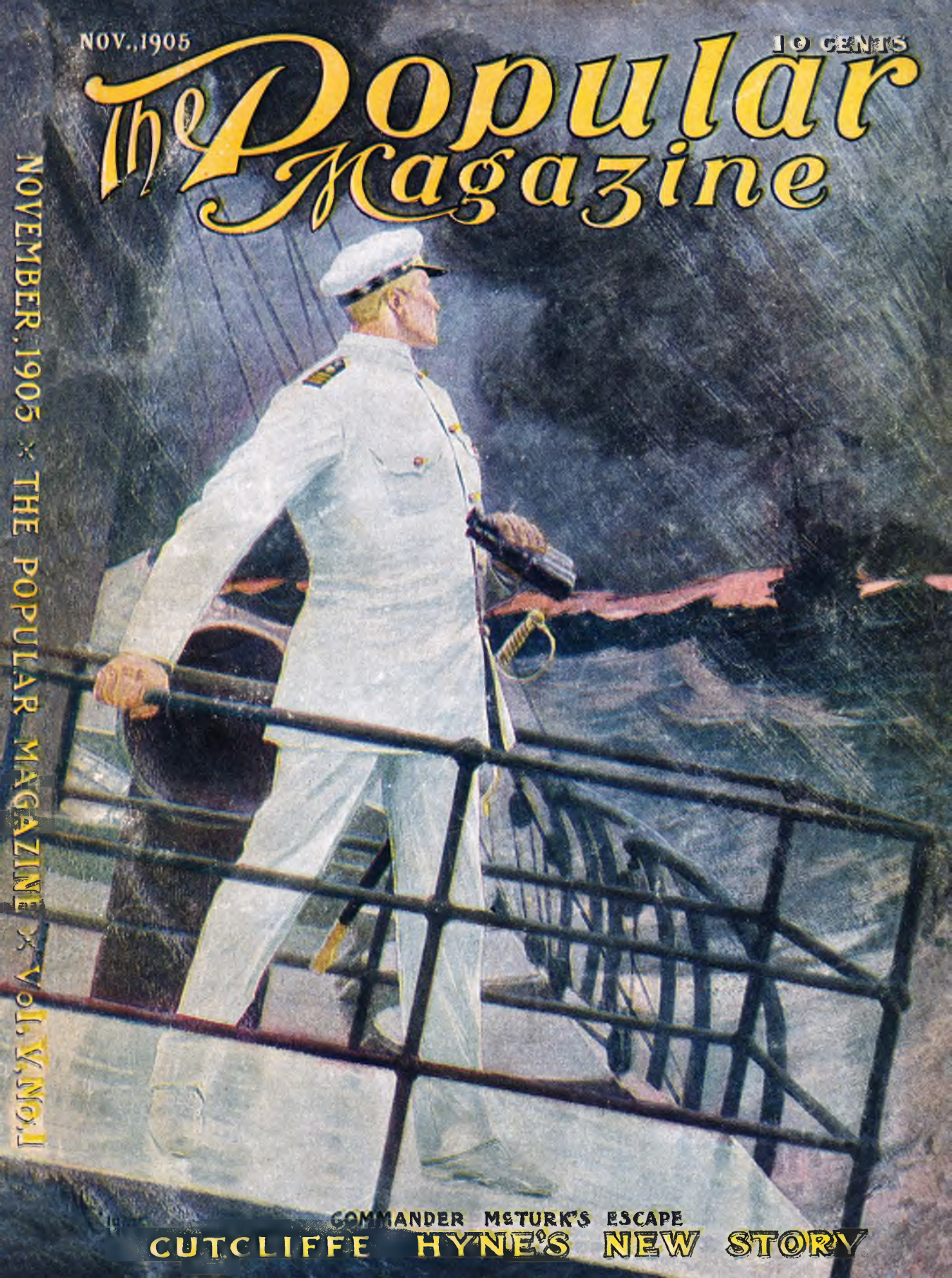
NOV., 1905

10 CENTS

The Popular Magazine



NOVEMBER, 1905 × THE POPULAR MAGAZINE × VOL. V, NO. 1

COMMANDER McTURK'S ESCAPE

CUTCLIFFE HYNE'S NEW STORY

The December number will contain a very remarkable Complete Novel called "THE CRAFT O' KINGS"

VOL. V. NO. 1

The Popular Magazine

CONTENTS FOR NOVEMBER, 1905

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

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

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We offer you this beautiful Art Portfolio, containing 16 superb copies of masterpieces by world famous artists; reproduced by the duogravure process and printed on heavy plate paper ready for framing.

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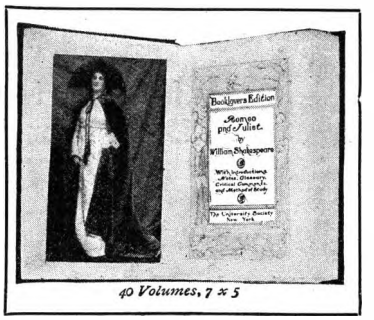
The Booklovers' Shakespeare

This is our fourth year with the *BOOKLOVERS' SHAKESPEARE*—years of solid success and ever increasing popularity. The publishers feel so confident that the set is now sufficiently well known to sell at the regular price ($42.00), that they did not want to let us have another edition. We have been successful, however, in getting 500 sets which we are able to offer at the same low popular price as before, payable in little easy monthly instalments.

Furthermore, the first 250 who send in their orders for the *BOOKLOVERS' SHAKESPEARE* will receive the beautiful art portfolio described above, absolutely free of charge.



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Why It Is Best

The *BOOKLOVERS' SHAKESPEARE* has always been the choice of discriminating people who desire a thoroughly satisfactory edition at a moderate price. It is bound in 40 dainty volumes—a play to a volume—and contains 7,000 pages, including 40 beautiful plates in colors, besides 400 other illustrations. The volumes are 7 x 5 inches in size—just right for easy handling. No other edition contains the following important features, which are absolutely essential to a perfect understanding of Shakespeare's plays:

Topical Index: By means of which the reader can find any desired passage in the plays and poems.

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Life of Shakespeare, by Dr. Israel Gollancz, with critical essays by Bagehot, Stephen, and other distinguished Shakespearean scholars and critics.

FREE — FOR FIVE DAYS

We will send you the complete set—40 dainty volumes, for five days examination if you mail the accompanying coupon promptly.

We prepay transportation charges. You are allowed ample time for a critical examination and you may return the books at our expense if you decide you can do without them.

The regular price of the *BOOKLOVERS'* sold through agents is $42.00. You can now purchase a set for $27.00 and pay for it in small monthly instalments if this is any convenience to you.

If your order is one of the first 250 received we will present you with an Art Portfolio free of charge.

SIEGEL COOPER CO., New York

We employ no agents. Our Book Club transacts all its business by correspondence.

Pop
Nov. 5

Siegel Cooper Co.
New York

COUPON

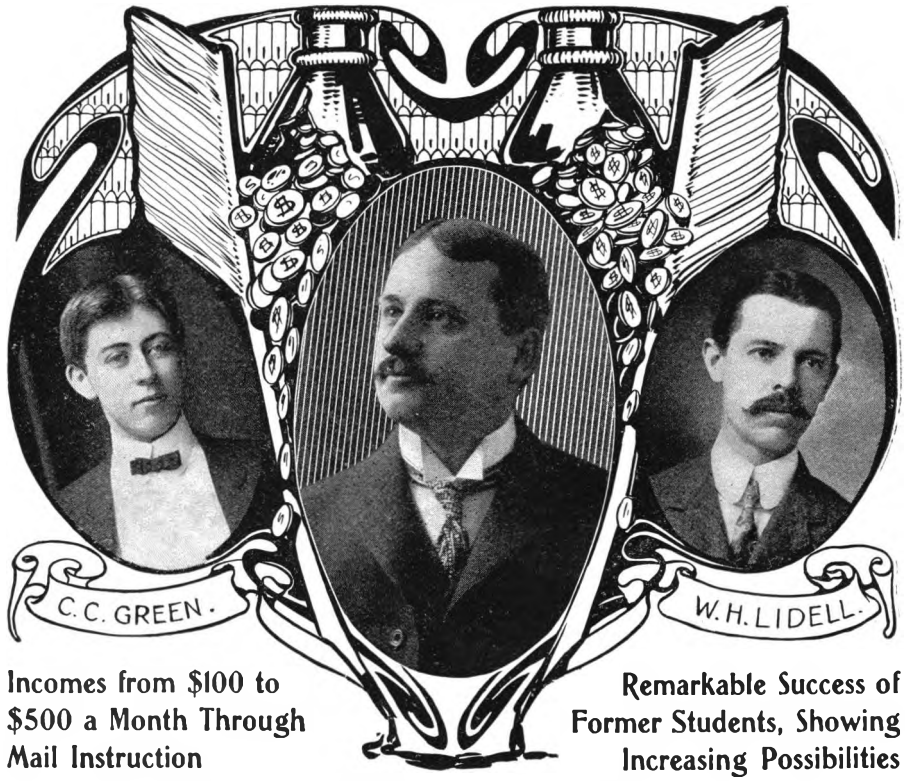
Send me for examination, prepaid, a set of the **BOOKLOVERS' SHAKESPEARE** in half leather binding. If satisfactory, I will pay you $1.00 within five days after receipt of the books and $2.00 a month thereafter for 13 months.* Title to remain in Siegel Cooper Co. until fully paid for. If not satisfactory, I will notify you and hold the set subject to your order. Also send me, prepaid, the $8.00 art portfolio, which I am to retain free of charge, if I keep the books.

NAME.... .....

ADDRESS.... .....

*If you prefer cloth binding change 13 months to 10.

Why Ad. Writing Pays



Incomes from $100 to $500 a Month Through Mail Instruction

Remarkable Success of Former Students, Showing Increasing Possibilities

By GEORGE H. POWELL

THE readers of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE who have read what I have from time to time said about advertising writing as a money-making business have been, in many cases, surprised at the rapid growth of this new vocation, although they have realized that the magazines and newspapers are constantly increasing their space devoted to publicity.

Just how rapidly this increase is going on may be fairly judged by an examination of the various National publications of to-day and of a year or two back, although the daily papers likewise show the trend of the times in an equally conclusive manner.

And a wonderful bearing, too, it has on the future of the advertising writing business. Take the latest report of the New York *World* just laid on my desk: the records show that the net gain in the amount of advertising carried in its columns during the dullest month of the year, August, 1905, was more than 500 columns over the same period of 1904! The same increase is also seen in all great publications.

These figures are readily comprehended, and they go to prove that commercial America finds advertising so profitable that it is increasing its expenditure over a hundred millions of dollars annually in this one direction.

The young man or woman who is thinking of learning the art of "Ad. writing," as it is commonly called, will, in face of facts and figures, cease to wonder that the competent writer is able to earn from $100.00 to $500.00 a month, and that the picked workers are filling positions at far greater salaries.

Columns might be written showing scores of reasons why modern advertising is forging to the front in leaps and bounds, but this space forbids more than a reference or two.

In the first place, it has been demonstrated in

every conclusive test that the retailer who advertises wisely is bound to absorb most of the trade of his competitor who doesn't advertise, and in a like manner the manufacturer is wonderfully successful or not, as he practices or declines the great momentum that comes only with up-to-date advertising methods.

Never before since the creation of man has any one factor appeared in the business world bearing such a mighty money-producing wand as does modern advertising. It is less of an uncertainty than formerly, because its principles are getting to be thoroughly understood and appreciated.

In a word, the new advertiser can be quickly put next to the right methods, and competent advertising writers will take care of his copy and other details when he has not the time to attend to this himself, as is generally the case.

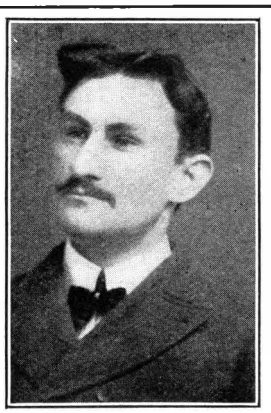
The lack of a sufficient number of good ad. writers, however, has compelled many a business man to take up correspondence instruction himself, or to put one of his clerks under my tutelage. Scarcely a week passes that some very prominent merchant does not enroll in my course for the specific purpose of learning how to branch out into a wider field. The wholesale grocer wants to create a National demand for his coffees, the shirt manufacturer wants to establish stores in all large cities, the department store is anxious to build a new building or develop a mail order trade—and they all realize that their salvation depends almost wholly upon the judicious use of printers' ink.

And in this onward march to greater prosperity I want to go on record with a prophecy: within the next ten years the present volume of advertising will be doubled over the figures of 1905! So marvelous a weapon as scientific advertising will never be allowed to get rusty from want of use. Let a man discover gold in the coldest confines of the North, and thousands will flock thence if they have to walk. So, too, will our merchants and manufacturers follow the golden path blazed by good advertising and gather their fortunes. The failures of the past will be avoided by reason of greater knowledge, and there will soon be no valid reason for groping in the dark and stumbling over obstacles.

I want to add a word about the Powell students who have won distinction. Mr. Green and Mr. Lidell, whose portraits appear herewith, show how old Powell students start on their careers and continue to advance. Mr. Green, 1146-15th St., Washington, D. C., is advertising manager for a great medical corporation spending nearly $100,000.00 yearly. Mr. Lidell I placed in a $25 position after completing my course; a year later he established his own advertising agency at 108 Fulton St., New York, and has constantly earned a large income from a score of clients. I have sent him many new accounts, as I have other Powell graduates. The careers of both young men show what good instruction, conscientious endeavor and a growing field offer to the ambitious.

The fact that the Powell System of mail instruction can do so much is amply strengthened day by day by the continued successes of the students. That it is the one correct system of teaching advertising there can be no doubt, and the testimony is so different, so much stronger, and so much more specific than ever before heard of, that I know it is a power for good, alike to the man or woman who wishes to earn more, or to the business man who is anxious to seize his golden opportunities.

To these I shall be glad to mail my two free books—beautiful new Prospectus, the most interesting work of its kind ever issued, and "Net Results," together with the strongest kind of testimony. Simply address me **George H. Powell, 1611 Temple Court, New York, N. Y.**



From $3.50 to Assistant Advertising Manager Siegel-Cooper Co.

57 Russell Street, Brooklyn, N. Y., Sept. 11, 1905.

MY DEAR MR. POWELL:

You will no doubt be interested to learn that since July 1st I have been assistant advertising manager for Siegel-Cooper Co., the largest department store in the world. When I took up your System of Instruction I knew nothing about advertising. Before completing it I secured a combination position as advertising man and salesman; later I resigned to enter the dept. store field, where in a store of 42 departments we built up a business of $100,000 yearly on an advertising appropriation of $2,000.00 in a town of 20,000. I then took hold of the mail order end of a knit goods concern, and evolved a marketing plan that was pronounced the cleverest of its kind. An ad. that drew replies at 60c. each I replaced with one that got them for 20c. The firm still uses my old copy.

It is to the Powell System I owe my success. You started me writing practical ads and your personal attention and interest were constant.

I have heretofore refrained from writing, as I wished to wait until I had secured something BIG that you might feel your former scholar's success was overwhelming.

Very truly yours,
ERNEST GILMORE GARDNER.

A Chat With You

CHESS is a fascinating game—so fascinating that many of those who play it lose interest in all other things and make the game their chief object in life. It is easy enough to see why it appeals to anyone of intelligence and imagination. The game that is played on the checkered board is a pure struggle of intellect, and the imaginative player, as he moves his pawns and rooks and knights whither he will—an absolute controller of their fates—tastes the joy of an absolute monarch. Has it ever struck you that the same game is played in the world on a much larger scale—a game in which the pawns are living men, and the stake fought for, not the mastery of a wooden chessboard, but an empire?

* * *

A MATCH of this character was recently played at Portsmouth, Mass., in which a large white man named Witte and a small yellow man named Komura were the principals. No one, except the rulers of the countries they represented and themselves, is able to say who won, or whether the game ended in a stalemate. But the world knew that the game was being played and watched it with the interest that a battle for big stakes always attracts. It is a game that very few have a chance to play. Almost everyone would like to be a diplomat, but very few reach the diplomatic service. And of these, few indeed arrive at a position where they are not mere pawns themselves. It is on this account, and also because of the mystery that generally surrounds it, that the profession of diplomacy has such a charm and interest attaching to it.

* * *

WE have been hoping for a long time to be able to give you a novel in which the game of kings and diplomats is really shown. In next month's issue we will complete the series of novels which have been such a feature of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE, and in doing so, furnish you with an exciting and enthralling picture of the game that kings play at. In "The Craft o' Kings," which is the novel for next month, you will find a story with a two-fold interest—one that holds you both on account of the fascinating nature of the events with which it deals and because of the strength and humanity of the characters it depicts.

* * *

MR. VANCE is already well known to you through his O'Rourke stories, which, after first appearing in THE POPULAR, are now having a phenomenal sale in book form. In "The Craft o' Kings" you will find him at his best. Each one of the series of novels which has been running in THE POPULAR for the past year has scored a hit—this last one will please you better than any of them.

