over—passed into history. It might be advisable to change the name of the yacht; but that is a detail."

He paused. De Netze spoke.

"I would endorse that suggestion," he said, "with an amendment—at some convenient point I can be landed, to make my way back to Russia. You may safely, I think, count upon *my* keeping silence."

He smiled. Von Holzborn nodded agreement to him. "There will be no objection raised, I am sure," he said. "But now a fresh complication has presented itself. Against my better judgment, but in deference to the wishes of Monsieur de Netze, I caused boats to be lowered, after the deplorable disaster of yesterday evening, and a search to be made for survivors—with the result you see."

With a wave of his hand he indicated the waiting line of those who were practically prisoners. "Incriminating witnesses, gentlemen," he asserted. "We must have a care with handling them. Two at least—Mr. Traill and Mr. Sevrance—are openly my enemies. I think we can count upon their continued hostility to whatever plan we settle upon. Am I right?"

"You are certainly right," I gave him answer without delay.

"To the end," agreed Sevrance, with a short laugh.

"You see. Gentlemen—you, mon-

sieur; you, captain; you, doctor—I appeal to you that such a state of affairs is intolerable."

"I might add," Sevrance broke in, "for your benefit, that I, personally, shall not rest until I see you in your grave, *Herr* Captain."

"I am infinitely obliged," stated Von Holzborn; "the warning shall not go unregarded. Under these circumstances, no ship is large enough to hold you two and myself. The question presents itself: What to do with you?"

"If you'll permit me"—Sevrance began diffidently; the German nodded—"I make bold to suggest that your course is plain to you—to knife us while we sleep, Von Holzborn, would be an easy matter, and one quite to your taste."

"It shall be considered," agreed the German with ugly gravity. "And now, captain, what would you suggest?"

Keen smiled evilly. "There are certain islands in our proposed course," he insinuated, "where men might be marooned and not sight ship for years—if they lived."

"Thank you. You, doctor?"

"I bow to your superior genius, Captain von Holzborn."

The Prussian's brows gathered quickly, as quickly smoothed themselves; the gaze he turned from Chine was quite placid. "And you, De Netze, *mon ami?*"

The Russian coughed behind his delicate fingers. "I do not see the necessity," he countered. "Messieurs Traill and Sevrance have been of great service to us, and might have been of greater had it not been for that Japanese destroyer——"

"De Netze," I cried—judging the time ripe—"that boat was no Japanese!"

Von Holzborn jumped to his feet. "Be quiet, you!" he snarled.

"She was——"

The German motioned to the mate. A hand was clapped over my lips; I mumbled my conclusion into it, staring into the eye of his revolver.

"German," I heard Sevrance conclude my words on the instant: "The *Vistula,* Monsieur de Netze, inspired to this devilment——"

"Be silent!" Von Holzborn thundered. "If not, by God! I'll——" He produced his revolver with a flourish.

But a hint had been sufficient to the astute Russian secret agent. He rose suddenly, his face crimson, his white hands quivering.

"Von Holzborn," he cried sharply, "what truth is there in this?"

Von Holzborn hesitated, for once at a loss. I do not think that he had suspected our knowledge of the *Vistula's* identity; I believe that our words came to him as a total surprise. He stammered, seeking vainly for a loophole for escape. Were his perfidy to De Netze made known, then in truth was his camp divided against itself—and against him.

"No truth," he stuttered. "Upon my word, De Netze, would you believe that pig-dog?"

The Russian drew himself up stiffly, his eyes blazing, his lips white with rage. "If I believed for an instant——" he began; and stealthily his hand moved toward a pocket.

Von Holzborn rapped sharply on the table with his revolver.

"Believe or not," he cried wrathfully; "small odds to me, monsieur, but have you a care with that pistol!"

What followed is a blur of impressions. I can hardly set them down with accuracy; a number of things happened synchronously.

On my own part I had been watching my chance. Already I had decided that our fate was a thing already settled in the Prussian's mind—that he waited only the opportunity to put us out of the way. And, as I saw the case, the sooner we were come to a settlement, the better for all concerned.

I think that the wine and my anger and fatigue had all combined to throw me somewhat off my mental balance. I think I must have gone a bit mad. Surely it was madness to have harbored so insane a plan as did I.

For some seconds I had been watching the mate narrowly. The altercation between De Netze and the Prussian

had drawn his attention inevitably, even as I had hoped it would. For a single instant he allowed his eyes to wander from me.

For that instant I had been waiting. I improved it by striking up his arm—delivering a powerful blow with the side of my hand upon the muscles of his wrist. Inevitably his grip upon his weapon relaxed. It fell to the floor. Simultaneously I put a fist in his face and knocked him backward, stunning him.

Even as I did so, out of the tail of my eye I caught a flitting shadow between myself and De Netze. There was a quick cry, the gleam of steel and the thud of a heavy blow.

The happening held us all spellbound for an instant. Tragedy had stalked unbidden from an unsuspected corner of the saloon. De Netze had been stabbed to the heart.

I saw him rise upon his toes, grasping at the empty air. Then he fell, like an inanimate object, stiffly.

The sound of his fall roused us. I heard a cry of horror, high-keyed, an oath and a swift patter of feet.

He whose arm had aimed the blow at the Russian's heart was running for the companionway. As he turned, reeking knife clenched in his hand, desperation writ large upon his features, crouching like a hunted thing, I saw his face.

It was Pike—"George Pike," agent of the Secret Chapter. I had not recognized him when he had entered, but now I knew him unmistakably.

He reached the foot of the steps in two jumps, stumbled, and went to his knees. As he scrambled to his feet a shot rang suddenly through the saloon. Pike swayed backward, lurched and crumpled in upon himself—a limp bundle of rags.

Von Holzborn had fired.

I saw the smoking gun in his hand, and caught the glint of brute rage in his eye as it ranged us all. He seemed abruptly to comprehend what had occurred, in the matter of the mate, and turned upon me like a tiger.

"By Heaven!" he cried, "the ball's begun! So you, too, court death? Come, then, and find it!"

He menaced me with the revolver. I saw Sevrance crouched as if to spring at him across the floor, and myself felt my muscles coiling and trembling beneath my clothing.

"I'll kill you with my naked hand, you cur!" I cried, beside myself. "Armed or not, I'll——"

I sprang for him. Reason was gone from me entirely. Civilization had dropped from me as a cast garment. For the nonce I was crazed with the blood lust of the primitive barbarian. If men go baresark these degenerate days, I had proven myself brother to them.

My prey lay before me; my fingers itched for the death clutch on his throat. Mad, indeed, I threw myself across the floor of the saloon.

He fired without hesitation. Something struck me a terrific blow in the chest. I felt myself brought up, as it were, in midspring. Again he fired.

In a maze I found myself upon the floor, the breath fairly driven from my body by that second staggering blow. Intuitively I knew myself wounded, and wounded nigh unto death. Yet the madness held me; I strove to raise myself, to regain my feet, again to court the issue with his pistol.