DID you ever reflect as to the possibility of completely changing your identity –letting yourself drop out of the world entirely and appearing as some other person? Almost everyone, at some time, has thought of doing such a thing, but generally, after a little thought, we dismiss the idea as chimerical and impractical. A complete change of identity may be a simpler thing than we imagine, and sometimes it may lead to most astounding results. Conceive of a millionaire who changes places with a stranger. The stranger commits suicide, leaving the millionaire in his shoes, literally as well as figuratively. His body is afterward identified as that of the millionaire, and the millionaire, in the guise of the suicide, is accused of murder. Rather an interesting situation. A new serial by Richard Marsh, entitled "A Plunge into the Unknown," starts that way in the next month's issue of THE POPULAR. It will be worth while following it up.

A GOOD many of you have not been reading THE POPULAR for a full year as yet. The fact that we have made an increase in our circulation of close to one hundred thousand during the past twelve months is an indication that there are just that many new members in the family of THE POPULAR readers. The older members—and there are plenty of them, too—know, however, what we promised for this year and how we carried out our promises. The year is not over yet. There is one more month to come, and we are bending every effort to make that last issue of the year a banner one. We feel that we have been doing pretty well during the year, but we have saved up a lot of surplus strength for the finish, and we are going to make the strongest finish we know how.

WE have a lot of good people who are helping us to do it. Cutcliffe Hyne has written the best, so far, of his McTurk stories for the December issue. There is a wonderful short story, "In Chinatown," by Charles K. Moser, and B. M. Bower is helping with a Western story that will make you feel that you, yourself, are cantering across a windswept prairie. Charles Fort has one of his funny stories in it, and there is a rattling football story by Philip C. Stanton. You see that we have been preparing for the end of the year, and are going to crown the work of the twelve months with the best magazine, *by far the best*, that we have ever issued. Within a short time we will have a big piece of news for you. We have been planning ahead, and when we tell you about these plans we will be all ready to carry them out. They are so big, and mark such an advance step in the progress of THE POPULAR, that we do not want to announce them prematurely. But just wait for a month or so!

FREE BOOKS—READ CAREFULLY

We are going to give away, absolutely free of cost, 52 sets of books worth $16.00 a set. As one who reads you will be interested in this offer. Read carefully, for this is a rare opportunity, and one that will not occur again. In taking stock we find on hand a few sets of the

Makers of History

32 magnificent volumes, of which the bindings are slightly rubbed—not enough to impair their real value, but sufficient to prevent their shipment as perfect stock—at the regular price of $32 and $48 per set. There being only 52 of these sets, we shall not rebind, but have decided to let them go for half-price, upon easy monthly payments, and to give away with each of these 52 sets **FREE** one set of Shakespeare's Complete Works in 8 magnificent volumes worth $16 per set.

The "Makers of History" are the most entertaining and instructive friends you could possibly have in your home. Each volume is a complete narrative of a man or woman who in their time made things happen. There is not a dull page in the entire 32 volumes. No set of books published can compare in interest or instruction with the "Makers of History." They are as absorbing as anything you can imagine. They are the kind of books that keep people up late reading. Once you start to read any of these volumes you dislike to stop until the book is finished. Hundreds of thousands know and own these books. Their sale is ever increasing, because they are real books to be read and enjoyed—not to be put away and never looked at.

Read coupon carefully; price is cut in halves. You take no risk. After examination, if books are not found to be satisfactory, return them at our expense. Remember, these sets are as good as new for all practical purposes. We guarantee the interiors are not injured.

40 Magnificent Books, Less than 44 Cents a Volume

Description of the Free Shakespeare

It contains all the Tragedies, all the Comedies, all the Poems and Sonnets, and embraces a History of the Early Drama, an Exhaustive Biography, Shakespeare's Will, Introduction to each Play, Index to Characters, Glossary of Obsolete Words, Names of Actors and Actresses of Shakespeare's Day, Notes on each Play, etc., etc., from the works of Collier, Knight, Dyce, Douce, Hunter, Richardson, Ver Plank, and Hudson.

EDITED BY

George Long Duyckink

Many full-page illustrations, including portraits of leading Shakespearean actors and actresses, and scenes from the plays taken from the famous Boydell Gallery. 8 volumes. Handsomely and durably bound in fine cloth, gilt tops, with gold lettering and stamping.

Order to-day—to-morrow may be too late. Only 52 Sets will be given away.

We Recommend the Special Library Binding

Free Eight Volumes Shakespeare Coupon

Harpers History Club, 16 East 17th St., New York

You may send me for inspection and approval one set of the
MAKERS OF HISTORY
32 volumes, bound in the style indicated by having the "X" beside it.

Cloth Binding (regular price $32 per set). I will pay for same if I decide to keep the books, as follows: $1.00 after I examine them, and $1.50 a month for eleven months.

Special Library Binding (regular price $48 per set). I will pay for same, if I decide to keep the books, as follows: $1.00 after I examine them, and $2.00 a month for eleven months.

It is understood you send both sets of books, the "Makers of History," in 32 volumes, and the 8-volume "Shakespeare," to me upon approval, and if I decide not to keep the books I am to return them to you, charges collect. If I decide to keep the books, I am to pay you for the "Makers of History" and you are to present the "Shakespeare" to me free of cost.

NAME _____
STREET _____
CITY OR TOWN _____
STATE _____

POPULAR NOV.

TITLES OF BOOKS

William the Conqueror
Alexander the Great
Alfred the Great
Richard I.
Cyrus the Great
Genghis Khan
Xerxes
Julius Cæsar
Pyrrhus
Charles I.
Josephine
Marie Antoinette
Hernando Cortez
King Philip
Louis Philippe
Queen Elizabeth
Cleopatra
Margaret of Anjou
Richard II.
Darius the Great
Peter the Great
Hannibal
Nero
Romulus
Hortense
Madame Roland
Henry IV.
Joseph Bonaparte
Louis XIV.
Charles II.
Richard III.
Mary Queen of Scots

Harpers History Club, 16 East 17th St., New York, N. Y.

LEARN TO WRITE ADVERTISEMENTS

Page-Davis students who are now making daily use of their instruction and who are being paid handsomely for their services, first became acquainted with us just as you are now doing, and followed up the acquaintance.

If you want to know us better, and if you want to advance as they have done, sign the coupon, mail it to us, and you will receive full details regarding this profession and how you can prepare by correspondence, for positions paying from $25.00 to $100.00 a week. We will also send you a list of 500 men and women holding positions all directly traceable to their simple request for our literature.

Just to give you an idea of the practical working value of correct instruction, we publish below a partial list of the prominent high-class firms now employing "Page-Davis Men."

COSMOPOLITAN MAGAZINE.
A Page-Davis man is assistant western representative of this conservative high-class magazine of New York.

JOHN D. MORRIS & CO.
A Page-Davis man is advertising manager of this old established publishing house of Philadelphia.

MANHATTAN ELECTRICAL SUPPLY CO.
A Page-Davis man writes the advertisements for this, the foremost electrical concern in the world.

BAILEY, BANKS AND BIDDLE CO.
A Page-Davis woman prepares the beautiful high-class advertisements of this famous Jewelry concern, which is one of the two largest establishments of the kind in America.

GIMBLE BROTHERS DEPARTMENT STORE.
A Page-Davis man is advertisement writer for this great Milwaukee department store.

EILERS PIANO HOUSE.
A Page-Davis man controls the advertising of this large western piano house, which has headquarters in Portland, and branch houses in nearly every city of the northwest.

MUNGER'S LAUNDRY.
A Page-Davis man writes all the advertisements for this well-known and enterprising concern of Los Angeles, Calif.

YELLOW BOY MINING CO.
A Page-Davis man is promoting the interests of this successful mining company of Ogden, Utah, by means of advertising.

Everyone of these successful students, and hundreds of others on our long lists—which we will send you on request, was occupying an ordinary position when he enrolled with us.

One of the secrets of success is becoming associated with people who are personally interested in advancing you. It is to our interest to help you, as your success redounds to our credit, and thus further spreads the reputation of the Page-Davis Company.

By signing the coupon and sending it to us we will give you all the information you need to thoroughly understand.

Page-Davis Company

Address either office
90 Wabash Avenue
CHICAGO
150 Nassau Street
NEW YORK

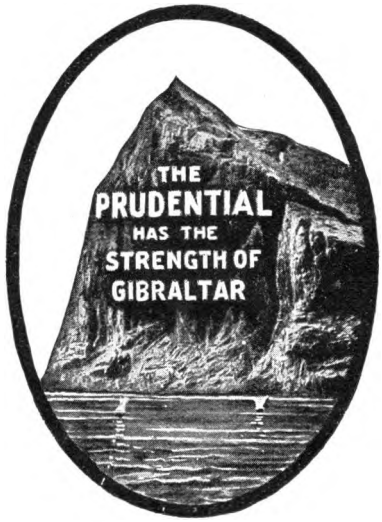
FILL IN NAME AND ADDRESS AND SEND THIS COUPON

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

Name.....
Address.....
City.....
State.....

11171

The Prudential



Issues the Ideal Life Insurance Contract.

Simple and explicit as a bank check. No confusing technicalities. A definite "promise to pay," with

Rates, Benefits and Privileges Absolutely Fixed and Guaranteed in the Policy.

Cash Loans. Paid-up Insurance. Automatic Extended Insurance. Cash Surrender Values. Occupation, Residence and Travel Unrestricted, and many other valuable features.

POLICIES MAY BE ISSUED WITH CASH DIVIDENDS PAYABLE ANNUALLY OR EVERY FIVE YEARS.

The Instalment Privilege

is a Splendid Feature of Prudential Policies.

WHEN POLICY MATURES it may be made payable in one sum; or in from two to twenty-five annual instalments; or in continuous instalments during lifetime of beneficiary (or insured); or the sum insured may be left with the Company as a trust fund at 3 per cent interest, with annual dividends.

IS YOUR LIFE INSURED? We have the policy you want at low cost on the Whole Life, Limited Payment or Endowment Plan.

Write us today and we will send free, particulars with rates and benefits at your age.

The Prudential Insurance Co. of America

INCORPORATED AS A STOCK COMPANY BY THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY.

JOHN F. DRYDEN, President. **Home Office, NEWARK, N. J.**

DEPT. 95

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. V. NOVEMBER, 1905. No. 1.

The Trials of Commander McTurk

By Cutcliffe Hyne

Author of "Captain Kettle, K. C. B.," "McTodd," Etc.

III.—THE WESTERN OCEAN PIRATE

(*A Complete Story*)

ISS BRIDGET McTURK picked up the side of her front that hung down over her nose, and pinned it up into place. Then she took the other two hairpins out of her mouth, turned away from the glass and said: "Come in."

A tall, thin, red-faced man stepped into the room and greeted her.

She placidly returned his kiss. "If I'd known it was you, J. K., you could have come right in. My hair had come off, that was all. But I couldn't tell it was you from your knock, and other people seem to think they ought to be shocked if you let them see you wear a transformation."

Commander John Kelly McTurk fidgeted, but she went complacently on: "I've heard all about these two last young damsels you've been sparking round. The hussies! I've written to them both, so if they cool off, you'll know why."

"Really, Bridget," her brother rasped out, "I wish you wouldn't interfere. I'm quite old enough to manage my own affairs."

"You may think you are," said his sister, dryly, "but past history doesn't show it. You're a bachelor now at forty-two, and so far as I can keep count, you've proposed to forty-two different women and been accepted by about twenty-one of them."

"Suppose we drop this subject."

"It's a good thing to drop hot coals. Well, my poor lad, what I sent for you for was this: That yam-headed navy board at Washington don't see they've got any immediate use for you on the active list. They can sit down and sleep on if they know you are still 'retired.'"

"How have you found that out?"

Miss McTurk slid in the two other hairpins, and made her yellow front really secure. "Is that straight?" she asked.

"No, it isn't," said her brother; "it never is. Look in the glass."

Miss McTurk peered at the mirror. "Oh! how you fuss. That's near enough. You'll stay to dinner, now you are here?"

"Come to the point, Bridget. Have you been writing to the navy board?"

"My dear J. K., of course I have. Do you think I'm ashamed of it? I

This series began in the September issue. The back numbers can be obtained through any newsdealer. Price, ten cents.

don't mind them knowing I'm interested in my brother's career. I don't mind all the United States knowing."

Commander McTurk groaned, and his red face with its thousand tiny wrinkles deepened in tint to a fine plum color. "You had better imagine my comments," he said.

"If you mean you want to reel out a lot of wicked shipboard swears, I shall do nothing of the kind. I wish you had accepted my invitation to come to lunch last Sunday. Our minister gave us a most edifying sermon on swearing. He said that to think a swear got you as many bad marks in heaven as to say one, and that the use of such words as 'botheration,' or 'drat the thing,' if you threw in the proper emphasis, was just as bad as one of those remarks that they print with a straight line."

"Well," said her brother, "I hope you'll carry it on your conscience that you've just made me score up thirty-two bad marks."

Miss McTurk scratched her nose thoughtfully. "You always had a fearful tongue, boy. I think it must be that which originally made you take to the navy as an opening. But you never had a notion of making the most of yourself or your efforts. You've always seemed to lack the business sense. You want somebody to run you as a going concern, and I'm the person that's going to do it—I beg your pardon, what was that? John Kelly McTurk, look me in the face and kindly repeat what you said."

"It slipped out," said the sailor; "and it's your own fault. I wish to Glory you'd leave my profession alone, Bridget. I'm an officer of the United States Navy, and though I am on the retired list for the moment, I wouldn't change that to be king of Siam."

Miss Bridget nodded her yellow head. "It's quite right you should be proud of it; I'm not quarreling with that. But I want them to put more hustle into your promotion. I want to see you an admiral."

"So do I, Bridget; and you can take it from me that I shall be one if you don't step in and spoil my chances. Petticoat influence, unless it is effective, plays the very mischief with the nerves of the navy board. Well, good-by. I must be going now."

"I wish you could have stayed to dinner. Drat this transformation, it's loose again. Just hand me a couple of hairpins, J. K., there's a good boy. You'll find some right there, under the cruet. Mind you come Sunday, and I'll take you to church."

Now, there was more in all this talk than might meet the eye on simple reading. Commander McTurk had a scheme on hand for his own professional advancement, which was, to say the least of it, perilous. He had preserved, as he thought, the utmost secrecy; but secrets, as he knew, are apt to leak out in many directions; and of necessity this secret was shared by many others already. That morning he had received a letter which had upset him considerably. It came from a friend in Washington, and contained a hint that all was not well with his interests at the navy board. Incidentally, the writer managed to drag in the name of Miss Bridget McTurk.

"That blessed Bridget!" thought her brother. "She's got hold of this Western Ocean game, and she thinks it dangerous, and she's trying to head me off. I've stood her interference long enough, and I'm hanged if I don't stop it here and now." With which he called, and found—largely to his relief—that whatever her petition had been about, it at any rate had nothing to do with the scheme on hand. Upon which he made his way to the house of Mr. Israel McMechie, with a mind very pleasantly unloaded of that particular care.

Mr. McMechie kept his tall visitor waiting, and when at last he did arrive in the room he showed a certain strain of manner that threatened to change into petulant hostility on short notice.

In private life, and at the social board, Mr. McMechie divorced himself as much as possible from the ancestral Moses, and adopted that very broad Lowland accent which can be found at its richest between the latitudes of Carlisle and Paisley. The fleshy, predatory

nose and the black and yellow eye remained, of course, always with him; but on these occasions he strongly repressed the waving palm and such other Oriental habits as were his by heredity, and posed as the Scot of ancient lineage, resident within the United States through a natural taste for travel.

But to-day he made no disguise of any of his Semitic tendencies. He even expostulated with both palms before he began to speak.

"Oh, I see you're mad," admitted Commander McTurk; "and I know what it's about. I just had to tell Cameron, your yacht's master, the plain truth, and there's an end to it. Captain Cameron had got his suspicions; he was brimming with them; and, as he was not an idiot, I don't see how he could have been loaded with much else."

"But you promised me there should be abtholutely nothing of the kind."

"Well, it was no fault of mine. It was that four-inch Krupp rifle that gave the hint."

"Why wath it opened? You promithed me you would not touch the cathe till you were thafely out at thea."

"I didn't touch it, McMechie, and don't you use that tone to me. It's some of your own men who were at fault, and if you're mad about the bungle, I can tell you I'm madder. You've gone into the game for a joke, for a sensation. For me, well, my professional future depends on it, to say the least; and, incidentally, of course, my neck as well."

Mr. McMechie was the successful head of half a dozen businesses, and many were the unfortunate Gentiles who had cursed his hectoring manner; but he was a shrewd enough judge of men to know to a sentence how far he could go with anybody; and he judged that Commander McTurk was an officer who would use the toe of his boot upon him if sufficiently provoked. So the tone was changed.

"My boy; my dear boy, don't get mad with me, your betht friend. It was your thafety I wath thinking about, not my convenienth. My boy, do you think I thould ever worry about my own convenienth when your welfare wath contherned?"

Commander McTurk did think so, certainly, but he accepted the olive branch.

"The cathe looked like a grand piano; I thaw it mythelf."

"Oh, it looked like a piano crate right enough; though, as a matter of taste, I think your men overdid the number of stencils they put on—'fragile,' you know; 'pianofabrik,' 'this side up,' and so on. But that's not the point. Cameron would have signed for 'contents as stated on bill of lading' if he'd been given an ordinary chance. But the crane man lifted her with a rotten sling, and the rope gave just as the case came down on the deck fenders. Just one corner was splintered off, and Captain Cameron clapped his eye to the hole. Natural he should, I guess. And then he had the sense to stuff a wad of newspaper into the gap, and stow the case below with the broken corner down hill, so that no others of the crew tumbled to the tune that piano could play."

"Still, there's Cameron in the know; and he's a Scot. They're a very grathping race, the Scotch."

Commander McTurk's red face twitched slightly, and some score or so of its thousand tiny wrinkles deepened. But he refrained from saying the obvious. He merely remarked that Captain Cameron wanted an explanation of that four-inch cannon—and got one.

Mr. McMechie waved with agitation. "My boy, you have put both our neckth in a noothe. Cameron can hang us any moment he liketh. I hate to be in any man'th power. It ith tho costly."

"I don't see you need be rattled. You've been in other people's power before and not been hurt. You've been in my power, for instance."

Mr. McMechie answered on the spur of the moment, and he accentuated his reply with a backward palm-thrust of contempt. "Oh, you! You are a mere thimpleton. You don't know how to blackmail. I mean," he corrected, biting at the slip—"I mean, you are a United States naval officer and a man

of honor, and that's quite another thing. Oh, I quite rely on you, my boy. I never feel any uneathineth about you."

"Yes," rasped Commander McTurk, "I see how you look at the thing. It must be a relief to you, McMechie, to come across a gentleman every now and again in your business dealings. Takes off from the general strain, I mean. However, I don't think you need fear Captain Cameron. Whatever else that man may be, he's a sportsman. Besides, there should be no further leakage. We'll pull out into the river to-night, and will have dropped the land by to-morrow's dawn. I came here really to fix up final arrangements with you. By Glory, McMechie, every officer of our navy would envy me if he knew what's on ahead!"

Now, in the Bahama group there are three hundred and sixty-five islands, besides reefs and sand banks, and, though all of these are neatly entered upon the chart, most of them ceased to be visited with any regularity when the wrecking business was spoiled by steam shipping taking the place of sail in the Gulf Stream. It was in a harbor of one of these uninhabited islets that the fifteen-hundred-ton, twin-screw, turbine-engined, steam yacht *Lufkihumma* came to a quiet anchor, while her people changed her into the semblance of a torpedo gunboat.

Except for the four-inch Krupp rifle —a very ancient piece which wore an early pattern in breach blocks, and had all its rifling eaten away with rust—all her armament was sham. But there was no doubt about its impressiveness. Commander McTurk was an artist as well as a seaman, and he saw to it that the yacht's disguise should be amazingly complete. She showed three funnels instead of her former one, and the two new arrivals could, upon necessity, emit genuine smoke. She had a military top cuddling round each of her two masts, each with a short military signaling yard crossed above it. The genuine gun was mounted forward in a barbette that no one could tell from steel; and the wooden Quaker gun that matched it on the after deck looked, from a hundred fathoms distance, every bit as dangerous.

Four Maxims rammed their water jackets through the armor of the tops, and from behind adder-headed shields five twelve-pounders grinned from each of the gunboat's sides; and, though properly these should have been below the water line, a couple of vicious-looking torpedo tubes sprawled in full view upon her decks. Then, with brushes of green-gray, all bright work was eclipsed, and the whole of the vessel and all that she carried to public view was reduced to one inconspicuous, serviceable, fighting tint.

Now, it must not be at all understood that this work went on peacefully and without hitch. Yachtsmen are supposed to be the pick of all seafarers in neatness, obedience and sailing skill; and the crew of the steam yacht *Lufkihumma* had all these qualities and many others. The yacht was chartered "for a three weeks' cruise" by a gentleman they had never heard of, and they were quite prepared to give him diligent service, and to put up with any peculiarities he might wear, in return for their regular wage, and a possible *douceur* at the end of the trip.

They bunkered, and took on board the usual stores; they received and stowed a number of crates and packing cases without showing the smallest curiosity about their contents; and they put to sea without emotion and in the ordinary way. When they ran into the harbor of a desolate island which seemed chiefly noteworthy as containing a derelict plantation of bastard sisal hemp, still they remained unmoved and uninterested. The destinations of yacht charterers are usually beyond the comprehensions of their deckhands and engine-room staff.

But when the tall gentleman with the red face, who had been painting weird seascapes during the passage, put off his suit of tweeds and came on deck in the precise uniform of a commander, United States Navy, with telescope under arm in place of the binoculars he had been using before, why, then they woke up with the idea that

here at last was something new. Cameron, their own skipper, alone of all the yacht's company, seemed to be in the know, for when this new starched person curtly ordered "Call aft the crew," Captain Cameron saluted briskly and gave the formal "Ay, ay, sir," which is required by a superior. The men obeyed promptly, and with considerable wonder.

"Men," said Commander McTurk, "you will have seen the agitation that has been going on ashore about the need for strengthening the United States Navy, especially in commerce-destroying cruisers."

They evidently had not.

"In the papers, I mean."

No, they had not read the papers; at any rate, those parts of the papers. The merchant seaman or the yachtsman reads the murders, and occasionally the agricultural news. He would as soon think of reading Latin grammar as of tackling naval topics.

"Well, I can see you haven't heard of it, so I am here to tell you. Our navy needs cruisers which could turn a hand to commerce destroying if war comes, and the government won't buy them till there's a scare. So that's why we're here—to provide the scare. We shall guy the yacht out as a gunboat with canvas funnels and canvas fittings and Quaker guns, and proceed, for the space of one week, to hold up all shipping that tries to cross the Western Ocean."

"Oh, whiskers," murmured a voice; "what a pile of loot!" And from half a dozen men an uneasy laugh went up. The rest stared at one another in awkward silence.

"Of course," said Commander McTurk, "we are not going pirating or anything near it. This is merely a political move, as I tell you. But I'm not denying there's a certain small amount of risk attached to it, as some loose-lipped idiot may talk when he gets ashore and cause us to be stared at more than's pleasant. Well, anyone that does not wish to volunteer can step ashore here on this island and improve his mind by growing sisal hemp. For those that care to report for duty there's double pay, reckoned as from and to the seaboard of the United States."

"Beg pardon, sir," said one man; "will food and water be left for anyone that's marooned?"

"Certainly—with limitations."

"And will the pay run on, sir?"

"The month's pay you signed on for, my lad."

"And will the ship call back for them that's marooned after she's through with her cruise?"

"Why, that I couldn't guarantee. Do you want to study up how to grow sisal hemp?"

"Me, sir? Oh, Lord, no! Nothing in my line. Besides, I wouldn't miss the other racket, not if we have to swing for it. My name's Kidd, sir, and I think I must have had a great-grandfather who was in the profession before me. No, sir, I've always hoped for a chance like this. I only talked just to point out to any of these ducks that seem a bit doubtful, sir, that they'd best chip in, or they'll have no chance of ever seeing sweet home again."

Commander McTurk frowned. There was a certain buccaneering freedom in the man's speech that as a naval officer he strongly resented. But still he made an effort, and swallowed his pride. After all, the expedition was a trifle too unorthodox to run on strictly naval lines.

"I take it, then," he rasped out, "you all understand what is proposed. Now, before I go any further, are there any objectors? If there are, let them stand out."

Now, it is quite a sure thing that most of the crew, in spite of the double wages offered, were by no means in love with the scheme; but where one man volunteers, it is always a very unpleasant matter for another to hold back; and, besides, there was the alternative of a residence of doubtful length upon the island. The word "marooned" had been used. The operation of marooning is supposed to be obsolete in this year of grace, except among the light-hearted curdlings of a boy's book. But,

somehow, just then, the bald mention of the word carried its thrill.

They cast their eyes upon the isle, these doubters, and saw there desolation, dished up under a glare of sun. The ruined sisal plants might have stood for inhospitality typified in vegetation. The old white coral buildings ached with ruin.

Then, too, there was Commander McTurk to be reckoned with. The affable gentleman with the box of color tubes and the palette knife and the easel, who had made such extraordinary presentments of sky and sea on the voyage out, had vanished. There was nothing affable about this tall, precise naval officer; the man radiated authority; and he carried with him, too, a certain air of danger to those who might presume to thwart him that was very daunting. He had nothing of the fighting Yankee merchant officer about him; they were used to that breed, and so could judge with certainty. This one was dandified in clothing, and carried a little one-barreled telescope tucked under his armpit and his hands were habitually clasped behind his back. They could almost be sure even that he had no such thing as a revolver about his person. He was something fresh and new to them; and, perhaps, for that reason, among the others, they were all frankly afraid of him. No, when it came to the point, there were no members of that crew who failed to volunteer.

"Well and good, then," said Commander McTurk. "Mr. Cameron, please turn-to and get the Quaker outfit rigged, according to the schedule I supplied you with."

Paint and the sea are wonderful softeners of the crudities of canvas and wood, and at a hundred and fifty yards distance no one even with glasses could have made out that the steam yacht *Lufkihumma's* defenses and armament were of anything but steel. And, by the way, her name, of course, had disappeared on bow, elliptical stern, boats, steam launch, and even on the carbide lifebuoy by the poop staff. Instead, there flared a great number 17. Vaguely that new name seemed to hint that at any rate there were sixteen others in the fleet of which this mysterious war vessel formed a unit.

Only one touch of sentiment crept into the whole outfitting, and that was when the ensign was hoisted—a great splash of red, with broad white bars—under which they were to do their work. Commander McTurk called aft his whole crew. "Men," he said, "I swore never to fight under any flag but Old Glory, and, well, we are not going to fight. I never thought even to sail under another flag, but I'm going to do it now just because I know that although we are working for the good of the United States, diplomacy commands that we keep our commission hidden. That's all. Pipe down."

In the forecastle, over his tea, the sailor Kidd grinned round at his messmates. "Did you twig the old man's tomato face when we hoisted that new rag? It went as near white as I guess it could get. I almost looked to see him shed the hero's tear when he sobbed out that about Old Glory. I believe he was very nearly mad enough to have thrown down his cap on deck and danced on it."

"'Twouldn't be real healthy to tell him that," commented another. "There's a bit too much of the I-can-call-down-lightning-by-pressing-a-button kind of look about the pirate king to encourage a humorist."

"Thing that strikes me as funny is that he thinks we're going to go pirating and not touch any loot. Well, I reckon I'm like the original Captain Kidd when it comes to loot. Once we board one of these Western Ocean liners, if I don't come back to the ship with a pocketful of diamond rings and scarf-pins, you may call me a Dutchman."

One final preparation they made at that Bahama islet before they sailed. Spars and wire ropes were taken ashore, and presently from the crest of the isle a great mast uprose, guyed against every wind of heaven, and festooned with mysterious wires. Two of the ruined buildings of the sisal farmer were roofed with corrugated plates, and presently from one of them there came the

hacking cough and the evil breath of an oil engine, and with these was mingled the satisfied purr of a complacent dynamo.

In the next room a couple of electricians clamped down a great bench full of instruments, and when at last one of them pouched his square-nosed pliers and said: "Thank Jemima, that's through!" the other replied: "Well, I'll try and call up the United States."

He threw over a switch, and a great blue-white flare blazed out with a noise like the splash of a leaden bullet on stone—"I bet that's making somebody's mirror rotate," said the operator, and lit a cigarette. And then, presently: "Got 'im. Now, gents, for the latest news from the course."

The mail steamship *Cryptic* emitted such a buzz of sound that from a quarter of a mile away one was forcibly reminded of an upturned beehive. Counting crew and passengers, she was carrying fourteen hundred and seventy-three souls when she left Queenstown, and she had engaged to bring these, without halt or delay, to a New York pier. Against all of the five thousand and one dangers of the Western Ocean she was armed as well as science and experience could protect her. But here had arrived the unexpected.

A war ship, an unmistakable war ship, had steamed up from the southward, had fired a blank gun, and had flown a string of signal flags which read: "Heave-to, or take the consequences."

As it happened, Captain Salemson, of the *Cryptic,* was himself at that moment on the upper bridge. He looked at the war ship's ensign, which stood out flat as a board behind her. "Red with white bars? Who the pit are you to ask me to heave-to? Hey, you there, Mr. Wilkins, keep your hand off that telegraph."

Thirty seconds later, with the signal still flying, the war ship fired her bow gun again, and this time a steel hint hopped and skipped through the wave crests. There was a stern big gun to match the one forward, and that was also trained on the *Cryptic,* as were also five broadside guns behind slanting shields, as well as two torpedo tubes and some Maxims. It crossed Captain Salemson's mind that there were probably also underwater torpedo tubes as well, and that he was personally responsible at that particular moment for fourteen hundred and seventy-three lives.

"Stop her, Mr. Wilkins—both engines," said the captain to his subordinate at the telegraph, and added some further remarks that those passengers who knew him in the dining saloon would never have guessed were within his compass.

"Wireless message, sir," reported an officer, and Captain Salemson took the paper.

From Commander Gunboat 17. Stop (it read). *Cease all wireless communications except with me. Stop. Shall torpedo you if you attempt speak anyone else. Message ends.*

"Hell!" said Captain Salemson, quietly. "Here, send this," he said, and wrote:

Kindly state who you are.

Down in a darkened cabin below the message spirted out in great blue lightning flashes to the accompaniment of terrifying smacks, and in due time the reply came back through the ether:

From Commander Gunboat 17. Stop. I am your superior in force. Stop. Get under weigh at once on course south five degrees east or take consequences. Message ends.

Till that moment of his life, Captain Salemson had never quite realized how lonely a man is the master of a great Atlantic liner. At table he is affable with passengers; on duty he is courteous with his officers; ashore he has his owners to rely upon; but at sea the whole responsibility for the great steamboat and all that is within her is his, and his alone.

"By Gath, that's a pirate!" mused Captain Salemson. "No less. This is the twentieth century, and that's a pirate who could sink me in two minutes and a half, and I couldn't so much as chip his paint. My God! And an hour ago the purser was congratulating me on a full passenger list and a heavy cargo!"

In despair he sent another message:

What are your terms?

Back came the stern reply:

From Commander Gunboat 17. Stop. Obey instructions immediately or take consequences. Message ends.

Captain Salemson glared through his binoculars. Where this vessel had come from there was nothing to show. She was of a class slightly different from any he had seen before; but, then, there is an infinite variety in war ships; and, anyway, there was not the smallest doubt about this being a ship of war. Her naked defenses, her business-like color which blended so easily into the seascape, her wicked armament trained remorselessly on his boilers—all spoke to him eloquently of her power of offense, and of the *Cryptic's* utter helplessness.

A passenger, an English member of parliament, who knew himself to be a most important man, brushed aside all underlings who would have stopped him, and made his way to the upper bridge. "Captain," he said, "the passengers would like to know——"

But he got no further. On him Salemson turned like a tortured lion. "Get off my bridge. D'ye hear me? Get off my bridge and go to your room. Quartermaster, take this man down to his room, and if he gives trouble, iron him. Mr. Wilkins, half speed ahead, both engines. The course is south five degrees west. By Gath! I'm going to keep discipline among my passengers if I have to pull a gun on some of them!"

Captain Salemson had made a variation of ten degrees in the course which was ordered him. He wished to see his persecutor at closer quarters. At a distance none of her people were in sight. Her commanding officer was probably in the conning tower, her gun crews behind their defenses. If only he could see a face or two to recollect. If only he could get some hint of nationality——

"Wireless message, sir."

Captain Salemson took the paper and swore as he read his order:

From Commander Gunboat 17. Stop. Get on to your course immediately. Message ends.

Captain Salemson shifted his helm and steamed away into the south, receiving as he went further instructions for his future guidance. He was to manufacture a flag, red with white bars, and hoist this at the fore if he met with any of Number 17's consorts, to show that he had been already dealt with. He was to report each half hour the code word "Commerce," to show that he was accurately carrying out instructions, and failing this, he would be very promptly overhauled and sunk.

One small piece of grim consolation did the captain of the *Cryptic* have as he was steaming savagely out of sight. Hurrying from west to east, there came the *Aquaria,* of the great rival British line. Her also he saw held up even as he had been, and vividly could he picture the mortification of his old Conway mate, her skipper.

"Mr. Wilkins," he said, "one blessing: ours isn't the only line in the soup, that's plain. I don't know how big his appetite is, but if that scathing pirate stays where he is till nightfall, he should snap up the Dutchman as well, and then none of the companies can crow."

Commander McTurk held up the *Fürst Moltke* about nine o'clock that night, and, despite many threats of imperial mailed fists and telegrams, sent her also remorselessly at right angles to her proper course, in a direction five degrees east of south. She carried instructions to repeat the code word "Fist" at intervals of thirty minutes, so as not to interfere with the other code words "Commerce" and "Canada" which every half hour came out of the ether ahead of her.

With these great liners Commander McTurk had felt no nervousness. He knew that their captains would be far too much concerned about their passengers to take any of the chances opened up by resistance. With cargo boats he could not be so certain. "You see," he pointed out to Cameron, "our whole racket's three parts bluff and one part

water, and if a man's only got himself and a well-insured steamboat and a handful of old sailors to consider, it's quite possible he'd conclude to see our hand. I guess I would, under the circumstances. And you know it won't do to shoot in earnest if they do refuse to stop."

"No," said Cameron. "That's the blame exasperation of it. They're half mutinous forrard, now they find that they're pirates, as they say, and don't carry a full pirate's ticket. That sea lawyer, Kidd, wants them to seize the ship, I believe, and go in for the real thing."