Sevrance I saw leaping across my prostrate body. In another instant he should have had Von Holzborn by the throat. But a third time a revolver spoke—and on the heels of that report came a sharp, short cry. Sevrance stopped short in his tracks, and stepped back with a little, wondering exclamation.

Faintness was enchaining my limbs, numbing my senses. I felt that but a few moments more of consciousness remained to me; desperately I strove to prolong them, that I might know the cause of this sudden hush. Sevrance stepped aside.

I saw Von Holzborn standing, but supported only by his shoulders against the partition behind the table. His arms were outstretched, his hands empty, his eyes closed; his fingers twitched furiously.

Still I did not comprehend what had happened, but only looked and marveled.

Abruptly the man seemed to come to life, miraculously. He opened his eyes, for a moment stood steadily erect. One hand went to his breast, above his heart, clutching there fiercely; and a jet of blood spurted between his fingers.

His iron features contorted themselves into a dreadful smile—proud, impenitent, evil. His glassy eyes—now more opaque than ever—rolled in their sockets from side to side, until they rested upon that person who had put this leaden period to his career. There they became fixed, with a glare of admiring yet sardonic intensity—fixed and ironic. The blood ebbed swiftly from his cheeks, his close-shaven beard showing blue through the skin's cold pallor.

He half turned, all but bowed. Twice his lips moved without producing sound. The third time he mouthed one word:

"Madame!"

I heard a crash, and saw that he had fallen to the table, face down; and there he lay, very still and quiet and harmless.

Straining still to hold to consciousness, I twisted my head upon my shoulders, until my gaze rested upon my Heart's Desire.

She was standing, her left hand clutching and tearing at the lace of her corsage. In the right, swinging at her side, a revolver dangled; and from its muzzle curled a shred of smoke.

I braced myself. "Julia!" I cried.

The word seemed to rouse her as from evil dreams. She swung toward me with a little, pitiful cry, and her arms went out, the revolver falling from her hands. Swiftly she came toward me, tottering.

"Gordon—Gordon!" I heard her cry. "It was for you, dear heart—for you alone!"

She paused, swaying, her eyes vacant, her face wiped as clean of expression, whether of joy or of anguish, as a slate with a sponge.

Sevrance caught her as she fainted.

POSTSCRIPT.

Excerpt from a letter—Mr. Anthony Sevrance, Barrister-at-Law, London, to the editor:

LONDON, ENGLAND,
January 5, 190—.

You may complain that the story is unfinished—this I anticipate. The truth of the matter is that Traill by nothing could be persuaded to go beyond that last sentence in which he mentions that I caught her ladyship as she fell, fainting, in the saloon of the *Myosotis*.

I remember quite clearly a night about a month preceding my departure from Sru. For some time Gordon had been at work upon this narrative, though I protest that a great deal of credit for its production was due to me and to the Rev. Dr. Morten, of the Mission in Châlle. After much argument, we finally persuaded Gordon to tell his story to the missionary, for whom he had conceived a great liking. A young American stenographer, drifted by some strange mischance into Polynesia, took down his narrative in shorthand, and afterward hammered it out on an old typewriter.

Night after night we would sit out on the veranda of the house that Traill bought shortly after the *Myosotis* came to Sru; Traill in the middle, his feet on the railing, the missionary and I flanking him. Behind us, where the light through the long French window would fall on him, sat the stenographer.

Outside the moonlight—when there was a moon—would show us the curling line of foam on the reef, the further side of the still lagoon. The purr of the breakers formed an everlasting background of sound to the telling of the tale. Sometimes the natives would fish with torches for bonito in the lagoon. Now and again Mrs. Traill—they were married by Dr. Morten as soon as they landed in Sru; I was best man—would lend us the charm of her presence. But not often. She had grown to hate the memory of those last, bleak days in England. I do not think they will ever leave Sru—Gordon and Julia.

In such a manner was the adventure told. I wish it understood now that I cannot claim all the credit that Traill has seen fit to saddle upon mine unworthy shoulders: the story—and none knows this better than I—is correct in every essential point. But I have been given praise for many a praiseworthy deed or action that was not my doing—that was, in short, Traill's.

On the last night, our sitting was short. As he spoke the words, "Sevrance caught her as she fainted," Gordon rose, tossed his cigar out over the rail, and turned indoors.

"That will be about enough, I guess," he said. "I'm tired of the whole nasty business. Besides, it's all told. You add a foot-note if you want to, Sevrance, but me, *I'm* not going to bother with it again."

Nor could any word of mine move him from this determination. Let this, then, furnish material for a foot-note.

It was six months from the date of Von Holzborn's death that the *Myosotis* sailed into the harbor of Châlle, on the island of Sru, in the South Pacific.

In the meantime Traill had mended of the wounds inflicted by Von Holzborn; and Mrs. Traill—then Lady Herbert—had come successfully through an attack of fever of long duration. Chine here proved himself invaluable. When Lady Herbert convalesced, happily she was without memory of Von Holzborn's manner of meeting his death. She will never know, for Traill will never tell her, nor will Grady. As for myself, I would liever cut off my right hand than do so. And inasmuch as they will never leave Sru, she will live out her life in happy ignorance.

By the way, I've lost Grady. He married a native girl, and has settled down in Sru—overseer to Traill's lands. Naturally he refused to come back to England.

I don't blame him. For my own part, I have returned to England only to wind up some business matters. I sail for America for a consultation with Traill's solicitors next month; from New York I shall take overland train to San Francisco—and thence steamer to Sru.

You may have guessed that in one crisis, at least, I figured not so badly. With Traill collapsed, Von Holzborn's two bullets in his body; with the Prussian clay, and De Netze's soul going over the Great Divide; with her ladyship all but inanimate in my arms, I took command. Grady happened in—having been delayed—just at that moment, and jumped to the situation like the ready man he is. Also I had Chine, who had never been well-disposed toward the conspirators. Keen, as you will have surmised, was but a cheap villain; a little show of authority cowed him in an instant. Thereafter we had things our own way. When the *Myosotis* came to Sru, we paid off the crew liberally and sold the yacht.

One word more. You will note that several torpedoes were fired from the *Clymene,* without effect, during the great battle of this private war. Now, they were fired by men not thoroughly experienced in the handling of Whiteheads. If I remember rightly, no precautions were taken to prevent them from floating until the end of time. It has, then, been our theory, ever since the events, that the mysterious and never accounted for blowing up of the Folkestone pier and the German cruiser *Koenig* were caused by those derelict Whiteheads, dashed headlong by heavy seas against the supports of the pier and the side of the cruiser. Inasmuch as the two catastrophes took place within a period of ten days after the engagement of the *Cobra, Vistula* and *Clymene,* and with consideration for the fact that no other explanation has ever been offered for these disasters, at least a color of plausibility is lent to our theory.

Commending, then, the accompanying manuscript to your most tender mercies, I have the honor to be, my dear sir,

Faithfully yours,

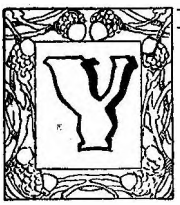
ANTHONY SEVRANCE.