Next afternoon they had their example of a resister. A rust-streaked tramp of some thousand tons climbed up over their horizon, and was duly hailed and bidden heave-to. A watch of three hands were engaged in painting her boats. On the upper bridge a ragged sailorman sawed at the wheel, and a spruce little officer with a red torpedo beard sat on an aërated water box at the bridge end, smoking at a long cigar and playing an accordion. Of the summons to stop he took no notice whatever.

Followed the usual shot, and the gunboat raced down to a hundred yards distance and brought the tramp under her broadside battery. A voice through a megaphone repeated the summons to surrender, and offered sinking as an alternative.

The fierce little officer put down his instrument, spoke sharply down his engine-room voice tube and conferred with his steersman. The tramp's pace slackened, and her head fell gradually off, sawing over the swells till it began to point toward the gunboat.

"Who the pit are you, anyway?" inquired the red-bearded officer.

"You will hear in due time. In the meanwhile you are to consider yourself captured."

"Oh! am I? What's that pink tablecloth you've got hung out there with the white gate on it? Come out of those cardboard boxes and show yourselves. I want to see what kind of skunks you can be that think you're bosses of the Western Ocean. By James, don't you try to dictate to me!" He seized the telegraph handle and jammed it down again with a vicious whirr to "full speed ahead."

The engineer on watch had had his warning through the voice tube, and promptly opened his throttle to the fullest. The little officer snapped an order at his wheelsman, which apparently was not carried out with that quickness he would have liked, for he sent him trundling with a sharp clip under the jaw, took the wheel himself and ground it over hard-a-starboard as far as it would go. The old rust-streaked tramp came round like a yacht, and her bow headed straight for the gunboat's side. Here, at any rate, was one skipper who was not afraid to ram.

"Good man," said McTurk, and ordered one of his own engines to go astern while the other turned ahead. His vessel twisted like an eel, escaped the collision and raced ahead, and for a mile the tramp hung doggedly after her, and then went back to her course. All through the little episode the three hands of the watch had continued to paint at her boats, as though little occurrences such as these were too common to give interest.

"By Glory!" said Commander McTurk, "I'd give two dollars and a half to have that small, red-bearded man under me for the next tough job I'm set to!"

Captain Cameron laughed. "You'd find him a dear bargain, sir, even at that price. Either you'd have to kill him before you'd been together a week, or he'd kill you. He can only be one thing, and that's skipper."

"Oh! you know him, then?"

"I should think I do. Kettle's his name. Look, he shot off that ear lobe for me. We were—— Well, tell you that later. Look, sir, there's the Havre boat dead astern. She'll have her six hundred passengers. She'll be our weight."

For a whole week Commander McTurk held up traffic on the Western Ocean and proved conclusively to the United States the value of fast cruisers

in war time as commerce destroyers—and incidentally, of course, proved exactly the same axiom to every other power on the globe which owned a ship and a fathom of seaboard.

At the end of that week an oil engine woke into sudden noise and odor among certain bastard sisal plants on a Bahama islet, and McTurk saw the waving palms of Mr. Israel McMechie projected out to him across the hills and dales of ocean.

France had sent a cruiser out to the scene of the outrage; the German Emperor ordered one squadron of battleships to be commissioned forthwith, and another squadron to be built; the United States sent what cruisers could be spared. Great Britain alone had sent no ships: she happened, as usual, to have part of her Atlantic squadron cruising about somewhere or other near the spot where it was wanted. Mr. McMechie seemed to have especial dread of the policy of Great Britain.

The *Cryptic*, the *Fürst Moltke*, the *Aquaria* and the other early captures had all made their way into port, and, somehow, it had leaked out that the whole thing was in some way or other a rather elaborate hoax with a trifle of political flavoring thrown in. But that did not make some people any the more amiable. The shipping companies, in particular, bawled for redress and vengeance. They had been forced into an undue expenditure of coal, provisions, interest and wages, and the extra moneys they had earned from the liquor bills they quite forgot to mention. They cried loudly about the injury done to their passengers—which was hardly fair, seeing that the said passengers were provided with at least one topic which would not wear out for a lifetime. And they talked about the unprotected state of the great trade routes in case of sudden forays, which, of course, has always been common news to everybody.

So, with the exception of Germany, who wanted to cry a three months' halt till her ships should be ready, the great powers interested quartered the seas with remarkable industry, and Commander McTurk got his warning only just in time.

Of course, the thing to be done was to shake the wizard's wand, and change back the gunboat with its bristle of armament, and its flaring "17" into the trim *Lufkihumma*, with as little delay as might be. But here Western Ocean weather stepped in most unkindly. For three days it blew a solid gale, and the yacht, fine seaboat though she was, was hard put to it to keep afloat. Furthermore, her coal was running extremely short.

Unship the heavy Krupp gun on the foredeck they dare not in that rage of sea, lest it should take charge and stove in the decks; and perched up high, as it was, it made her roll till they thought the masts would go overboard. They rid themselves piecemeal of the armored tops, the two signal yards, the Maxims, the Quaker broadside guns and their shields; and once the rounded wood and canvas sides of the conning tower were cut adrift there stood firmly in middeck, as formerly, a very comfortable chart house. But the stern big gun still poked a lengthy wooden chase out of its armored hood, and the tackle of the wireless telegraphy sang between the mast trucks.

Now, on yachts, a wireless telegraphic installation is unusual, and on the other hand it would be widely known that Gunboat 17—which was about the same size as the *Lufkihumma*—had one. But Commander McTurk decided to keep in wireless telegraphic touch with his base till the last suspicious touch was wiped away, and this could not be while the weather lasted. For, most damning of all touches, they carried along the paint with them; the paint which could not be repainted to an honest color till something approaching a flat calm, or a harbor gave a chance to rig stages over the sides.

It was at this point, while the gale was still making hard Western Ocean weather that H. B. M. S. *Panther* blew into sight; promptly saw Number 17; and bore down upon her under close-reefed topsails and steam.

The signal "Heave-to: I want to

speak to you," blew out from her lee rigging, and she called noisy attention to it with a blank cartridge.

The other vessel, which had been riding head to sea, acknowledged the summons by rounding away before the gale, steaming into the seas at the top of her pace and firing up another boiler on her few remaining tons of coal. Commander McTurk bit his thumbs in fury at fate. Being disgraced in the United States he could stand; he had been working for the United States' good. Being swamped or sunk at sea—well, that was a sailor's legitimate end. But being caught by the lubberly old-fashioned *Panther,* and being patronized—as he was sure he would be—as a failure by her officers, was more than he could stomach under any considerations. And so he was prepared to do rather more than possible in making an escape.

The gale, as has been said, was heavy for the yacht, but, to all appearance, it was just the *Panther's* weather. Her plump bows lifted her over the seas like a duck, and her canvas steadied her so that she rode like a swing.

She was an ancient corvette, three-masted, bark-rigged, with ten knots of auxiliary steam, and had one degree more fighting value than a well-found Chinese junk. But she had a fine assortment of obsolete muzzle-loading guns, and after she had hoisted her second signal of "Heave-to or take the consequences," she started hurling round shot, and making remarkably good practice, considering the weather.

Commander McTurk's fighting blood got on the boil, and if the after gun instead of that on the foredeck had been the Quaker, it is probable that the Western Ocean would have seen, that afternoon, a very deadly duel. But, luckily, the real gun was so mounted that it would only fire a few points on either bow, and, although McTurk and Kidd —both separately—cursed the after-deck weapon with every hard word they knew, it was a stolid, wooden thing, and did not mind. So the windy afternoon wore on, while both vessels just held their places, and then night fell.

With darkness Cameron brought word about the coal.

"I've got my memory on it," said Commander McTurk, and half an hour later put up his helm, and bore away, with the sea abeam at right angles to his former course. The *Panther,* with her crew at quarters, blew on before the wind, and so passes out of this tale. The *Panther* possessed nothing so new as a searchlight, and on the morrow, her crew made lurid comment on this fact.

It was a fortnight after this that the steam yacht *Lufkihumma,* out of coal, but trim and debonair as shining brass and polished teak could make her, worked in under sail to Castle Harbor, in the Bermudas, for bunkers and mail. She had been having a most enjoyable cruise in some vague seas round the Bahamas or the West Indies. Her people's accounts varied—but, then, yachtsmen's navigation is notoriously weak, so no one in St. George's paid much heed to discrepancies. She had not been troubled by the Western Ocean pirate because she was too small, or too far south, or, probably, because there was no pirate. Whose leg was being pulled? Oh! the pirate was genuine, was he? Well, certainly the *Lufkihumma* had not been seized.

It was Commander John Kelly McTurk, U. S. N., who did the talking, and no one ever took him very seriously. A fellow officer in the same service, who was getting rid of a Philippine malaria in the St. George Hotel, laughingly guaranteed this. And if Commander McTurk was a trifle absent-minded in some of his answers, and openly said it was because he was so deadly anxious to get his mail, the probable reason was—as the other officer explained, with a wink—he was, as usual, after some girl or other, and wanted to see if the coast was clear of the troublesome one, three back, who had been his best girl eighteen months ago. His fellow officer discoursed most wittily in the hotel veranda on McTurk's weakness in this direction, and the naval officers from the British ships on the station told lies to prove that

they had more curious men in their own service.

There was a remarkable absence of news from McMechie. Mr. McMechie, with racial caution, was singularly anxious not to commit himself, and so, as the simplest ways of doing this, had refrained from writing a solitary line. There was, however, a long and chatty letter from Miss Bridget McTurk, which, unfortunately, has only reached me in a very expurgated form.

The first three pages, for a wager, referred to some unfortunate love affair. Anyway, they are missing. I quote from the top of page four:

. . . . So you may thank me for clearing you out of that entanglement, at any rate. This seems all our news that concerns you, and so I sign myself as usual,

Your affec. sister,

BRIDGET MCTURK.

P. S.—Your Scotch friend, Mr. I. McMechie—by the way, he comes from Judea, and not even Paisley—certainly not Glasgow—Mr. McMechie has, they say, made a million on Wall Street over the late scare. He had the pluck to know that the whole thing was ridiculous, and sold when stocks flopped—as they did, let me tell you, J. K.—and then bought in again when they touched the floor. Result, one million dollars. So much for a Hebrew's faith in U. S.

P. S. No. 2.—More about McMechie. He has bought a shipyard and has secured the orders that the navy board have given out for three new cruisers, which they ordered owing to the late scare. He seems a useful man for you to know. Am writing to him this mail to bring your name before him.

P. S.—Many thanks for that bottle of patent medicine which you say you saw favorably mentioned in an advertisement. I have found it most warming. Please send another. Larger if they make them.

I open again to say that idiot of a woman, Sallie Hamilton, has just called. She has got some idea in her head that you were somehow or other mixed up in this pirate business. I showed her the above-mentioned bottle, with the wrapper, pointing out it was mailed by you from New York when the pirate was doing brisk business in mid-Atlantic. That about cooked her goose. I don't really know, J. K., how you could have dangled after such a silly woman as Sallie. But, my, she did get mad when I said so!

Commander McTurk's red face, with its thousand tiny wrinkles, twitched as he read. Bridget was really too exasperating at times. But Bridget often let solid information leak out in her postscripts.

"Now, I suppose," said Commander McTurk to himself, "that McMechie thinks he's made a cat's-paw of me, but to my idea the boot's on the other foot. The States wanted those cruisers—I've seen to it that we've got 'em. The means don't matter."

FROM A PIN-PRICK

THE importance of little things gains further illustration from a detail connected with the battle of the Nile, one of Lord Nelson's most famous victories.

The great admiral was at a loss as to the position of the French navy, when a pin-prick gave him the clew which led to his triumph.

Sir John Acton, the British commander-in-chief at Naples, was in his wife's room when her French maid was putting the finishing touches to her ladyship's dress.

The maid accidentally pricked her mistress with a pin. She apologized, saying some one had at that moment handed her a letter from her brother, a French sailor, from whom she had not heard for some time, and its receipt had startled her.

Sir John Acton, foreseeing possibilities, offered to read the letter while the maid continued her duties.

The moment he had read it he dashed off to find Nelson. The letter gave all the information as to the whereabouts and intentions of the French. Upon this Nelson acted, and the battle of the Nile resulted from that pin-prick.

THE MAN WHO DID NOT COMMIT SUICIDE

By Edward Marshall

Author of "The Story of the Rough Riders," "Lizette," Etc.

Mr. Marshall will be remembered as the war correspondent of a well known New York newspaper, who was almost fatally wounded during the skirmish with the Spaniards at Las Guasimas. Since then he has taken up fiction writing with considerable success. The present story has to do with Wall Street, and describes how a gang of financial buccaneers caught a Tartar

(*A Complete Story*)

DURING the brief Wall Street day Henry Huff worked with an energy which kept him so busied by each momentary affair that, until the gong had rung and the business of the day was over, he had not really sensed the disaster which undoubtedly lay in waiting for him in the next two days. But the realization, when it came, came with a rush, and, as it came, while he sat in his silent office, he crossed his arms upon his desk and dropped his head until it rested on them.

He did not accept the certainty of complete defeat with the smiling face of a philosopher. He regarded it unwillingly, and with as black a frown as his ordinarily good-natured face could conjure up. Approaching ruin is, in any circumstances, a grewsome thing to see before one, and when it is plainly the work of organized and intentional attack, as was that which threatened him, it is even less a pleasant prospect.

There was no doubt, he concluded after reflection, that he was being "jockeyed." And as he considered this, despair fled before resentment, and he began to wonder if he was surely too far down to make resistance useless. His temperament helped him, for it made him say to himself:

"No man is really down and out until he's boxed up with a silver plate upon the packing case."

About the time that this helpful thought had come to him he lifted his face away from the rough cloth of his sleeves and leaned back in his chair, with an effort to put forebodings away from him and plan a fight. He stopped grieving and became angry. This was a good sign.

Perhaps the most annoying detail of the situation was that he could not decide with certainty upon the identity of his assailants. Blows may be struck mysteriously in Wall Street battles. He was convinced that he was being hammered by a well-organized opposition, but he could not locate it. The selling orders had appeared to come from all quarters at one time, and it was not probable that the Street in general realized that they were being aimed especially at him. But he realized it, and knew that before he could do anything of importance in the way of real resistance, he must learn just who it was who stood secretly behind the blows.

He pulled a pad of paper toward him and prepared to make a list of possibilities, but was interrupted in this plan by

the ringing of the telephone bell in the outer office. As all his clerks had been gone for more than half an hour, he rose and went to the instrument.

As soon as he had put the receiver to his ear, he knew that his wife was at the other end of the wire, and the thought of her gave him a sharp pang. It would be she who would suffer most as a result of the work which he felt sure had been prepared for execution during the next two days.

"Hello, Billy," came the message.

"Hello, dear," he answered.

"Aren't you ever coming home?" she asked.

"I've been detained a little," he replied; "but I'll be there for dinner."

And, after a few words more, he rang off and returned to his desk.

Again he was dulled by depression. He decided that he would *not* dine at home. Later he would call up his wife and tell her that business made it impossible.

This had often occurred, and would neither surprise nor annoy her. She was not of those wives who demand that their husbands shall accomplish the impossible, or who fail to realize that emergencies arise in business life which make violations of the daily routine unavoidable.

They had been married for a little more than a year, and he was extremely fond of her. If he dined at home he would probably blurt out what impended, or, if he managed to hold his tongue, she would see signs of trouble in his manner and be worried. But if he went home late and left early in the morning, all revelations could be postponed until another day had made matters clearer.

He wondered how she would accept vicissitude if it came. He did not doubt that she would meet it gracefully, and even uncomplainingly, but he was curious as to details.

She had never known misfortune of the money sort. It would surely be a kindness to keep her in ignorance of it all until the disaster had actually arrived, or until, by some stroke of wit or fortune at the moment inconceivable to him, he had avoided it. If that happened, she need never know. Surely it was the part of kindness to fend the shock away from her until it became inevitable.

He reflected with satisfaction that she need not suffer from poverty, no matter what happened to him, for she had money of her own. And he was glad, as he thought about this, to remember the firmness with which he had refused to let her put her fortune into his hands for management, when, by the terms of the will, old Peter Miller's term as guardian had expired. Huff had never touched a cent of it, and would never touch a cent of it.

Without having any particular reason for believing it, he had always thought that old Peter Miller felt small confidence in him. This feeling had doubtless had its origin in "Uncle Peter's"—everybody in the Street called him "Uncle Peter" with a sarcastic counterfeit of affection—cross-examination of him at the time when he had asked for his ward's hand. The consent had come heartily enough at the end, but the bruises which Huff's pride had received under the old man's minute questioning had left, as it were, permanent black-and-blue spots on his self-esteem.

Since the marriage "Uncle Peter" had told him one day that he would be ready at any time to surrender the trust, but Huff had noted, or imagined that he had noted, a tone of reluctance in his voice, and had, with great dignity, replied that so far as he was concerned he preferred to let matters stand as they were. "Uncle Peter's" ready assent had given his pride an additional contusion.

When, later, Mrs. Huff had, without argument, agreed to the arrangement—he remembered that she had been eating chocolate creams at the time—he had resented that, too; but had charged it to "Uncle Peter's" account and not to hers. But there was satisfaction in this situation now.

Huff knew that without cheating his creditors he could reserve enough of his own money, in case of failure, to carry the home along for a month; and by that time arrangements could have

been made for his wife to go away for a time. He would have to let her use her own money for that, because if he insisted that she should confine her expenditures to what he could give her she would be unable to live as well as she had always lived. But none of it should touch his fingers, and during her absence he would make his fight and try to win again.