THE END.

The Somnolence of Somers

By Frank N. Stratton

In this interesting little tale of the far West Mr. Stratton tells how a "tenderfoot" deliberately connived at the breaking of the law of the land, and possessed an untroubled conscience thereafter in spite of it



ES, sir; th' boss is gone," explained the foreman of Fielding's ranch, as Somers stepped from the buckboard and shook the dust from his clothes. "Him and th' boys is out after Sonora Jack's gang of cattle rustlers—and they'll fix 'em this time. Powerful lot of trouble they've give' us th' last two years. Mr. Fielding was mighty sorry you didn't get here in time to go. Thought mebbe a man hunt would be somethin' new for you—kind o' brace you up."

Somers mentally agreed that the hunting of men, though rather strenuous for an invalid, might prove a novel and exciting diversion from the monotonous pursuit of dollars.

"You might possibly see th' finish, though," the foreman continued. "Tommy Evans just come in, bad hurt, and says th' boys s'prised th' gang up th' Little Fork, and got most of 'em. They're chasin' Sonora Jack hisself now, and think they'll catch him in th' Alta Pass—right out yonder where you and Fielding killed th' bear, when you was here two year ago. Fielding sent word by Tommy that if you was here, and wanted to try, you might take th' roan thoroughbred and gallop over; he's th' only hoss left on th' place that don't buck."

Somers' eyes glistened.

"I'm pretty tired," he said; "but I'll stretch out and rest for an hour, and then, if you'll kindly bring the roan around, I think I'll try it. It'll be a treat to back Dixie once more, even if I miss the finish."

When Somers pulled himself up into the saddle the foreman delivered a parting admonition:

"If th' trouble's on when you reach th' pass, better not ride too close. Mr. Fielding wouldn't have Dixie hurt for half th' ranch. Wouldn't ride him hisself for fear he might get crippled in th' muss."

There being no evidence of "trouble"—past, present or prospective—when Somers reached the pass, he tethered the roan securely up a little ravine and climbed to a point where he could witness the approach of the chase—provided Sonora Jack had not disobligingly changed his course.

After hours of fruitless vigil Somers caught himself nodding drowsily, roused himself determinedly, and nodded again. Unaccustomed to a fiercer torridity than that afforded by a New England climate, he was gradually yielding to the soporific power of a southern sun. With each successive nod his chin sank a little lower, his eyes blinked less resolutely, until the outlines of the foot-hills melted and sank into the sheen of the distant desert, the ardent, turquoise sky bent low to ward off riotous columns of reeling cactus, the mountain swayed as soothingly as the cradle of long ago, and Somers dozed and dreamed.

He was in his State Street office, listening to the ticker, whose insistent clatter steadily swelled to a roar, and as he hurried toward it to watch Amalgamated, the machine burst with a

mighty report—and Somers, starting up, became dimly conscious of a limping mustang loping up the pass, carrying a long, lean man, whose face was masked by a paste of sweat and alkali dust.

Slipping from the saddle of the panting beast, the man glanced swiftly about, then clambered upward, straight toward Somers, Winchester in hand. With clearing vision, Somers saw beneath the masking dust a face that brought a train of dear and dormant memories, and with an exclamation of delight he sprang to his feet.

"Tubby!" he cried. "Tubby Haines! Is it really you?"

The lean man lowered the gun that had leaped to his shoulder as Somers arose.

"Somers! Bob Somers!" he exclaimed, and scrambled up to grasp the outstretched hand.

He dropped wearily upon a boulder, wiped his dripping face with the sleeve of a flannel shirt, and stared into Somers' face, amazement and delight shining in his keen eyes.

"Good old Scrappy Somers," he murmured. "I can't quite realize that you're 'way out here, thousands of miles from home."

"Visiting Hal Fielding," explained Somers. "You know Fielding, of course; everybody around here does."

"I've had occasional dealings with him—and got the worst of it," Haines answered carelessly, fingering the gun at his knee and glancing eastward.

"I've heard that he's pretty shrewd," said Somers, with a laugh.

"Too keen for me," remarked Haines. "It takes a mighty good man to get ahead of him—and stay ahead."

"Then you're in the cattle business, too?" queried Somers.

"In a desultory sort of way. Just now I'm thinking of getting out of it; it's too wearing; keeps me too much on the jump."

Somers chuckled, and patted the lean man's broad shoulder affectionately.

"Same old Tubby!" he said. "Always wanted to take things easy. I never could understand why the boys dubbed you Tubby, when 'Sleepy' or 'Lazy' would have been so much more appropriate."

"Called me Tubby because I was lean. Just as they named you 'Scrappy' because you never would fight," the other observed.

"Why should I fight," laughed Somers, "when I had such a valiant champion in you?"

"Well, you needed a champion," said Haines, with a kindly gleam in his eyes. "You were about as puny as they made 'em; and fighting was fun for me—then."

"Remember the time you licked Bully Dormer?" asked Somers, with a musing smile. "Ah, but that *was* a fight—and a licking."

"The licking he got wasn't in it with the one old MacStinger gave me that evening," remarked Haines, grinning. "Gee, Scrappy! I can feel that birch yet. I reckon old Mac's dead now."

"Died in the harness. His last words were *'Omnia Gallia.'* Remember how Anne used to cry whenever he'd wallop you? I often joke her about it yet."

A wistful look sprang to the lean man's eyes; he shot a quick glance at Somers, then gazed dreamily up the pass.

"Is she at Fielding's, too, Bob?" he asked softly.

"No. I wanted her to come, but she feared the little fellows couldn't stand the long trip."

The crippled mustang below them whinnied expectantly. Haines turned his face eastward. Among the foothills rose a cloud of dust that lengthened westward despite the eastward breeze. Haines rose to his feet and took Somers' hand.

"Good-by, Bob," he said.

"You're not going!" exclaimed Somers. "Why, we've only just begun to talk; and I want you to come——"

"I'm not going," Haines interrupted, with an odd smile. "Not for an hour or so yet. But you are—unless you

want to reverse the old order of things and fight my battle."

He dropped to one knee behind the rocks, picked up the Winchester, and passed a hand over the belt of murderous cartridges. The thud of pounding hoofs arose faintly from the hills below. A horrible suspicion numbed Somers' brain.

"Tubby!" he gasped. "Dear old Jack! you aren't——"

The lean man looked up into the pallid face, nodded, and smiled grimly.

"Bob," he said slowly, "when you see Anne again, I want you to tell her that I remembered her—to the last. Will you?"

"Jack," Somers cried, "they're more than a mile away yet; there's time for you to escape."

"Not on that crippled mustang. They got fresh mounts at Zell's station. No ordinary horse could save me now, else I'd have asked you for yours long ago."

He balanced the Winchester in his hands, and turned his rigid face away toward the mouth of the pass.

"They'd overtake me west of the pass, in the open," he continued. "I prefer to finish the business here. I'll get more of them—before they get me—than in a running fight."

"But if you had Fielding's roan——"

Sonora Jack looked up impatiently.