Now it was a sign that he was really in an evil state of mind that his thoughts merely said that he would "try" to win again. Heretofore they had always said that he "would" win. And a perfectly simple association of ideas in this train of evil thoughts sent a vicious notion scuttling through his head. It was that if, while she was absent, he should *not* win again, it would be easy to arrange matters so that, returning, she would not find that she was tied irrevocably and forever to a failure. He felt an actual physical twinge as this morbid notion took possession of his ordinarily healthful mind, but he could not put it away from him.

Henry Huff was the last man in the Street whom any sane person would imagine to be capable of committing suicide. He was the last man in the Street whom *he* would have thought, two minutes before, capable of even considering suicide. But there he was, considering it whether he would or no; and as he unwillingly considered it, his naturally logical habit of thought forced him to array the pros and cons in methodical order. Of course, he pondered, if he should win out again, there would be an end to such grim nonsense. But if he did not win out, *would* it be nonsense? He was perfectly certain that he did not wish to fail and go on living.

At about this point in his reflections he heard the telephone again, and when he went to it, found her voice once more coming pleasantly from the other end of the wire.

"Aren't you *ever* coming home?" she asked, good-naturedly, but insistently. "You know that Uncle Peter and his wife are to dine here," she added.

He had forgotten that.

"I'll start uptown at once, dear," said he, in as cheerful a voice as he could manage; and he added what was perfectly true when he told her, after looking at his watch, that it was later than he had supposed.

But he knew that he would need to do some heavy thinking that night, even at his home—a necessity which he could not remember to have met before—and he decided that he would take the tools along to help him. So he hastily made a bundle of the papers on which he had been uselessly scribbling, of the "Directory of Directors"—he might need that in his search for the identity of his enemies—and of a list of his assets and his liabilities.

II.

Huff did not know it, but after he had reached home his wife guessed almost instantly that something had gone wrong with him. She said nothing of it, however, for, in the first place, there was little time before the dinner hour for gossip of any kind, and, in the second place, she did not suspect for a moment that his preoccupation could have been caused by anything very serious.

Peter Miller and his wife arrived promptly. Peter Miller, Huff reflected as the meal progressed, was either a malicious old curmudgeon who liked to watch other insects writhe, or he was singularly stupid in everything but the affairs of Wall Street.

Miller began his unpleasant conversational performances with about the second course.

"Heard they squeezed you jest le-e-e-tle bit to-day," he said.

He was rather proud of talking in the alleged dialect of New England. He realized that it surprised people who merely knew that he was one of the richest men in the country, to hear him when they actually met him, speak like the down East farmer of the magazines and further realized that this made them admire him as one who had triumphed over circumstances. As a matter of fact, he was college bred, and had acquired the dialect with some difficulty.

Huff tried to laugh, for he saw that

his wife was listening. There had been such a shrewd counterfeit of real concern and genuine geniality in the old man's voice that it would have made anyone believe that he would have been sorry to know that Huff had suffered. But it did not deceive Huff.

"It was nothing much," said he.

"'Z that so?" said Miller, in his execrable dialect. "Folks was sayin' that you'd b'en mighty hard hit."

Huff tried to laugh again, for he saw that his wife's listening had become eager.

"It takes more than that to down me!" he said, with such jovial tones that he fooled Miller, and almost fooled Mrs. Huff. Indeed, he thought that he had fooled her.

Miller laughed cacklingly.

"Well, I'm mighty glad to hear that you're all right," he said. "If I'd b'en so placed as to let me, I c'ld a-told you it was a-comin'."

And again, if Huff had not remembered that old cross-examination, he would have believed that Peter Miller had been really concerned about him, and would have helped him if he had asked him to.

But at this point in the conversation the thought came to him that if Miller had known that it was coming, he must also know who were behind it. Through a habit of mind Huff said to himself that he would give a hundred thousand dollars to have that information; and then, with what would have been a satirical laugh if it had passed from his brain to his face, he corrected this thought by acknowledging that for the first time in ten years he did not stand possessed that night of the means of immediately getting hold of anything like a hundred thousand dollars.

"*They* think they've got ye," Miller continued.

Huff could see that his wife's interest was growing, and again he was forced to correct his too lavish brain, for, involuntarily, he had reflected that he would give another hundred thousand dollars if Miller would keep quiet. This recurrent necessity for self-correction was not pleasant. What made things worse was the fear that his face was revealing his distress in one way or another. But he kept his nerve as well as he could, and that was so well that it fooled Miller. But it did not fool Huff's wife.

"Well," said Huff, "they will find out where their error lies before I get all through with them."

He said this jauntily, and he knew that he had said it jauntily.

Miller chuckled again.

"*Told* Phillson to look out for ye," said he.

So *Phillson* was in it! Huff decided that he would hazard a guess. He wondered if, through it, he could not worm out of this old hard-shell some further information. He quickly reflected that if Phillson was in it, Peel was probably. They generally worked together in their wrecking operations. And if Peel was in it, then Smoley was. Smoley was an abominable little man. Huff knew him to be a coward. And if Phillson, and Peel, and Smoley were all in it, then Huff knew about as much as he could wish to know. For, with certain hangers-on, these gentlemen formed a distinct and well-known group. As a matter of fact, he had not suspected this particular crowd of being at the bottom of it all, and he was glad that Miller had let that name slip.

Now he began to see light. It was an infuriating sort of light, for he had never "bucked up against" this particular group before, and they were very big men financially. He did not press Miller for details, for, he shrewdly reflected, any sign that he really wanted them would make the old fellow shut up tighter than a bank vault at midnight with the combination lost. So talk upon the subject ceased for an hour. Indeed, the only further mention of the matter came at the very door as Miller was leaving.

"Want I should say to Phillson that you're feelin' purty peart in spite of his little operation?" Miller asked.

"Yes," said Huff. "You can say that to Phillson, and to Peel, and to Smoley."

There was no doubt that the old operator was really surprised by this

shrewd guess of Huff's. He showed it in a lifting of his bushy eyebrows—which lasted only half a second—and then Mrs. Huff, who worried every night lest her husband would not be in bed by ten minutes after ten, dragged him away. Just as Huff was about to close the door, after having said the final good-nights and having seen Mr. and Mrs. Miller climb into their brougham, a newsboy passed, calling the extra edition of the *Evening Sun*. The extra edition of the *Evening Sun* was, at that time, devoted about equally to fisticuffs, football and finance—a fine trio of exciting and precarious sports. Huff called the boy and bought a paper. His wife was waiting for him in the brightly lighted hallway, but he could not resist the temptation to glance quickly at the newspaper before he turned to her. That quick glance astounded him, for it showed a headline saying:

FAILURES EXPECTED.
Several Firms, Including Henry Huff & Co., Hard Hit To-Day.

III.

After they had gone upstairs to the library Huff thought that his wife lingered, as if loath to say good-night, although he knew that she was tired, but after she had finally gone, he decided that he had imagined vain things.

He believed that he remembered having dropped the paper to the floor at the end of the desk with studied nonchalance when they had entered the room, but when, actually relieved by her departure, he looked there for it, he could not find it.

He realized that in his existing state of mind he might easily make mistakes about small things, and went to the lower hallway to see if he had not left it there. But it was not there.

Then he wondered if his wife might not have carelessly picked it up and taken it into her room with her, and this thought made him catch his breath. If she had seen it, she knew what threatened him. That would spoil his plan of getting her to go away in ignorance of it all and stay away—in ignorance or not, as chance might dictate—until he had made his new fight.

He hurried up the stairs again, and, as he hastened, it seemed to him that he heard the patter of bare or slippered feet in the hallway. But the hall was quite empty when he reached it, and he decided that he had been mistaken. Still, he wished to make sure. If she had seen the paper and he could not save her from the worry, then he ought to know of it at once. If she had not, an inquiry about it would not arouse her curiosity.

He knocked at her door, and when she called to him to enter, he opened it enough so that he could see her in a wrapper before her dresser. She was combing her hair. She did not even turn around.

"Have you seen the *Evening Sun?*" he asked, trying hard to keep signs of anxiety out of his voice.

"You had it in your hand in the library," she answered, apparently with no unusual interest in the matter. "Didn't you lay it down there in the window seat?"

He could not remember having gone near the window seat, but he knew that he might have done so, and so he simply closed her door and went down to the library again. The paper was lying in the window seat. He sat down at the table and began to read it. Presently, while he was learning how desperate his plight was known to be, and, by reading between the lines, finding confirmation of his new suspicions as to its place of origin, his wife called to him from the head of the stairs.

"I am tired," said she. "Good-night, dear."

He answered her with as natural a voice as he could muster, and returned to his seat by the library table. There he sat for a long hour.

Feeling certain that she would not come down again that night, he took up the bundle which he had brought from the office. The "Directory of Directors" was the largest thing in it, and, after making a very complete list of the

names of the men who he now knew were behind the fierce attacks upon him, he placed opposite the names the initials which, in the book, were given as abbreviations of the names of the companies on whose boards they sat.

Having completed this work, he sat for a time, pondering this list. At first he learned little that seemed likely to be of use to him from this study, but presently a curious detail impressed itself upon his mind. The initials showed that every man upon his list was connected with the directorate of some life insurance company. Huff carried a great deal of life insurance, estimated even in these days of tremendous policies.

It made his lip curl with annoyance to realize that the men who were fighting him had received a very considerable amount of his money as premiums on those policies. He reflected that if they won in their fight their victory would be double, for they would not only have bested him in Wall Street, but they would have made it impossible for him to keep up the premiums on his tremendous insurance, and so all that he had paid in would revert to the companies in which they were interested, and thus add to their profits.

His very anger over this situation helped him to get his nerve back. He reflected that ample sleep would help him to think clearly during the following day when clear and quick thought would be necessary if they ever had been; and with admirable self-control he put his worries away from him and began to search his mind for a catchy air which he and his wife had thought clever a night or two before when they had heard a light opera. As, still holding a tight rein over himself, he prepared to go to bed, he still whistled. His wife called to him from the next room:

"Is that you, Billy?"

"Yes," he answered. "Did you think it was a kitten in distress? I beg your pardon."

And he stopped whistling.

Presently his wife called again.

"I like to hear you whistle, Billy," she said.

"Good taste, my dear," said he, lightly.

"Good-night."

"Good-night, my dear."

As soon as he was snug in bed the worry began again, and the last thought that came to him before he went to sleep was that he was glad his wife did not suspect this worry or the cause of it. She was the dearest thing alive, and if the crash came to him he must see to it that she was as little hurt as possible.

IV.

He noticed, with disgust, when he arose in the morning, that his face was pale and that his eyes were dull. At the breakfast table his wife also observed these things, and spoke of them, but he passed the matter off with a joke about the effect of two hours of Uncle Peter upon the human system, and expressed surprise that she did not herself show unfavorable signs. As a matter of fact she was *not* quite up to her usual radiant standard, but he was too gallant to comment on it.

As he journeyed downtown in the Underground, his worry tried to get a hold on him again, but, while he schemed busily, he tried not to scheme anxiously. There is never any merit in that.

The day developed even worse things than he had expected, and when its business was over he again sat alone in his office; this time with the certainty that the gang had him where they wanted to have him, and that they wanted to have him in a very tight place indeed.

His surmise of the previous evening, built on old Peter Miller's unconscious hint, had been confirmed, although Huff acknowledged that he would not have known this, even yet, had it not been for the hint.

Again he pondered over the names in the "Directory of Directors," and again he was impressed by the fact that among the initials standing opposite to them were those of the life insurance companies in which he had his largest policies.

Again he shut his teeth hard when he

reflected that the very men who were downing him to make a Wall Street holiday were those to whom he had been passing in great premiums for their shares to fatten on. It was exasperating.

They had really accomplished, that day, all that they had started out to do. He might be able to hold up for a few hours after the opening on the morrow, but noon would have seen his downfall. It is not pleasant to contemplate the writhing of anyone in agony, so I shall not say what passed there in the silent offices. It was very pitiful, for the flinching of a strong man is always more impressive than the flinching of a coward. And Huff must have credit for flinching more because of his wife than because of himself, or even because of his wrath.

He went carefully over his assets and confirmed what he had known. He was helpless. He had much property, but it was not in such shape that he could realize on it in the twenty hours that were left to him. Twenty days might have made it possible. Twenty weeks would have made it certain. But twenty hours! No.

Again he considered that list, and again he let his wrath rise at the thought that the very men who had profited by his very notable expenditures in life insurance were the men who had first caused, and then taken advantage of, his temporary weakness. Alive, they had him at their mercy. Dead, he would have them at his mercy. It was a queer situation.

A boy entered with a note for him. He looked idly at it, and saw that it had come from his bank. He had expected it before, for he had sent there from the Exchange for a confirmation of his own record of his available funds, but it had been delayed in coming, and he had looked the matter up himself after he had returned to his offices. He assumed, therefore, that the note would not interest him, so slipped it into his pocket, signed the messenger's book for it, and saw the boy go away. Then, again alone, he sat staring, unseeing, out of the window.

The thought that had come to him just before the boy had entered was recurrent. Alive, they had him at their mercy; dead, he would have them at his mercy—and dead men know no mercy. This idea grew by coming back, as all his thoughts came back in a larger or smaller circle, to his wife. If he lived she would have a pauper husband. If he died she would be a rich widow. He was not cruel enough in his mind to doubt for a moment which she would choose if the choice were hers; but the fact remained, and what she would choose, he reflected, was not what he, if he were truly unselfish in his love for her, would choose for her.

He considered the widows whom he knew. None of them had been inconsolable. All of them enjoyed life, after a fashion, in spite of the fact that their husbands had died. It is probable that up to that time Huff had never fully realized how tremendous was his love for the little woman who, the night before, had said she liked to hear him whistle. Huff was suffering.

He went to his safe and took out his policies. He would have spread them on his desk and uselessly examined them if the telephone bell had not rung. He hastily caught up his coat and hat and put them on before he answered it. The tension of the silent mental strain was broken. He went to the instrument. He had known it would be she.

"Billy, dear," said she, "aren't you *ever* coming home?"

There was a rich, caressing note in her voice when she spoke to him that always touched him, even when its effect had been but sub-conscious. Now it was acute. It was with an effort to prevent a choke from catching his own voice that he replied:

"My hat and coat were where they ought to be, and I was ready when I took the phone down." There was a firm attempt at gayety in his tone. "I will hurry."

Again that caressing quality in her voice impressed him, and sang in his ears after he had left the telephone and stepped into the elevator.

"That little woman must not suffer the hardship of being tied up to a Wall Street wreck," he said to himself.

Before the train had reached Fourteenth Street the great plan had come to him, and, horrid as it was, he had decided on it. Details arranged themselves in his mind with startling rapidity after he had accepted the general outline of the scheme. His chief clerk lived in one of these old houses which still linger in that part of New York City known to ancient citizens as Chelsea Village, and he hurried from the train at Twenty-third Street.

He was quick and definite in his movements, for he had reached a determination. He wondered how he could have spent those hours in pondering at his desk so fruitlessly, when every circumstance—his large insurance, the identity of the men who had assailed him, and his determination that he would not carry his wife down with him in financial wreck—had all pointed out the way to him. He hurried to a public telephone. Through it he told his wife that he should be still further delayed. He was conscious that his voice was brisk and very different from that in which he had spoken to her before, and he was conscious that in her reply there was a pleased acknowledgment of this. Her tone indicated that she felt relieved about something, although nothing of this sort was mentioned in the brief conversation.

As, in a cab, he rushed to his clerk's house, the direful plan that he had settled upon did not terrify him. The thought of her protected future prevented that. Fortunately—or unfortunately, as you choose—the clerk was at home, and he had a supply of office stationery there. Huff had felt sure he would have this, for the man frequently took notes, made late in the day, home with him to be transcribed during the evening. He was a little startled by his employer's call, but Wall Street employees are not greatly given to curiosity or to expression of surprise—if they are sensible. And he was sensible.

Huff dictated to him notes addressed to the homes of every man in the group which was concerned in the attack upon him, signed them, after they had been rattled off on the clerk's typewriter, and told him that, after dropping him at the station at Sixth Avenue, he was to keep the cab and deliver them, with no regard for anything else.

The notes asked the men to whom they were addressed to meet Huff at a certain hotel that night at ten o'clock, and they were worded so that they were more than mere requests. They were demands, and Huff knew that the men who received them would be startled by them. He chuckled as he realized this. They would conjecture wildly. Convinced that their preparations for wrecking him on the following day were complete, the notes would start all sorts of wild speculations in their minds. He chuckled again, for he knew that what would occur at the meeting would be even more startling than the notes which bid them to it. and he knew that not one of them could possibly foretell it. Whatever they might guess at as the reason for this extraordinary demand, they would still fail to conceive the real reason for it.

V.

When Huff reached home, he smiled as he entered the hallway and found that his wife was waiting for him in the little reception room. He was very late, and most men, in the circumstances, would have expected reproaches. Huff knew that there would be none, and there were none. He thought that she looked at him with a little eagerness of inquiry, but that was all. When, during dinner, he told her that he must spend the evening out, she said, with a smile, that she was rather glad of it, for she had some work which she wished to finish, adding, when he made inquiry, that it was fancy work. Had his mind not been preoccupied by his troubles, he might have observed that she blushed slightly as she said this, but, as it was, he did not notice it.