"Yes—if I had—but I haven't. Get out now, Bob; you mustn't be caught with me."

"Jack," Somers almost screamed, "the roan isn't a hundred yards away—up that ravine—saddled and bridled, and fresh as a rose!"

He had seized Haines by the collar, and was tugging to help him to his feet.

"Hurry, for Heaven's sake!" he cried, as Haines raced madly toward the ravine, and the echoes of galloping hoofs rang sharply up the pass.

Slowly he staggered downward to the trail as Fielding, grim, grimy and perspiring, dashed up at the head of a dozen cowboys.

"Glad to see you again, old boy," shouted Fielding, as he sprang from the saddle. "You're in time; we've got him treed. Which way did he go?"

"Who?" asked Somers drowsily, rubbing his eyes.

"Who? Why, th' fellow that rode that mustang! Didn't you see——"

He stopped short, stared, wide-eyed, up the pass, and ripped out an oath. On a distant ledge, where the trail wound around the face of a cliff, a tall man on a galloping roan was jauntily waving a sombrero toward them.

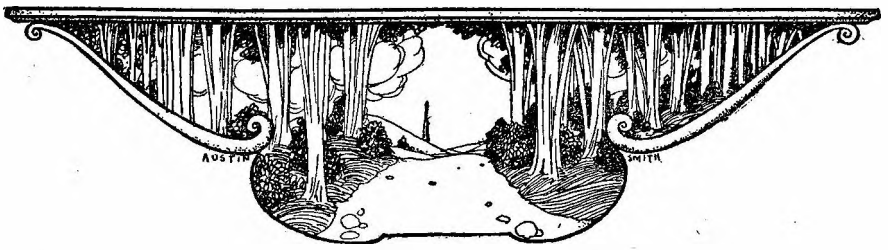
"Sonora Jack—and my roan!" roared Fielding.

"I—I believe it is," stammered Somers, blinking stupidly. "The rascal must have stolen him while I was asleep. Never mind, Hal; I'll pay——"

"While you was asleep!" Fielding bellowed. "Did you hear that, boys? *Asleep! Asleep!*"

He climbed back slowly into the saddle and turned his tired horse's head eastward.

"Back home, boys," he said wearily, with a disgusted glance at the blinking Somers. "It's all off. Maybe some time we'll learn why an all-wise Providence created greasers, sheepmen and tenderfeet."



Settled Out of Court

By Walter E. Grogan

Author of "The King's Scepter," "A Divided Mission," Etc.

In this clever story Mr. Grogan, who is an English author of some renown, relates how a country lawyer with the detective instinct succeeded in fathoming a mystery which involved the stealing of a gem of great value—Lady Neasden's blue diamond

EARLY one summer morning my attention was arrested by the sound of a hurried entry. Haste in a country lawyer's office is so rare that I instantly threw down the legal documents I had been examining and swung round in my chair.

Looking through the window in my office, which permits me a view of the clerks' double room beyond, I was surprised to see that the person who had entered in such noisy and evident haste was Sir Thomas Dipscombe, the eminent authority on physiology.

He was a hale man of sixty-five, and had recently given up his professorship at St. Jacob's, London, for the brisk country life of Buttery St. Agnes. His house, Holmwood, was half a mile from our little town, a comfortable, roomy, two-storied building, hidden largely by creepers.

Lady Dipscombe was at least fifteen years younger than Sir Thomas—a bright, brisk, breezy little woman. I do not think I have ever met another elderly couple quite so happy and comfortable, or so full of evident enjoyment of their new life.

Most men who had spent the best years of their life in the very center of scientific and intellectual life would have found Buttery St. Agnes dull in the extreme, but Sir Thomas had taken to country life and country pursuits with an avidity that was very refreshing.

Altogether a very simple, charming old man, and quite the very last person I should have expected to come bustling into my office, consternation vividly depicted on his face.

"Mr. Brine!" I heard him cry. "Mr. Brine! Must see him at once!"

A moment later Smallcombe was at the door.

"Are you at liberty to see Sir Thomas Dipscombe, sir?" the dignified old clerk commenced, when he was thrust unceremoniously aside by the knight himself.

"He must see me!" he declared.

I waved the ruffled and astonished Smallcombe out of the room, and turned to Sir Thomas. He had plumped himself down upon a chair, and was mopping his forehead with a voluminous handkerchief.

"Brine, it's awful!" he burst out. "You must help me. I'm bewildered—nonplused!"

"So Lady Neasden has lost the blue diamond?" I said quietly.

"Good gad!" Sir Thomas exclaimed. "Who told you?"

"You did," I answered.

"Look here, Brine, this is a very serious matter, and I don't care for your jokes. You are perfectly aware that I did not tell you."

"But you did, Sir Thomas—you told me a great deal of the story. For instance, the theft, or suspected theft, was only discovered this morning, and it was taken from Lady Neasden's room presumably by the window—or, at all events, you think so."

Sir Thomas stared at me in amazement.

"And you have not yet had your

breakfast," I continued. "Can I ring for sandwiches?" I touched the bell as I spoke. Sir Thomas fell back in his chair, with his round, blue eyes opened to their widest extent.

"Smallcombe, tell Keziah to cut a few sandwiches, and bring a whisky and soda," I said to the old clerk who answered the bell. Then I turned to Sir Thomas.

"How do you know all this?" he demanded in a bewildered voice. "Have you discovered the thief?—but that is impossible!"

"It is quite simple, and you yourself have really been my informant. I know that Lady Neasden has been staying with you, and of course all the world is aware of the Neasden blue diamond. When you burst in so unceremoniously I knew at once the blue diamond was gone. Only its loss could explain your consternation.

"Sickness was out of the question, because, although possibly a lawyer might be wanted for the making of a will, being a medical man, you would have remained in your house and sent some one else for me.

"I know it was discovered this morning, because you are evidently in the bewilderment of your first consternation; and it is apparent that you have grounds for believing that it was stolen through the window, as, unless the door was locked, suspicion would attach to the servants, in which case you would first go to the police-station. I heard your dog-cart pull up, and it was coming from the direction of your house. The police-station is lower down."

"I see," said Sir Thomas. "It is, as you say, quite simple, now that you have explained. But the necessity for these?" he added, as Smallcombe entered with a plate of sandwiches and a tumbler of whisky and soda.

"Pardon me, Sir Thomas," I laughed, "you are wearing a very old coat. I don't think you would have breakfasted in that with Lady Neasden. I know you are late risers at Holmwood. And, confirmatory of this, you have three or four lunch biscuits in your pocket. I can see the round, flat bulge. Lady Dipscombe is very careful of you."

"By Jove, I had forgotten them!" Sir Thomas exclaimed. "But I think these sandwiches look more appetizing."

He made a hasty meal while I went out to give Smallcombe instructions.

"Come, Sir Thomas, I am at your disposal. Shall we take the matter to the police?"

"Yes, certainly. I think they ought to be acquainted, although I don't expect much help in that quarter. The inspector is a good, honest fellow, but very thick-headed, and his men regard him as being sharp and shrewd, so there is little to be hoped from them."

We drove down to the police-station, and left instructions with the sergeant in charge to send some one to make investigations at once. Then Sir Thomas turned his horse round, and we made our way back to Holmwood. On the road he sketched briefly the story of the loss.

Lady Neasden was the second wife of the late Baron Neasden. Her husband had been dead two years, but his successor, a nephew, being a bachelor, had permitted Lady Neasden still to enjoy possession of the family jewels.

These were considerable, but the chiefest in value and reputation was the famous blue diamond. It was of the first water and of great size, and earned its name through the possession of a distinct tinge of blue. It was mounted in silver on a thin silver wire, and was used as a hair ornament.

The present Lord Neasden had become engaged, and his marriage was imminent. Naturally, in such a case, his lordship had requested the return of the family jewels for his bride, the return to be effected within a week of that morning.

Sir Thomas explained that he was in his dressing-room when his wife had called him out. Lady Neasden, who had discovered her loss that morning, came immediately to his wife.

The blue diamond had been seen by Lady Dipscombe on Lady Neasden's dressing-table before dinner on the previous day. She had persuaded Lady

Neasden not to wear it, as she was nervous. They had retired late, as was their custom, and Lady Neasden had not discovered her loss until the following morning. Such was the purport of Sir Thomas' narrative.

I met Lady Neasden in the drawing-room. She was a handsome woman of about forty years of age, well preserved, and frank in manner. She was with Lady Dipscombe, who was much agitated. Lady Neasden, beyond excessive pallor, betrayed no signs of the unpleasant experience she had undergone.

"I have brought him!" Sir Thomas exclaimed. "Here's Brine! Best fellow in the world for a case like this." He was excited, and, despite his white hair, looked absurdly boyish.

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Brine," Lady Neasden said. "Sir Thomas spoke of you directly he was aware of my loss. I hope you will do what you can for me, although I fear I cannot hope to recover the jewel."

"Why not?" I inquired.

"I fear I am pessimistic—but jewel robberies planned so well as this one must have been rarely result in the recovery of the plunder."

"Oh, my dear Mary, don't talk like that! Of course it will be recovered—it must be recovered!" Lady Dipscombe exclaimed, in a fluttering attempt at consolation. "In our house, too, Tom," she added. "So terrible!"

"But here's Brine," Sir Thomas repeated, holding to me valiantly with a faith quite touching. "He's done some smart things. He'll lay the thief by the heels in no time."

"I think I will do nothing until the police come, Sir Thomas," I said.

"The police! Oh, Tom!" poor Lady Dipscombe cried, with all a nervous woman's horror of the man in blue; but Lady Neasden nodded her head approvingly.

"That is quite right," she said, "although I expect nothing from their investigations——"

"Nothing!" interjected Sir Thomas. "I know 'em!"

"They will, of course, insist upon a search. You will appreciate my position, Mr. Brine, I am sure, when I tell you that the stolen jewel was not mine. It is an heirloom of my late husband's family, and should have passed in a week's time to the present baron. I am not on very good terms with Lord Neasden, although I admit his generosity in permitting me the use of the family jewels until his marriage. Hence I fear this loss renders me liable to suspicion."

"Oh, my dear Mary," expostulated Lady Dipscombe, "that is absurd!"

"I shall insist upon being personally searched. It is exceedingly unpleasant, but I am right. Luckily, Augusta saw the jewel in my room before dinner last night, and was present when I locked the door. There can be no doubt that I have not been able to take it out of the house."

Shortly afterward the police arrived, Inspector Bovey, a sergeant and a constable. The matter was explained to them by Sir Thomas, while they listened with the profoundest gravity. They were a little aghast at the suggestion that Lady Neasden should be searched, but agreed that it would be satisfactory.

"Certainly," said her ladyship. "Lady Dipscombe and her maid, Agatha, shall do it. There can be no question regarding their verdict. And here are the keys of everything I have here. I took the precaution, inspector, of locking my bedroom door directly the loss was established. Nothing has been touched."

"Your ladyship did quite right," Bovey answered.

"I think I'll come with you, Bovey, while you make your investigations," I said.

"Very good, sir. As far as I can see we are both agreed it is a clear case of larceny."

Lady Neasden's trunks were diligently searched, every corner of the room was subjected to the minutest search, every drawer examined, every box ransacked, with absolutely no trace of the missing jewel.

But this search I had the greatest difficulty in persuading the two police officers to undertake, for from the very moment of entering the room they

pinned their faith to a burglary by means of the window.

There were marks upon the window-sash, where the catch had been forced; the sill, gritty and dusty at the sides, had evidently been rubbed clean by cloth in the center, which suggested the passage of a man's body, and the creeper was torn away all round the window.

Investigations below revealed places where the stucco had been kicked away, and the creeper showed signs of rough usage. It was one of considerable age, and the thick, interlaced stems were capable of giving ample support to an active man.

It was only after pointing out that Lady Neasden had desired a search of her belongings, in order that no breath of suspicion might attach to her, that I prevailed upon the stolid officers to do their duty.

As it was, they despatched the constable to the police-station, in order to telephone to the chief at Exeter, and to all the local stations, warning them of the loss, and putting them on the alert for any suspicious characters.

Afterward, I believe both Bovey and the sergeant thoroughly enjoyed overhauling Lady Neasden's effects. The gravity that sat heavily upon the inspector relaxed a little at the disclosure of her ladyship's toilet preparations.

"You are quite satisfied, Bovey?" I asked, when the long labor was at an end.

"Perfectly, Mr. Brine," he answered. "The theft was carried out by a person, or persons, who entered through the window. That is quite clear. We have only undertaken the search in deference to her ladyship's wishes."

"The room can now be used?"

"Certainly: I have made my examination."

"Have you any hope of catching the thief?"

"That I can't say, sir," he answered pompously. "We—we have to keep our movements secret. I may tell you, though, that the thief is certainly a young hand at the game."

"Ah! Why do you say that?"

"The catch was forced in a very clumsy manner. Jim noticed it as well. Pity we've had such dry weather. A lawn is all right when wet—but you might as well try to find traces of a fly's foot-marks on a piece of granite as a man's boots on this sun-baked ground."

The inspector and the sergeant took their departure after having listened, at Lady Neasden's request, to the assurances of Lady Dipscombe and her maid that their search had been thorough and fruitless.

"There was no need," the inspector assured her. "We saw at once how it was done. That window gave the whole thing away, your ladyship. We shall make inquiries as to any suspicious characters being seen in the neighborhood, and I have no doubt we shall be able to restore the missing jewel very soon. We have our methods. I can't say more. Good morning, your ladyship. Good morning, Sir Thomas."

Lady Neasden looked at me and smiled sadly.

"Quite hopeless, I fear, Mr. Brine. I never expect to see the blue diamond again."

"Oh, don't say that," I answered. "It may yet turn up."