Huff's heart beat with unpleasant

rapidity as he went up to his room immediately after dinner, and when he turned the key in his door he did so with great care, that she should not hear the little noise. This done, he went to his dresser, and from one of its drawers, took that with which he proposed to save the situation. It was a queer implement to be used for such a purpose, for it was nothing other than a shining revolver of large caliber. He made sure that it was loaded, and found a grim satisfaction in noting the ugly noses of the bullets hiding in their chambers. He had to hold it beneath the gas jet at the side of the dresser in order to do this, for the cartridges were short, while the chambers would have held long bullets. Six ugly little leaden noses perked sullenly at him from their seclusion as he turned the cylinder. If the bluff he had planned did not prove effective, he would be able to back it up with this tool! He slipped it into the pocket of a light overcoat which hung across the back of a chair, and, finding when he looked at his watch that he had fifteen minutes to spare, went in search of his wife.

He did not know whether or not the good-by which he was about to say would be the final one, but he determined that no hint of the real agony that burned in his heart should be revealed by his actions, and was almost gay with her when he came upon her in her little sitting room. She was busy at something in which yarn and needles were involved, and wore an especially soft and pleasing expression on her face. He scarcely noticed the work at all; but the expression—he devoured it with hungry eyes. He reflected that it was fortunate that he had been accustomed to kissing her whenever he went out, even for a brief absence, for, this being the case, such a tenderness at this time would cause no surprise. If he had been like some men, the kiss which he planned would have astonished her, and might have given rise to inconvenient speculations. She seemed to be slightly flushed, and he wondered why. Suddenly, just before his time was to expire, she jumped up.

"Oh," said she, "I have something to show you. Will you wait here a moment?"

"Yes," said he, "but I cannot wait much longer than a moment."

"And read this letter from Aunt Emma while I am gone," she said, taking a letter from the desk and handing it to him.

He accepted the letter, and she ran from the room. He found that Aunt Emma had had nothing of especial interest to say, but by the time he had deciphered her somewhat difficult scrawl his wife returned. With a commonplace or two—and they came hard, those commonplaces!—he kissed her. He thought she seemed to be breathing as if her throat were sore. He asked her about it, and she said:

"A little."

Then he said:

"Good-night, my dear."

He had almost added another "my dear," which might have aroused her curiosity.

"Good-night," said she.

And he turned away. As he did so, his foot caught in some yarn upon the floor, and, not noticing this, he made a step, pulling the fancy work, which had lain upon the back part of the table under a newspaper, to the floor. She gasped.

"Oh!" said she.

"I am sorry," he apologized. "I didn't see it."

Before he could stoop to pick up the dainty stuff, she had gathered it up and restored it to its place beneath the newspaper.

"It doesn't matter at all," said she. "But the color is so delicate! I was afraid—I was afraid it might be soiled. It's all right."

"Good-night."

"Good-night, dear!"

He went to his room and took up his hat and coat—the latter hanging heavy because of the unusual burden in its pocket. His throat filled as he went to the lower hall, and he felt the burning rush of tears to his eyes. But he was sure that she had noticed nothing.

VI.

At the hotel at which those extraordinary notes had told the men to meet him, he found that he was a bit ahead of time. The clerk, who, he knew, had a house not far away, was not at all surprised to have him come there to take a parlor for the evening, for many important business and political deals had been consummated in that hotel.

Huff went to the parlor, and before anyone arrived he had time to arrange certain matters. He pulled the square-cornered, oblong table from the middle of the room and placed it before the bay window. He saw to it that there was space for him to stand behind it, and arranged other furniture, so that it would be difficult for anyone to get at him quickly while he held this position.

Going to the annunciator, he unscrewed the little metal rim and took the button out. Then he bent the brass spring tongue back so that it could not be pressed into contact with the wires. Having thus completely disabled the bell, he replaced the button in the rim and screwed the latter again into its place. Thus communication with the office by means of that bell was effectually severed, and it would be difficult for his guests to quickly call for help. There remained the small house-service telephone. Its wires he laboriously cut with his pocketknife.

He had done these things while still wearing his overcoat. Now he went to the table and pulled out its drawer, which opened toward the window, and could not be seen from the major portion of the room. Into this drawer he slipped the revolver and then cast the coat aside. He was calm when he had finished these arrangements, but the calm was like that with which a man might march to the battlefield, where he felt reasonably certain that he would meet a hostile bullet.

He had barely completed these arrangements, when the first of his commanded guests arrived. The man entered the room with an expression of astonishment on his face which, Huff reflected, must have been left over from that which his note had caused at the time of its reception. Huff greeted him gravely and offered no explanation. When the man made inquiry in a nervous voice, Huff turned upon him, almost with a snarl.

"I've got something to say," he said; "but there are others coming to whom, also, I want to say it. We might as well wait for them."

He offered a cigar from his pocket case, and the man took it, biting off the end of it with an angry twist of his teeth.

A few moments later there were two more arrivals, and before the bustle of their coming had entirely passed, and before there had been opportunity for much questioning, the other three men whom Huff had bidden came in together.

Huff was standing near the door when they entered, and he closed it behind them. No one noticed that he turned the key in the lock after he had closed it, but he did, and slipped it into his pocket. Then he took his stand behind the table, in the small space between it and the wall and window. His face was stern, and there was something about it and the whole affair which unpleasantly impressed everyone who was there. It was a most unusual proceeding, and made them nervous. Besides, it may be that even these men, hardened by the tricks of Wall Street, found it unpleasant to look at close range into the eyes of him whom they had schemed to floor financially.

"Well, gentlemen," said Huff, "we might as well come down to business."

Then he paused. The visitors were sitting about in the chairs he had arranged for them, exhibiting uneasiness, curiosity or wrath, each according to his kind.

One of them broke the pause. "Yes," said he, with sarcasm, "I should think it might be just as well. Apparently you have assumed command of us. *I'd* like an explanation of your extraordinary communication—as soon as you can give it to me. You have al-

ready upset my plans for this evening, and I don't want to waste any more time than—than your royal highness really requires."

There were smiles at the last words, but the others nodded.

"Yes," said one, "get a gait on. I can't monkey around here all night!"

"The situation is this," said Huff, calmly and slowly. "You have made a combination against me, and I am here to tell you that it won't work."

There were one contemptuous smile, one start of slight uneasiness, and four expressions of tolerant curiosity in the group in front of the table.

"There was no reason," Huff continued, "for picking me out to be the victim of your malice except that a combination of circumstances made me an easy person to pick out. So far as I know, I have never quarreled with any one of you. I have never injured any one of you in the least, and in one way I have contributed to the prosperity of each of you, for I have been, and am, a large policy holder in the insurance companies with which you are all connected."

There was an expression of annoyed impatience from one of the group. It was Galt who spoke, and no one had ever mistaken him for a man of breeding.

"Cut all that," said he, "and get down to business."

"I'm coming to it," said Huff, still calmly. "Now, because you saw your opportunity, you have, in the last few days, cornered me, and I have every reason to believe that you intend to put the screws on me to-morrow and drive me to the wall."

Galt laughed jerkily. He was a piggish man, and his eyes twinkled like a pig's.

"Well, what of it?" he asked. "You would be the first person to do the same to us if we were foolish enough to let you get us where we've got you."

There had not been any attempt to deny what Huff had charged. Perhaps they thought that it was not worth while. His charges were tacitly admitted.

"But you *haven't* got me," Huff said, quickly. *"I've got you!"*

There was something in his voice which made the others shift uneasily in their chairs, and Galt rose nervously.

"Come, come, now!" he said. "Don't try to frighten us. We know what we're about!"

He was always offensive. The others did not speak.

"I'll tell you *how* I've got you," Huff went on.

He took from his breast pocket the little bundle of life insurance policies.

"You are a director in the Tampa Tontine," he said to Galt, and mentioned also some other companies with which he was connected. Then he turned to the others and, one by one, named the companies in which they held offices and in which their money was invested. "Now," he continued, "I have policies in all these companies, and your aggregate investment in them"—he was talking to the whole group now—"is above two millions. I am insured, in all, for seven hundred and eighty thousand dollars. That would be a large sum for your companies to have to pay out suddenly!"

"But you are not insured against losing your money," said Galt, with his porcine look of shrewdness. "You are insured against losing your life."

"I know just how you figure," said Huff, still quite calmly. "You assume that when I lose my money I shall be unable to keep my payments up, and that all the money—and it is a great deal—which I have paid into your companies, will revert on the lapsed policies. Isn't that about the way you have thought it out?"

"Well," said Galt, grinning and still acting as self-appointed spokesman for the rest, "that's logical, all right. I won't say that we have figured it out that way."

"But," said Huff, with a shrug of his shoulders, such as some men give when they wish to abruptly change the subject of conversation, "that is not what I called you here to talk about to-night. What I really want to do is to borrow money of you—borrow enough money

to carry me through the little mess which you have mixed for me."

There was a general gasp of astonishment, and then some laughter.

Huff brought from his pocket another package of papers, and let it fall upon the table.

"In that bundle," he said, "are real estate and other securities sufficient to cover a loan of three hundred thousand dollars. I need only a hundred thousand. I have everything drawn up, ready for your signature. Will you collectively, or any one of you individually, let me have that hundred thousand dollars? It will be enough to let me cover and protect myself from the selling which you have planned to do to-morrow for the purpose of driving me to the wall."

Galt rose angrily.

"I guess you're crazy," he said. "I'm going."

"You *can't* go without raising a row," said Huff, carelessly, "for I have locked the door. Better sit down again and wait. When I have finished what I have to say I'll let you out; or, if I *can't* let you out then, you will find the key in my trousers pocket—on the right-hand side, in front—and can let yourselves out."

This was an extraordinary remark, and it had its effect upon Galt as well as the others. He especially began to sputter.

Huff waved his hand at him, as if to admonish him to keep quiet, and the man sat down. Huff put the question to the others, one after another. It was plain that they all believed that something had happened in his head, and that he had become unbalanced by his peril. But they all refused to lend him money. Wall Street is a bad place in which to search for sympathy. And they were angry, too, at what they considered to have been an unwarrantable intrusion on their time.

"All right," said Huff, quite cheerfully. "Then if you won't lend me one hundred thousand dollars to-night, you may *prepare to pay my heirs seven hundred and eighty thousand dollars to-morrow!*"

If a bomb had exploded in the room the general astonishment could not have been greater. Galt had been angrily pacing the floor. Now he stopped, and stood with his mouth open. In a second or two he tried to laugh it off.

"You're crazy!" said he.

"Perhaps," said Huff. "But that will not affect the validity of my policies."

He picked up a number of papers from the table where he had opened the bundle.

"There are blank checks on the banks where you deposit," said he. "There are blank notes which I will fill out if you decide to lend me the money. My securities are here, only waiting for formalities to put you in a position where you will be surely safe from loss. All you need to do is to lend me enough money so that I can dodge the trap which you yourselves fixed up for me. You cannot possibly lose a cent. I cannot possibly make a cent by the transaction. All that this will accomplish will be the overthrow of your scheme to ruin me. Now will you do what I suggest?"

Galt was not the only one who spoke now. There was a clamor. Every voice was busy angrily denouncing Huff and calling him a fool. They resented having been brought here so peremptorily; they resented the insult to their intelligence, which they said was implied by the proposition of such a scheme; they were annoyed and disgusted by the whole affair. In their various ways they expressed these things to Huff. He answered them by pulling open the table drawer and deftly picking the revolver out of it.

"All right, gentlemen," said he. "My policies are incontestable. You will have to pay my heirs!"

VII.

For an instant the party gazed spellbound. Then one or two stammered something or other of no importance. One or two others tried to take the matter as a situation to be laughed at. But the stammerers and the scoffers were alike put out of countenance by the ex-

pression on Huff's face. He was pale, but he looked calm, and, above all else, he looked determined.

"My policies are incontestable!" he said.

"Put that thing up, Huff!" said one of his visitors. There was panic in his voice, but he tried to modulate it so that it would convey the impression that he recognized the joke, and that it had gone far enough. Huff paid no attention to him. With the hand which was not engaged by the revolver he took out his watch.

"I shall give you a minute to think the matter over," he announced. "Just —one—minute."

One of the men edged toward him, as if he intended to spring across the table. Huff looked at him and smiled.

"I shall not give you the minute," he said, calmly, "unless you keep your distance."

The man fell back, white-faced.

"I do not propose," Huff said, after he was sure that the man would not again attempt to interfere with him, "to let you fellows sacrifice my wife. If it were me only, then things might be different."

"My God, Huff!" said one of them.

"You haven't any, except money," said Huff. "Forty seconds!"

"Wh—what do you want us to—to do?" said Galt.

From being the nonchalant spokesman who looked at Huff almost with contempt, he had suddenly become nervous. He had always had a horror of firearms, and hated the sight of blood, which, entirely aside from the loss which undoubtedly threatened his company, was a cause for uneasiness.

"I believe," said Huff, "that it will smash your company, Galt—the loss and the story of what caused it. Folks can't trust a company whose head speculates the way the letters which I shall leave behind me show that you do. But, of course, you'll have to pay *my* policies. There will be so much newspaper talk about this thing that if you didn't you would surely smash."

"For God's sake, Huff," said one who had not spoken before, "put that revolver down!"

"I shall put it up in ten seconds," said Huff.

Three gathered at the side.

"Give us another minute, Huff," said one of them, nervously.

"You can't call help, because I've broken the bell," said Huff. "And you can't get out, because I've locked the door. But I'll give you one more minute, and that's all I will give you. It's begun now."

Much can be said in ten seconds.

One of them turned to Huff again. "What are your securities?" he asked, in a queer voice.

"There they are," said Huff, pointing to them as they lay upon the table. But he did not take his eyes away from his watch.

"Give us time to look them over," said Galt.

He had visibly weakened. He was deathly pale, and his hand shook. A vivid vision of spurting blood and—ugh! He could not endure the thought of it.

"All right," said Huff, pleasantly. "You shall have two minutes. But that will be the very last extension of time. You know that you did not propose to give *me* an extension to-morrow."

There was a consultation in rapid whispers. That particular group of Wall Street operators had never talked more earnestly together, and there had been some absorbed consultations among them in the past. The terror of blood was in Galt's mind, and from being the contemptuous scoffer he had changed until he was the eager advocate.

"Great Heaven!" said he. "He'll do it! He'll do it!"

He repeated these words as if he were a talking doll, and they were the only words provided for by his machine.

"I don't propose," said Huff, slowly, "to let you squeeze all the comfort out of my wife's future. First minute's up."

The group stood in a corner of the room. They had gathered there, in-

tending to talk this amazing situation over; but when they considered it they found that there was really very little to say about it.

"Thirty seconds!' said Huff.

Galt was beginning to whimper like a child. He glanced at Huff's impassive and determined face.

"It's horrible!" he said, and shuddered.

There was no bluster in him now. His eyes saw blood. His ears anticipated the crashing explosion of the shot.

"Forty seconds!"

Huff's fingers took a fresh grip on the handle of the revolver. His face was utterly colorless. His hand started on its upward movement, but it did not tremble. Galt noticed that its grip was now so tight that there was no blood in the knuckles. They were white dots against the golf tan of the remainder of the hand.

"Fifty seconds!"

Galt groaned.

"Fifty-one!"

One man leaned toward Huff, as he would have toward a stage on which an intense scene was being shown.

"Fifty-two!"

"God! God!" said Galt.

One who had not spoken at all grasped at the back of a chair for support. He was suddenly faint.

"Fifty-three!"

Galt wailed. There was the shuddering tone in his voice which a superstitious child's might have after a fancied sight of some banshee.

"Fifty-four!"

"I'll do it! I'll do it!" said Galt, shivering.

"How about the others?" asked Huff, and, having missed a second, added instantly.

"Fifty-six!"

"Oh, we'll do it, curse you!" said Phillson, speaking for almost the first time since he had entered the room. "You infernal fool—we'll do it!"

"All right," said Huff, in an utterly colorless voice. "There are the papers, and there are pens and ink. I can't stand for any delay in it."

They signed, one after the other.

There was no smile of triumph on Huff's face. He looked wan—as if he had lately recovered from a long illness.

"Now," said he, "if any of you make an effort to go back on these"—with the butt of the revolver he tapped the papers which they had signed—"I won't wait a second. And I'll not wait a second, either, if any of you try to have me restrained or interfered with until after the Exchange has opened in the morning, and all this has been actually attended to. You have not signed under duress. I have not threatened you. I have threatened no one but myself. And, gentlemen, I mean business."

"Gad! I believe you do," said Peel, with cold wonder.

"After I have protected myself against your little scheme—have *thoroughly* protected myself—you may tell anyone you please about what has happened here to-night," said Huff. "But I will agree, now and here, that I will never mention it to a soul if you don't. If it *is* talked about, I fancy that I will not look more vicious than you will to the public eye."

He folded up the papers and put them in his pocket.

"There must be no tomfoolery," he continued. "As things stand, if our agreement is carried out, I shall not have been robbed, and you will not have the loot. That is all. Not one honest penny will have been lost by anyone concerned."

He went to the outer door and unlocked it.

"Bear in mind what I have said about the danger of meddling with the situation," he admonished. "The least sign of it from any of you will make it necessary for you to cash in those policies; next time you will be given no chance of crawling out of it. Goodnight!"

He stepped back, opening the door.

The men were silent as they filed out; but, after they had left the room, one of them drew a long breath and laughed heartily. It was not Galt. He created

a commotion among the bell boys by fainting in the rotunda.