"I think not, and I am wondering how I shall break the news to Lord Neasden. It is terribly unfortunate. The blue diamond is bound up with the luck of the Stantons"—Stanton was the family name of Lord Neasden. "I dare say you wonder why I brought it here and left all the other family jewels in the safe custody of my bankers."

"I confess it does appear rather strange," I answered.

Lady Neasden smiled a little patient, brave smile.

"All women are superstitious—and I am no exception. I have just entered upon a small speculation on the Stock Exchange, and I could not bring myself to let my talisman out of my sight. Foolish, of course, Mr. Brine, and I can assure you I repent it now—but you can make excuses for a woman's whim."

"I fear your sex has not a monopoly of superstition, Lady Neasden. Of course your action is quite understandable," I hastened to reassure her.

"Where, may I ask, is Lord Neasden now?"

"At Neasden Hall—it is just outside Bristol, near the village of Almondsbury."

"Ah," I answered. "Shall I undertake the task of informing him?"

"Why?" Lady Neasden inquired.

"I gathered that you were not on good terms with his lordship, and the task might be a difficult, not to say unpleasant, one for you. I could speak also as to the fact of the search, and assure him that the blue diamond cannot possibly be in your possession."

Lady Neasden considered the suggestion for a moment in silence.

"My dear Mary," urged Lady Dipscombe, "do, I entreat you. Mr. Brine will write it so diplomatically. It may shield you from any unpleasantness."

"Thank you, Mr. Brine," Lady Neasden said. "It is very good of you. Don't think me ungrateful for not at once closing with your generous proposition. Mine is an extremely difficult position, and I don't wish to decide anything hurriedly. But I accept—with thanks."

I bowed, and went to the door. Sir Thomas followed me out into the hall.

"Sir Thomas," I said, "I can explain nothing, but I wish you to give your housemaids instructions to remove all Lady Neasden's belongings to another room. You must come with me and superintend the removal. I shall then lock the door and take the key with me. I am going to Bristol to-night to see Lord Neasden personally. To-morrow I hope to return here, when I will make everything clear."

"But, my dear Brine," he commenced, in an expostulating voice.

"You can trust me?"

"I do—fully. But——"

"Well, do as I say, and I assure you that the blue diamond shall be recovered. Remember, this is strictly a secret. Not a word even to your wife. You can say that the police required all evidence of the entry at the window to remain untouched."

Sir Thomas gave me the requisite promise, although reluctantly, and we went up to the bedroom with two housemaids. In handling a small bag, I unfortunately let it drop, and spilled its contents. Among them was a small paper packet such as chemists use, labeled "Oxalic acid."

"That's very careless," I said. "Isn't it, Sir Thomas? No one should leave virulent poisons about like that."

When the transfer of room had been effected, and I had locked the door, I followed Sir Thomas down to his study, holding the packet in my hand.

"By the way, Sir Thomas, we will seal this packet, and you can lock it up until to-morrow," I said. "I want to give her ladyship a lesson. I think a small fib to the effect that we discovered it in a servant's possession, who had mistaken it for a harmless powder, might prove a very salutary lesson—eh?"

"Yes, yes," acquiesced Sir Thomas, whose eyes sparkled boyishly at the idea of this small practical joke; "but I don't quite see the force of all this sealing."

"That is part of the fright, Sir Thomas. Now I will have another look at the convenient creeper from the garden, and alone. Then I shall make my journey to Bristol."

I took the precaution of wiring to Lord Neasden before I left Buttery St. Agnes, so that his lordship was prepared for my visit.

Almondsbury is some ten miles out of Bristol, and I was therefore constrained to spend a night at Neasden Hall—Lord Neasden kindly insisting that I should not trust myself to the mercies of the village hostelry. The next day I returned to Buttery St. Agnes, and at once drove to Holmwood.

In the garden was Sir Thomas, and he came forward on hearing my cab.

"So you have returned, Brine!" he cried. "That's capital. Now for the mystery. Have you found out the thief?"

"I know the person who took the blue diamond," I answered. "Can I see Lady Neasden?"

"She is in the drawing-room with my wife. To tell you the truth, I've been hanging about the garden ever since

you left. They've got an idea that I know something, and—Augusta says it is the first time since our marriage that I have had a secret from her. I dare say it is. This won't long be one. I can't stand it."

"My dear Sir Thomas, I am very sorry," I said. "Bring the little packet, and we will go into the drawing-room. If we read Lady Neasden that lesson, it may serve to divert attention from you."

"By Jove, yes!" cried Sir Thomas.

When we entered the drawing-room —I fancied Sir Thomas kept discreetly in my rear—the ladies were seated close together. I think they had been talking of Sir Thomas, and I believe Sir Thomas had the same impression. He certainly tried very hard to efface himself. Lady Neasden appeared to be in a very bad temper.

"You have no news, I presume, Mr. Brine?" she said.

"Indeed I have, Lady Neasden," I answered. "I think I have solved the mystery of the blue diamond."

For a minute I enjoyed the extraordinary surprise my announcement had caused.

"And, Lady Neasden," I continued, "I have Lord Neasden's assurance that, for the sake of the family name, he will proceed no further in the matter if you will give the name and address of the establishment where it is, and facilitate his redemption of it."

Consternation, indignation, anger, all were strongly depicted upon her ladyship's handsome features.

"This is an insult!" she cried.

"I think his lordship is behaving very well. Please understand that we know everything, and that, unless his offer is at once accepted, I have his authority to inform the police immediately."

"This is outrageous!" she replied.

"If I tell you something of what we know, perhaps you will see the wisdom of acceding to Lord Neasden's demand. Some time ago you had a counterfeit blue diamond manufactured. This, I know, is a general custom, in order to lessen the chances of theft. Then, for some reason, you were pressed for money, and pledged the blue diamond.

"That is the preamble. Then came the news of Lord Neasden's approaching marriage, and the demand for the return of the family jewels. You were contemplating throwing yourself upon Lord Neasden's mercy, when a sudden inspiration came to you. You were invited here, and you traveled down, bringing with you the imitation blue diamond.

"On the evening before last you drew Lady Dipscombe's attention to it before dinner, locked your door, and went down-stairs. The next morning you announced your loss.

"What really happened was this: After retiring to rest, you spent some considerable time crushing the imitation blue diamond to powder. The weights you used were, I suspect, taken from Sir Thomas' study. Your bedroom being in the west wing, entirely away from the rest of the house, gave you a fairly free hand.

"Having done this, you went down the narrow stairway opposite your door, restored the weights to Sir Thomas' study, and passed out into the garden through his French window.

"There you tore and mangled the creeper, and, with the aid of a long-handled rake, simulated the damage caused by a man climbing up to your window.

"You then returned by the same way as you had come, closed and bolted the French windows, and finished your work by forcing the catch of your window and dusting the sill with a handkerchief. Now, may I inquire where the real blue diamond is? Sir Thomas has the remains of the imitation one."

"I? My dear Brine, I know nothing of this, on my honor!" exclaimed Sir Thomas, aghast.

"That packet of oxalic acid you kindly sealed for me is the powdered imitation blue diamond," I answered.

"I don't know how you discovered this, Mr. Brine," Lady Neasden said, in a low voice. "It is true. I pledged the diamond three years ago, for five thousand pounds, with Link & Link. I

owed debts I could not pay otherwise --debts of honor through losses at bridge. I have saved since then, with the hope of redeeming the jewel. Lord Neasden's unlooked-for marriage came before I had completed the sum. I have some three thousand odd, which, of course, I will hand to Lord Neasden."

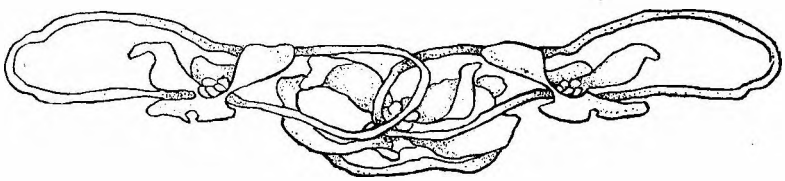
Sir Thomas asked me afterward how I had discovered the truth. It appeared wonderful to him. As a matter of fact, it was merely the use of observation.

A pair of walking-boots in the bedroom bore on the toe-caps marks of rough usage. This, in conjunction with the fact that the stucco knocked away beneath the window was too near the ground, excited my suspicions.

A man climbing would hardly have marked the stucco at all—certainly not within two or three feet of the ground.

A long-handled rake, close at hand, was another link; and the discovery that some of the leaves of the creeper had been pierced by its teeth confirmed my suspicions. In the bedroom there was a handkerchief that had obviously been newly washed—it was stiff and yet rumpled—and I found a shaving of wood inside the window.

When the sealed packet of oxalic acid came to light, I had the curiosity to open it, unseen by the maids. A faint bluish tinge in the powder at once told me what it was. I knew that no one could destroy a real diamond in such a way, so that the fact of the existence of an imitation was established. Of course I had the bedroom locked, as I left in it the pair of walking-boots.



OLDEST JOURNALS IN THE WORLD

A CONTROVERSY between the Occidental *savants* anent the country to which shall be accredited the honor of having first established a newspaper, reveals the fact that the most ancient journal of Europe is but infantile compared with the Chinese journals. The senior member of the periodicals of the entire world is printed at Pekin and called the *Tsing-Rao* (the *Review*). It dates from the fourteenth century and appears monthly. The most ancient of daily journals is the *Kin-Pan* (the *Annals*), which has been in existence for eleven hundred years. It was at first published monthly, then weekly from the sixteenth century on until 1830, since when it has remained a daily, and even for some time has published three editions per day and that long before it was thought of in America or Europe. These editions differ each in color; yellow for morning, white for midday, and gray for evening.

At first, being the exponent of an essentially conservative nation, the *Kin-Pan* abstained from all polemics or commentary, adhering strictly to subjects that are not matters of discussion—the stars, the phases of the moons, the almanacs, fêtes and ceremonies—and, to relieve the monotony of this program, stories, legends and poetry. Later it risked speaking of politics, always with extreme discretion, however. Thus it has remained constant, invariable and consistent with its principles, so that no manner of reproach has ever assailed it—and the European journals have called China a backward country!

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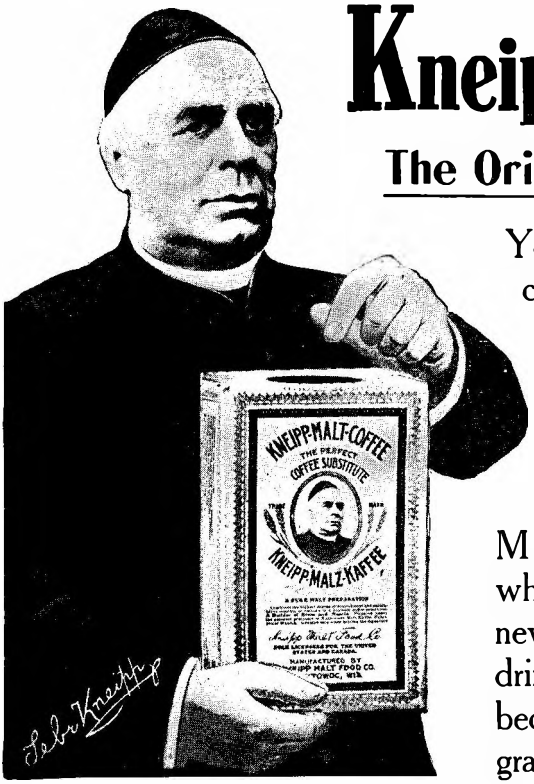

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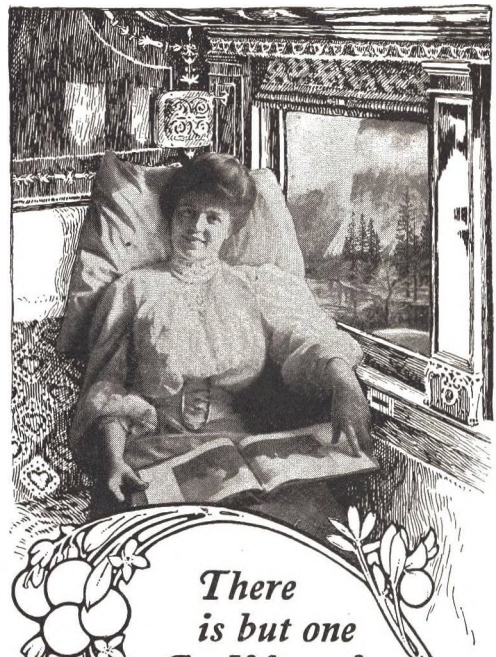

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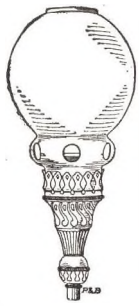

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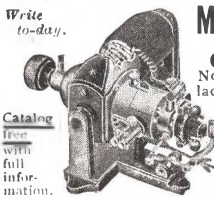

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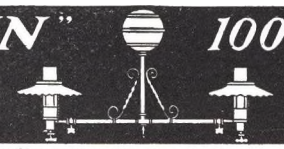

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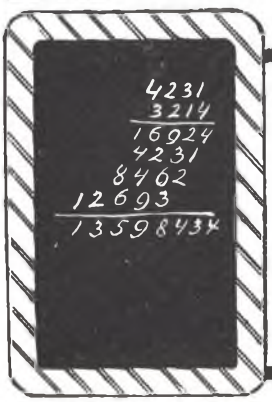