VIII.

Huff found his wife sitting up for him in the library when he reached his home. It was not very late. She was pale, but she rose to greet him with her excitement and great joy at seeing him so well concealed that, in the midst of his own emotions, he did not observe them.

"Hello, dear," said he. "Is everything all right?"

"Yes," said she, and went to put her arms around him; but he told her to wait a moment. He was afraid that she might feel the revolver in his pocket.

"I'll be back in a second," he said.

Upstairs he put the pistol into a drawer of his chiffonier, where it was well hidden. Then he went back to her and kissed her. He longed to press her to him fiercely and cover her face with quick kisses, but did not do it, fearing that it would hint to her of things unusual. But she looked up at him anxiously, quiveringly, intensely. There were tears in her eyes.

"What is the matter?" he asked, worried.

"Nothing, now that you are with me, dear," said she. "I have been lonely."

By and by she asked:

"Did you not receive a message from your bank to-day?"

"Why, no," said he. And then, remembering the note which the messenger boy had brought and which he had not opened, he made correction. "Yes, I did, after all," said he. "I sent for a full statement of my account, and they gave it to me. I haven't even opened it."

He searched among the many papers in his pocket until he found it. He tore the envelope open and looked at it.

"Why!" he exclaimed.

"Let me see it," said she.

Bewildered, he handed it to her, and she read:

> One hundred and eighty-four thousand and three dollars, your wife's whole deposit under the trust fund of which she is mistress subject to the approval of Peter Miller until she is thirty-five years of age and of which she will be complete mistress after that date, has, with and by Mr. Miller's advice and consent, by her order been transferred to your personal account; and drafts upon the same, signed by you, will in consequence be honored. We have also been instructed by Mr. Peter Miller to honor your drafts on his personal account until further notice to the total extent of fifty thousand dollars. The statement of your own account, which you requested, will be given to you early to-morrow morning.

She was sitting, now, at one side of a table and he was at the other side. He looked at her almost blankly.

"Lord!" was all he could find to say, just then.

"I supposed, of course, that you would read it when you received it," said she.

He was speechless for a space.

She looked at him closely.

"Do you know," said she, "that there is a gray lock in your hair—just on the right temple?"

She touched the place by reaching across the table with her long, wooden knitting needle.

"What!" said he at last.

She handed him a little needle case from her workbasket. Framed in its leather on one side there was a tiny mirror. He took it and looked into it. What she had said was true. There *was* a little gray lock on his temple. He remembered that it was at that temple that he had intended to point the revolver if the men had not done as he had told them to. The lock of gray had not been there in the morning. He almost made an exclamation, and, to cover his astonishment, reached over and laid a hand upon her fancy work, which had fallen to the table.

"What is it that you are making?" he asked, as a diversion. Really, he felt no interest whatever in the fancy work.

She colored.

"Just—oh! just fancy work," she said.

He toyed with it without wholly lifting it, and saw that there was at the end nearest to him a tiny yoke, and that at the sides two little sleeves projected. She tried to pull it away from

him gently. At first he did not understand. Then he began to realize.

"What?" said he.

Her face was very deeply flushed now, but she slowly nodded, very much confused.

"Sweetheart!" he said, and there was a stifling sensation at his throat.

Again he picked the soft stuff up, this time raising it clear of the table. From it some small and heavy objects fell. He thought they might be coins, but one rolled to his hand, and it was not a coin. It was a cartridge.

"Where did that come from?" he demanded.

He had planned to go to her and take her in his arms, but this cartridge stopped him. Cartridges, half an hour before, had had so terrible a significance.

"I took it—them—from your revolver," she answered, slowly. "It—it seemed so dangerous to have it around the house all loaded!"

"When?" he demanded.

"Just before you went away to-night," she said. "I—it was in the pocket of your—your overcoat—hanging on a—on a chair, in your room."

He gasped.

Then she passed around the table, and pulled his head over until it rested on her breast.

CAME WITHOUT CALLING

A CINCINNATI man was describing the dinner in London that admitted Joseph H. Choate to the society of the Old Benchers of the Inner Temple.

"Mr. Choate was in his best mood," he said. "With epigrams, witticisms and anecdotes he kept the table in a continuous roar.

"Perhaps he made the most telling impression with a story about an impoverished young Irish gentleman, the Hon. Denis Bellew.

"He said that Mr. Bellew, driven forth by poverty from his father's estate, went to London to seek his fortune. He seemed to be buried in London. Nothing was heard of him for several years.

"He had been a gay, convivial blade, and in the little home village he was missed. There was not a poacher or a roisterer within ten miles that hadn't a soft spot for Denis in his heart.

"Word one day passed about that up at the castle news had been received of Denis. The village at once became excited, and a deputation of a half dozen or so was soon on its way to see the old lord.

" 'My lord,' said the spokesman, 'is it true ye've gotten news o' yer son, Mr. Denis?'

" 'Ay, true enough. News at last, boys,' said his lordship.

" 'Faith, then, an' phwat might the bhoy be doin' up in London?' was the next question.

" 'He has been called to the bar,' the lord answered, proudly.

"The deputation looked at one another, for the phrase was new to them. Finally, in a loud whisper, one said:

" 'Oi don't know what thot manes; but from what Oi remember of the bhoy, he didn't want no callin'.' "

The Emancipation of Slim

By B. M. Bower

Author of "The Lure of the Dim Trails," "Chip, of the Flying U," Etc.

This is the first of a new series of stories of Western life by a writer who has long been a favorite with "Popular" readers. Jim Whitmore's "Happy Family" of the Flying U ranch will figure therein, as well as an occasional new character, and each story will be complete in itself

(A Complete Story)

ELL, we got a couple more baits for yuh, Slim," Shorty announced one day at dinner — "that white-faced yearling that fell in the water hole yesterday, and a spotted heifer that just got tired uh living. Get anything last night?"

"Naw," Slim grunted. "By golly, I never seen anything like it! They chawed on two baits, over in Rocky coulee, but I guess they never even got a stomach ache over it. I trailed one big feller five mile back into the hills, an' then lost his tracks among the rocks. I seen where he laid down an' rolled oncet, but that's all."

"All you're doin' is winter-feedin' all the wolves 'n' coyotes in the country," Happy Jack spoke up. "They're gittin' fatter 'n' sassier every day uv their lives. This here strychnine they hand out t' yuh is a fake; I told yuh so, all along. Yuh can't poison a wolf in a thousand years. Nothing works but traps er bullets."

"That's right, if Happy did say it," Cal Emmett affirmed.

"A goot vay t' gid dem volves mit poison," broke in Patsy, waving the coffee-pot over their heads to see who wanted a second cup, "ain't mit fillin' calves mit it. You don'd fix him der righd vay. Yust you tage soom tallow or lard, und put von leedle poison in a loomp off it. Und you make it round, just like some marble. Und you tage dem marbles off tallow—or lard—mit der poison in, und you drop dem along der volf trails—so—von rod, maybe, apart. Und you see! Dat fix 'em sure!" He nodded and winked, and Weary dodged the coffeepot, which swung uncomfortably close to his ear.

"You yust try dem marbles off lard vonce, Slim," Patsy urged. "I bet you dat fix 'em. You stick der poison all over mit a carcass, and der volf vot eats, he gid too mooch. He gid sick, und der hair coom off, maybe, but he don'd die. Dem marbles off lard, he svallow von und trod along, und maybe svallow anoder, und py und py dat volf lays down by der trail und die."

"Aw, the poison's no good, I tell yuh!" repeated Happy Jack, encouraged by Cal's approval of his argument. "I bet yuh I could eat all the poison you've got, 'n' do m' regular day's work afterward."

"That ain't saying much for the work yuh do," Cal fleered. "But I guess nobody'll put up any money on it, Happy. You're dead onto yourself for once, and we're with yuh."

"Old Man's going t' get some uh the real article," Shorty told them, to avoid dispute. "Imported straight from Germany, and costs eight dollars an ounce. You better set your traps around these

carcasses, Slim, and wait till that Dutch article arrives on the scene. There'll be more bait by then—and if there ain't, I guess the Old Man'll give yuh that lump-jar steer."

"I had a trap sprung this morning," Slim remarked, hopefully. It did not take much, where a wolf was concerned, to fan Slim's hope and keep it from sliding into discouragement.

From the first nip of frost and the first wolf howl that cried "good hunting" Slim had given himself up to the fascinations of wolf lore, and to the quest of the five-dollar bounty which the State paid upon each head. So steeped was he in the subject that the Old Man appointed him official wolf catcher, as it were, for the Flying U ranch. It was a position in which Slim gloried—only, so far, he had caught no wolves.

One must needs be an adept in the art if he would lure a grown wolf into his trap, and poison did not seem to work. Slim spent his days riding from bait to bait and from trap to trap, following defiantly plain trails, and scheming by night against the cunning of that scourge of the plains, the gray wolf.

Two coyotes he caught in his traps, and one he poisoned. And on Thanksgiving morning he discovered two gray, hairy toes of a wolf in a sprung trap—and Slim did not give thanks for his blessing, as admonished to do by the President. Instead, he brooded gloomily in the bunk house and mourned over the accident quite as sincerely, perhaps, as the owner of the toes must have done.

But this was one of the first days of a new year. He sat long in the mess house, with a pail of frozen lard at one elbow and a strychnine bottle at the other, industriously making the poisoned marbles which Patsy had suggested; Patsy was sixty-three years old, and had a reputation of being wise even beyond his years. Slim hoped the marbles would be efficacious, and looked upon the lard pail with the eye of faith.

And while he pottered his mind strayed from his work to the Countess Bixby; though what possible relation there could be between the grass-widowed sister of Mrs. Denson and the poisoned lard balls Slim would have been puzzled to explain.

She was no more a real countess than was Slim lithe of figure; and she was tall and aggressive, and much given to distorted maxims. But there was that in her very aggressiveness which drew Slim irresistibly, and the mutilated axioms of our ancestors were, to Slim's slow, serious mind, the scintillations of a wit most brilliant. Besides, she was conceded the best cook between the Highwood foothills and the highest peak of the Bear Paws. If you knew the stretch of country which lies between those two points, I am sure you would appreciate the concession.

The Happy Family, not being asleep individually or collectively, soon knew of Slim's infatuation. They talked together, quite seriously, about the eccentricities of the wolf packs, and how they ranged chiefly down the creek and around the Denson coulee. They noted the trend of Slim's tour each morning, and lowered eyelids at one another in a manner quite maddening.

And Slim, listening, red-faced, to their banter, would endeavor clumsily to prove to them that the wolves did really run that way, and that he rarely tied his horse to the Denton gate post. As a matter of fact, Slim spoke the truth; but that did not trouble the Happy Family, who went serenely about making his life miserable without regard to his veracity.

While he was gathering up his lard balls into a paper bag, and pondering whether, if he asked the Countess to go with him to the next dance and she consented, it would be possible for him to live on the same ranch with the Happy Family, Weary came in to warm his fingers and wheedle Patsy into letting him demolish the better part of a mince pie.

As Weary balanced a huge wedge of it nicely upon his palm and took delicious preliminary nibbles around the crusty, outer edge, his eyes wandered to Slim.

"Making poison balls?" he inquired, needlessly, after the manner of one who

feels amiably disposed to speech, and yet has nothing in mind worth the saying.

"Uh-huh." Slim rolled an eye toward him uneasily. He never felt sure of Weary.

"How many yuh got?" mumbled Weary, with his mouth too full for polite utterance.

" 'Bout a hunderd. Ain't got any more dope." Slim carefully gathered up the newspaper on which he had been working, and stuffed it into the stove. One does not take any chances with strychnine.

"Oh, mamma! Is that all? Which end uh the trail are yuh going to start in on?"

"Which end uh *what* trail?"—defiantly.

"The Denson trail," Weary explained, unblushingly. "How'd yuh expect a hundred pills to cover eight miles? A wolf'd get plumb discouraged traveling from one ball to the next. If I was you, I'd wait till I got ready to start home, and then drop 'em as long as they last."

"Start home from where?" Slim took refuge in profound ignorance of the obvious. "Nobody said anything about no trail. I'm goin' t' drop 'em out on top uh the ridge."

"Why, sure! Down in the coulee some uh those prize pups might get hold uh some—and think uh the hurt feelings you'd have to soothe. Besides, there ain't any bounty on 'yaller dorgs.' And it would likely queer yuh with——" Weary fitted the remnant of the wedge of pie nicely into his mouth, and so left the sentence a fragment.

"Queer me with who?" Slim whirled upon him ponderously. "By golly, all ails you gazabos is you'd like t' git a stand-in there yourselves! You're jealous, the hull pack uh yuh. By golly——" Slim gulped, and remembered how the Countess had once remarked, "As the sayin' is, 'Silence is good as gold, an' pearls ain't made fer pig feed.' " Slim felt there was truth in the statement, and was silent.

Weary wiped his mouth free of pie crumbs. "Jealous—oh, mamma!" he said, and went thoughtfully out into the cold whiteness.

Slim, grinning after him, remarked vainly to Patsy that he guessed he'd shut Weary up that time, anyway. But Weary's words rankled, nevertheless, and for that reason Slim took the trail which climbed the grade and wound over the ridge where the wolf packs were not fond of traveling, rather than ride down the coulee toward the Denson ranch.

That was because Slim took life seriously and was temperamentally unable to treat the banter of the Happy Family as lightly as it was meant. The Happy Family was much given to teasing, and went far toward making Slim's wolfing a failure. The lard balls, dropped along a lone wolf track which pointed toward the coulee, lay untouched for days, until the drifting of new-fallen snow buried them from sight. The much-vaunted German strychnine, valued at eight dollars the ounce, impregnated baits which lay unheeded on the bench land and brought to Slim not eight cents.

Each morning Slim faced doggedly to the north, rather than invite ridicule by riding to the southwest. Occasional, surreptitious inspection of the coulee showed wolf trails a-plenty, but he only grumbled when he saw them and turned back. He might as well have followed them, even unto the very door of the Densons—should they lead him there—for the Happy Family accused him of it, anyway, and he might have had better success.

Thus it was that two yearlings lay untouched—save where Slim's knife had slashed them to insert the poison—upon the hilltop near the Flying U trail.

Then, late one afternoon in early spring, when the frost was yielding to sun and the warm chinook winds, Happy Jack walked into the bunk house with his face contorted into the grin which looked diabolical, but which meant only that he had something to tell.

"Where's Slim?" he wanted to know,

blinking at the change from sunlight to shadow.

"What yuh want uh me?" Slim had suffered much at the hands of the Happy Family that day, and his temper was not at its best.

"Say, Slim, them baits uh yourn is disappearin' in big hunks." Happy grinned at the others as if there were some joke. "I dunno how the bounty is now on them that's fillin' up—but there used t' be one, all right."

"What baits?" Slim braced himself mentally for a joke of that practical sort which has no point except for the perpetrators.

"Yuh mind them yearlin's up on the ridge? They ain't anything left of 'em, hardly."

"Aw, go chase yerself," Slim growled.

"That's right," Happy Jack insisted. "I just come past there. There won't be even the hide left by mornin'."

"What brand was it, Happy?" Cal asked, pointedly.

"By golly, it takes a quart uh any kind t' make Happy see things!" Slim cried. "He must a got away with a lot, comin' home."

Happy's grin faded, for the shot struck. He had, on one occasion, got into the condition where he saw double, and insisted that he was performing the unusual feat of riding two sorrel horses home instead of one. He did not relish the memory of that night.

"Aw, yuh make me sick!" he exclaimed, half angrily. "If yuh don't want t' believe me, go on up an' see fer yerselves. I'd hate t' be standin' in Slim's shoes right now."

"Unburden your soul, and be done," Chip advised him, impatiently.

"Aw, I c'n *say* it, fast enough. You fellows think I'm throwin' a load. They's about twenty-five Injuns up there, feastin' on them poisoned calves —that's what! If Slim don't hang fer it——"

There was an interval of silence more eloquent than words. Slim's face bleached from beet-red to the pale hue of a turnip.

"By golly!" he gasped, at length. "Yuh needn't think *I'm* t' blame!"

"Aw, what if yuh ain't? I knowed a man oncet that was sent up fer ten years fer blowin' up a man with dynamite. *He* wasn't t' blame, either—but I notice he was up against it, just the same."

Weary stood up and yawned ostentatiously. "Happy, if you're lying, you'd ought to be chapped," he said, in pity for Slim.

"Go on up there an' see fer yerself, why don't yuh? I don't know any better way uh provin' it. They're camped in that little draw, just over the ridge, where the spring is. An' they're fillin' up on veal, sure's I stand here."

The Happy Family hesitated, and a little of the red came back into Slim's cheeks. It was Jack Bates who finally voiced their decision.

"We'll go take a look, Happy," he said, reaching for his hat. "But yuh want t' watch out if you're throwin' a load; we'll just about beat yuh to death."

"Beat an' be darned!" retorted Happy, secure in the knowledge that he was in earnest.

Patsy was amazed to see them file down to the stables when it lacked but ten minutes till supper time. They saddled hurriedly and rode away up the hill like men urged by necessity. As they topped the ridge a trail of smoke from several camp fires told that Happy Jack had spoken in good faith, so far as the camp was concerned.