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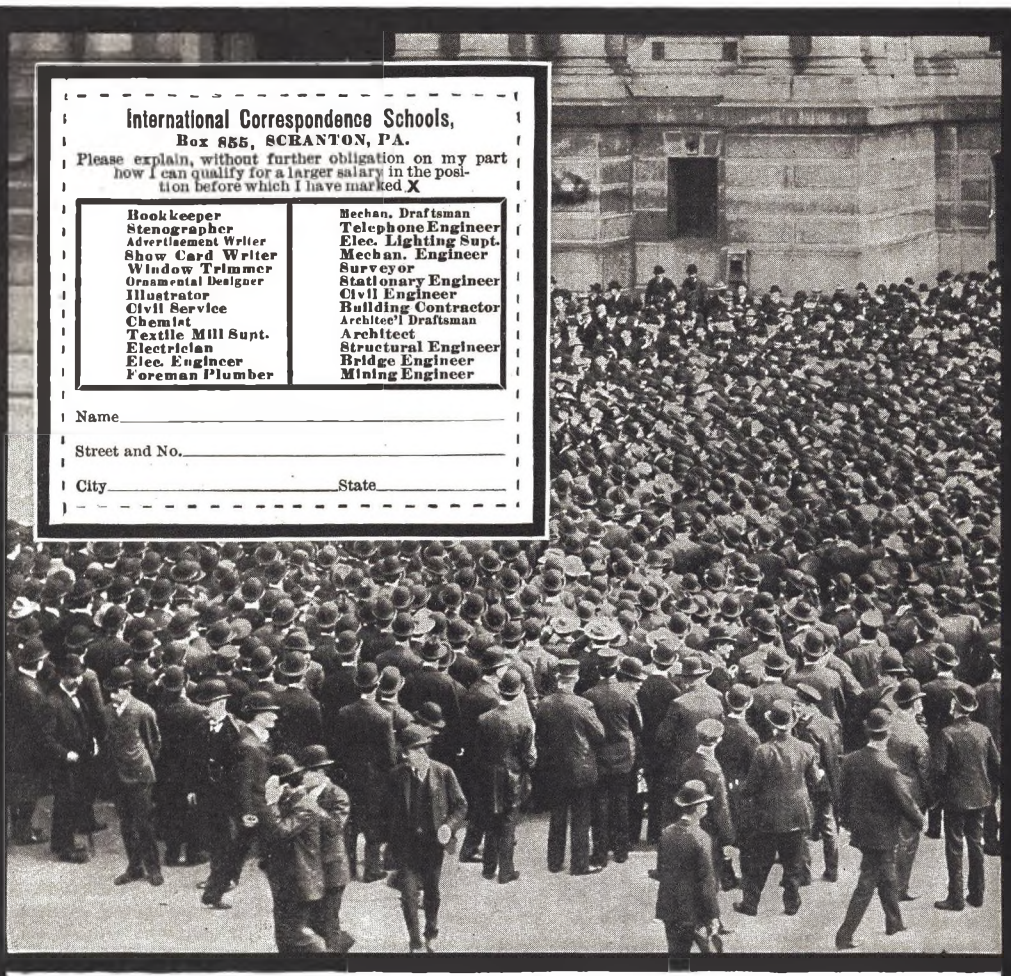

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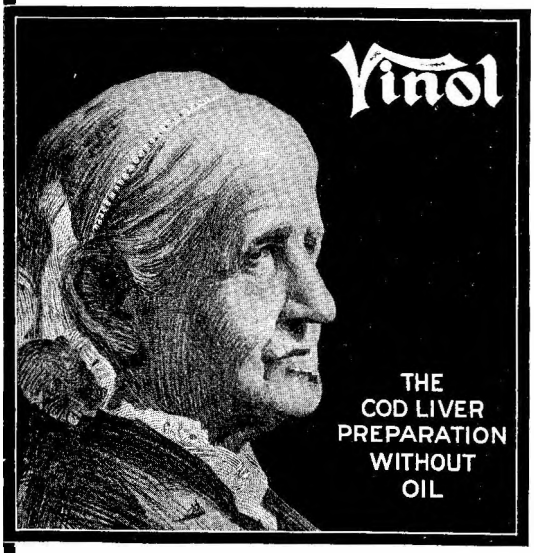

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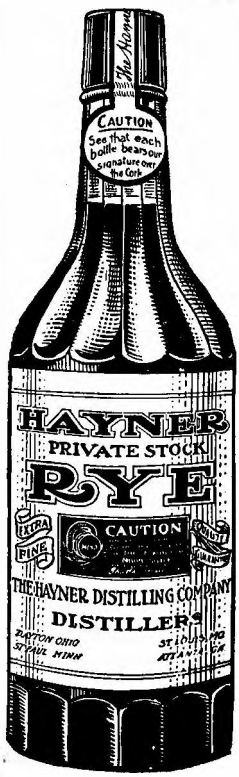

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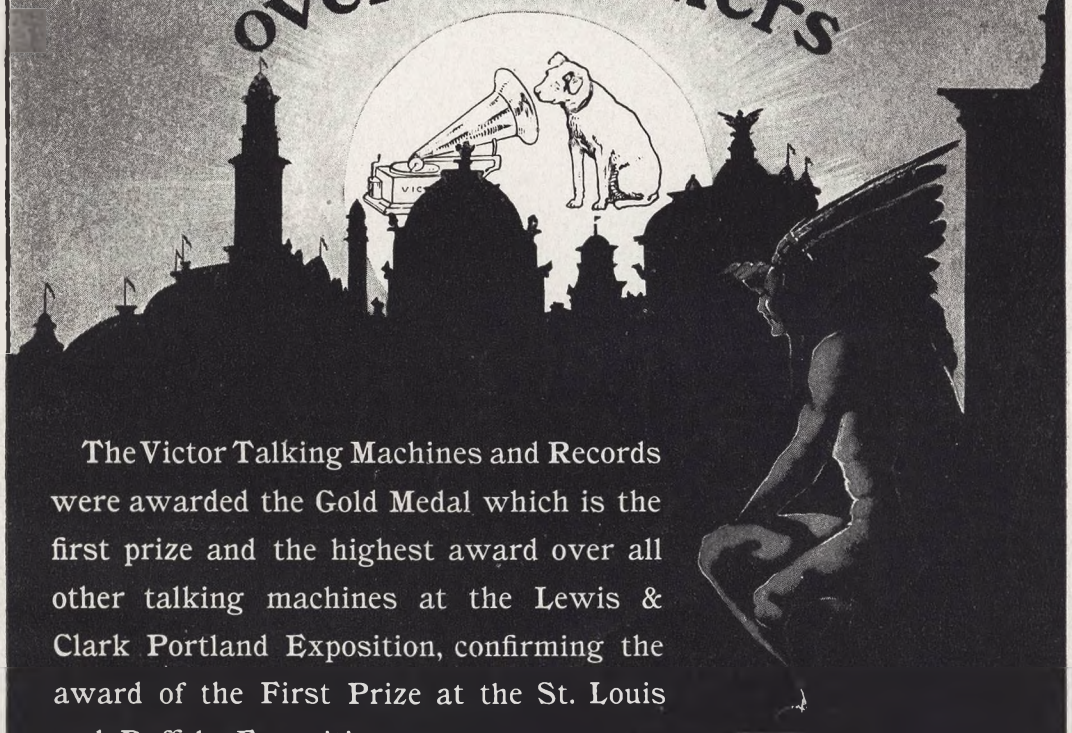

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