A little further, and against the red glow of the sunset they could see the tepees—seven of them. It was not so unusual a sight, for wandering bands did sometimes travel that trail on their way to the river, where was good fishing. Since the Flying U coulee and the creek that ran through it were fenced, they must perforce camp on the high land; and the spring at this place solved the water problem.

The Happy Family rode up quietly and stopped just short of the largest fire, on which some unsavory mess was cooking. They were received in the stolid silence which marks our noble

red man in his chance meetings with strangers.

Slim glanced about him furtively and fearfully, and saw strong circumstantial evidence of the purloining of his baits. He squirmed in the saddle and wondered if any had yet succumbed. From the look of things, however, they were just then preparing their supper.

"Hello!" Cal Emmett greeted blandly, by way of opening the conversation.

A remarkably uncombed buck took his little stone pipe from his lips and grunted unintelligibly.

"Where yuh come from?" Cal inquired, politely, and got no answer of any sort.

"Wonder what breed they are," he murmured to the others.

"Gros Ventres, most likely," was Jack Bates' opinion.

"Aw, can't yuh tell a Cree when yuh see one?" Happy Jack growled.

"Bet yuh they're Blackfeet," Weary cut in. "You come from over there?" He waved a hand airily toward the reservation.

The Indian pushed back a straggling lock of hair from his eyes and shook his head vaguely—almost imperceptibly. The squaws gabbled together in an undertone, and watched them warily.

"Well, here! Somebody break away and give 'em a heart-to-heart talk," Weary suggested. "There's some here can savvy, all right—if they want to. Go ahead, Chip."

Chip tilted his hat brim down to keep the last, horizontal sunrays out of his eyes, and "went ahead" in his usual direct manner.

"You took some dead calves, up here by the trail," he began, impressively. "They were full of strychnine—poison. Savvy? If you eat that meat, you die—take a straight trail for the happy hunting ground, with nobody to send your ponies after you. You're strictly up against it, my friends, if you don't throw that meat away."

"Here—do yuh think they've got a dictionary along?" Cal interrupted. "Meat no good. Heap bad medicine. Squaw die, papoose die—mebbe-so all die. You savvy? Heap bad medicine!"

"Huh!" said he of the little stone pipe, carefully putting back another tangled wisp of hair. Whether he "savvied," they could not even hazard a guess, so absolutely expressionless was his face.

"By golly, look over there!" Slim shouted. "That there outfit's goin' t' fill up, right now!" He rolled precipitately off his horse, and before any could stop him, snatched a kettle from the squaw who held it and turned it bottom up on the the ground.

"Yuh better go slow," Weary advised. "They'll land on yuh four deep, if yuh ain't careful."

He of the stone pipe rose and came slowly forward. Others came also. They seemed to materialize out of the shadows, like specters.

The Happy Family drew instinctively closer together. If it came to fighting, they had nothing but their quirts for weapons.

"Can't any of yuh savvy white-man talk?" Cal questioned the glowering group around them. They only scowled the more, but he continued: "You no eat. Meat heap bad medicine. Fix 'em with poison, mebbe-so for kill wolf; kill coyote. You eat, mebbe-so kill you."

"There ain't any 'mebby-so' about it," Weary cut in. "It's a cinch."

"Aw, yuh can't poison an Injun, any more'n yuh can a hog," Slim muttered.

At that moment a young buck strode calmly into camp and flung down a leg of beef. Slim, recognizing the color of the hide, groaned. It was part of another wolf bait. The squaws chattered more volubly and eyed the Happy Family malevolently, though not one made a move to right the overturned kettle.

Cal turned hopefully to the last arrival; perhaps he could be made to understand the peril which threatened the camp.

"You Gros Ventre?"

The fellow studied him for a full minute, flung out the word "Cree" and turned indifferently away into a tepee.

The Crees are not the adopted children of Uncle Sam, and may not claim

his bounty. Instead, they are wanderers, without home or income, for they will not stay in Canada, where they belong, and our own Uncle Sam does not feed alien tribes. So they are the hoboes of the plains, dirtier even than the average Indian and more ignorant, and they nurse a deep distrust of white men. Gros Ventres would have understood and been amenable to reason, but not so the Crees.

The Happy Family pleaded, expostulated and swore. They trimmed their speech down to bare essentials, and tried to make their meaning clear by signs. They vied with one another in facial contortions supposed to represent the extreme agony which would follow the eating of the meat, and Happy Jack scared a papoose into hysterical screaming by his efforts at realistic pantomime.

Their hearers squatted or stood in the shadows, stolidly silent while they watched the remarkable exhibition and listened to the vivisection of the English language. Once or twice they spoke in guarded, guttural tones to one another.

The afterglow faded from the sky, and a cold wind crept out of the north. The horses fretted to be off—for horses are discriminating in their tastes, and they like not men of the copper hue.

The Happy Family paused in sheer discouragement. A squaw slipped noiselessly through the dusk and righted the kettle. Another dragged the leg of beef forward and began to carve off lumps of it.

"Oh, come on, boys," cried Jack Bates, in disgust. "If the darned fools want to commit suicide, let 'em. I guess the country won't miss 'em much. We've done all we can—unless we close-herd 'em till they quit the place."

The others were of the same mind, and they were hungry as well. They gave a last, crisp warning and galloped away into the gloom. Before they were out of hearing, a derisive voice bellowed after them:

"Yo' t'ink yo' dam' smart! Yo' t'ink for heap scare! Yo' min' yo' beesness! We eat meat—mebby-so heap sick, mebby-so no sick. We heap sick, yo' go for jail one, mebby-so t'ree year! Yo' bet yo' life!"

Six horses went back upon their haunches, so sudden did the Happy Family pull up. They looked back to the camp and said things.

Weary spoke first, and his voice was sad. "And I like t' kinked my brain searching for language a two-year-old kid could swallow," he said.

"We ought t' go back and maul the daylights out uh him," added Cal.

"Aw, come on home t' supper!" urged Happy Jack, and they went.

Slim could not eat any supper, and he did not seem to have anything much to say. The others, observing the deep gloom which had settled upon him like a black mantle, shaped their conversation according to their impression of his need. Their way of dispelling gloom was a bit heroic, perhaps, but it was their own, and it was generally efficacious.

They sought to cheer Slim by dilating upon the horror of the situation, and throughout the evening the gallows loomed large in the background of their conversation. Happy Jack, being of gloomy temperament himself, would occasionally haul it into the foreground, while they argued whether the charge would be murder or manslaughter. Until bedtime the bunk house reeked with grewsome tales born in the imagination of the Happy Family, and Chip drew pictures, the realism of which got upon Slim's nerves.

Then, turning sympathetic, they gravely assured him that they would do what they could for him; and as they believed the Old Man would put up the money for a good lawyer, they could possibly get his sentence commuted to life imprisonment. An acquittal, they said mournfully, wasn't to be hoped for. As soon as the Old Man returned from Helena, they would put the case before him in its best light, and there wasn't a doubt but he would do the right thing. The Old Man was good-hearted, that was a cinch.

Weary told him, with tears in his

voice, that they'd sure make a big fuss if he was hanged. Cal added that he'd fix the sheriff that had the nerve to do it, and gripped Slim's fingers till he squirmed.

Slim, looking quite as downcast as they could wish, went out of doors; and when he had gone, the Happy Family smiled. Then Weary felt a twinge of compunction.

"Say, it's kinda mean t' devil him like that," he remarked; "he takes it so serious."

"Aw, he knows we're just joshing," Jack Bates answered. "He ought t' know an Injun can stand as much as a wolf any day."

"A Cree can stand more," said Chip. "They eat carrion that would kill a white man, and get fat on it. I'll bet there's some sick squaws up there, though. Maybe it'll teach them a lesson."

"I'll bet yuh Slim's gone up there," Cal declared. "He went out like he had something on his mind."

"Aw, that's nothing," said Happy Jack. "I never seen Slim when he didn't have."

Just then Slim returned and began to draw off his boots. The others followed his initiative, and in fifteen minutes the bunk house was dark and still.

Slim had thought of stealing up to the camp to try and learn the worst, but the sky had clouded, and it was snowing; and, though none might justly call Slim a coward, yet the prospect of riding alone to a camp of dying Indians did not strike him as pleasant. He listened long, but no sound came down from the bench land. He chose to take the silence for a good omen, and went in somewhat comforted.

The next morning was Sunday, and Slim slept later even than did the others, for the simple reason that he had lain awake nearly all night. He awoke to find Cal standing over him, shaking him vigorously, and saying things of a startling nature.

He had taken a shoot up the hill, he said, to find out how the Crees had come through with their banquet.

At the word "Cree," Slim's solemn, round eyes opened widely, and he tumbled precipitately out of bed. In the heavy sleep which had come to him just before daybreak he had forgotten the threatened tragedy.

Cal sat upon the edge of Slim's bunk, made him a cigarette and told a harrowing tale. They were not *all* laid out, he soothed—only fourteen. He was quite particular to count them, and he said it was a cinch there would be others later on. He remarked that it was sure a fright, and a crying shame the bounty on Injuns had run out. He said nobody need tell him that there strychnine was no good, when it could throw down fourteen Crees in one round.

There was more that he said while he finished the cigarette, but Slim did not wait to hear it. He went out hastily, looking rather pasty, and by his going changed the color of Cal's remarks. Cal listened to his retreating footsteps, lay back upon the bed and laughed to himself.

"On the dead, now," Weary demanded, "how do they stack up?"

"Fine and lovely; yuh can't kill a Cree that way—and that wolf dope must sure be fierce truck. Some of 'em looked kinda sick, but I noticed they was able t' pack up pretty lively. They was about ready t' hit the trail when I got there."

"I always told yuh that strychnine was no good," Happy Jack reminded, patronizingly. "I wolfed with it one hull winter."

"Maybe so much freezing and thawing took out what little strength it did have," Chip suggested.

"Anyway, I sure landed on the buck that sassed us, last night." Cal's tone told of a great content. "I made out it was that soiled bucko with the pipe. He seemed low-spirited, like his supper didn't agree with him none too well. I read him his pedigree, 'way back past the flood. He didn't say nothing, but he sure savvied, all right. He gave me the bad eye; and there was others felt unfriendly about it, too, by the scowl they got on 'em. I seen there

wasn't nothing doing, so I moseyed along."

Just then Patsy called breakfast, and they filed out. As they came down the path Slim shot by them, mounted on Banjo. When he saw them he pulled the horse down to a trot.

"Say, tell the Ole Man he c'n take his pay fer Banjo out uh my wages," he yelled. "I ain't goin' t' hang around here an' let no sheriff git his paws on *me*, by golly! S'long." Banjo felt the prick of Slim's spurs and galloped out of sight, while the Happy Family stood staring after him.

"Skipped, by thunder!" Cal murmured, in a daze. "Now, what d'yuh think uh that?"

"Wasn't that his rifle he had slung on the saddle?" asked Jack Bates. "It was in the mess house."

"He'll keep a-going," added Chip, and his lips twitched between laughter and profanity. "Slim's what yuh might call a one-ideaed man."

"The chump!" cried Cal. "Why, the darned fool might a-knowed I was just throwing a load!"

"He'll be back by dinner," Weary comforted.

"Don't yuh never believe he will," Cal retorted, pessimistically.

During breakfast they discovered that Slim had got a lunch from Patsy, and as Patsy's lunches were notoriously generous, they considered that he was provided with food for two days. This made matters seem more serious, and they decided that the only thing to do was to go after him at once, and explain that it was only a joke.

Even the Happy Family hates being obliged to explain its jokes, and it was a moody company which galloped down the coulee trail half an hour after. When they saw where Slim had taken the short cut across the hills to the Bad Lands, they drew up and consulted together.

"This here ain't goin' t' be no picnic," Happy Jack predicted. "If the snow melts so we can't track him, we've sure got our work cut out fer us."

They looked up at the sun, shining its March best, and at the hoofmarks already showing black in the thin layer of snow, and said nothing; there was nothing to say.

For five miles they galloped across the levels and down shallow coulees, and then the Bad Lands flung out century-scarred arms more numerous than a devilfish can show, and they were compelled to slacken their pace, and to keep sharp lookout for the faint traces of Banjo's hoofprints.

Times were when they lost the tracks completely in the rocky coulee bottoms, where the snow melted more quickly; and then they scattered, searching like fox hounds at fault. Times were when they halted, in doubt which way to go, where the canyons ran off at angles.

In the main, however, they kept to Slim's route, for they guessed that he was making for the Little Rockies, and would take the shortest way to the first ford.

Noon came, and they were far from home and Patsy. Also, they were hungry, and when Happy Jack reminded them that Patsy always had suet pudding for Sunday dinner, they grew hungrier.

They climbed a long ridge to where they could look out over the country between themselves and the Missouri, and searched with their eyes while their horses rested. A coyote was slinking along a near hillside, and an eagle circled leisurely over their heads, but no other living thing could they see.

The barren hills tumbled in fantastic confusion all about them, lonely, forbidding, weird in their eternal silence. The only friendly thing in sight was the river, and it seemed hurrying to reach a land more hospitable. The Happy Family had ridden every ridable foot of the country many times, but never had it depressed them more.

They filed dispiritedly down the ridge and went on, with no heart for the task they had set themselves. Slim was somewhere in that discouraging jumble, but there was no telling where. There was not even a surety that he was headed for the ford; the barren hills around them offered unlimited hiding places, and if he chose he might stay

there for an indefinite length of time, with no care but the finding of food.

Near the head of a narrow gash in the bluffs, through which they could see the shine of the river beyond, something hummed past them and clinked sharply against a bowlder behind. A few seconds later came the far-off crack of a rifle which they recognized instinctively as Slim's beloved 30-30.

The Happy Family prudently scurried to shelter, for Slim could shoot much better than he could take a joke; and even spent bullets may be nasty things to stop. Another leaden hint flicked up the dust under Happy Jack's left stirrup as they whipped around a shoulder of rock.

"The big chump!" exploded Cal, who felt especially aggrieved at this fresh proof of Slim's faith in his veracity.

"Oh, mamma!" sighed Weary. "T' think uh being held up by Slim—*Slim!*"

"I never gave him credit for the nerve," grinned Chip, getting out his tobacco and papers.

"He must be plumb locoed," said Jack Bates. "I guess we made it a little too scarey last night. But he ought t' be able t' tell us from a sheriff's posse, and he must know we ain't out fer any reward."

"It's likely he spotted us when we topped that ridge back there," Chip explained. "And he wouldn't recognize anyone that far. So he just ambushed the bunch for luck."

"By thunder! I'll do worse than ambush him!" threatened Cal. "You wait till I get m' hands on him. A man with no more sense than he's got ought t' be shut up."

"That's right," bantered Chip. "Any man that would swallow anything you told him is sure short on brains."

"It's them freak pictures yuh stuck in his face last night. They'd queer anybody!" Cal faced him belligerently.

"'Let dogs delight——'" began Weary, sweetly. But Cal told him curtly to close his face, and Weary did. Cal's temper would not bear much more roughening.

"Well, are we going t' set here till dark?" Jack Bates wanted to know. "I guess we've located Slim, all right. How're we going t' dislodge the enemy?"

They looked moodily up at the bluffs on either side. Clearly there was no hope of any flank movement. Happy Jack voiced the sentiments of the five.

"It looks t' me," he croaked, "as if Slim had us dead t' rights. We got t' git through this gap—'nless we go back about five miles an' come down the next draw."

"Maybe we could raise him with a war whoop," Chip suggested.

It seemed the only way, so they shouted Slim's name until the hills were full of it. But the wind whistled sharply through the gap and carried the sound back from the river. Jack Bates ventured out into the open and came near getting shot for his pains. He came back to shelter saying many things his mother never taught him.

They yelled explanations till their throats ached; and the deep canyons mocked their efforts. Then Weary had an inspiration. He got out his handkerchief, regarded it critically, decided that it would pass for white, and searched about him for a flagstaff. He could find nothing that would answer, however, and so tied it to the end of his quirt, thinking that he could keep it swinging and so keep his flag waving in the breeze, in the orthodox manner. Then he rode boldly out into the mouth of the pass.

There were no shots, but Weary never noticed their absence. For Glory, knowing of old the swing of a rawhide quirt, and not liking the white flutter at the end of it, started pitching with much venom in his eyes.

There was not a horse on the ranch could pitch like Glory, or that could keep it up so long. The Happy Family were fond of declaring that Glory could pitch for ten minutes without taking breath, on a patch of ground the size of a water bucket—which, of course, was rank exaggeration. Still, there was a suggestion of truth in the assertion, as Glory proved right there. So

there was nothing Weary could do but lower the flag of truce and belabor Glory with it—which he did most vigorously.

Simultaneously with the climax, which was worthy even of Glory, Slim rode out from the pass, grinning sheepishly.

"By golly, I'd know Glory's buck jumps ten mile off!" he began, placatingly. "I—I thought at first it was the sheriff. I hope I didn't hit none un yuh."

"Well, you're a lulla!" Cal rode up to him truculently. "You'd look nice, wouldn't yuh, standin' off a sheriff? Do yuh know they c'd send yuh over the road for resistin' an officer. Or have yuh lived here all your life an' never learned nothing?"

"I'd stand off forty sheriffs b'fore I'd let 'em pinch me fer murder," said Slim, doggedly. "I aint' t' blame fer nothin', an', by golly, I won't stand fer no arrestin' in mine! Yuh needn't think yuh c'n talk me into goin' back, if that's what yuh come fer."

They gathered round him and explained, with a wealth of detail and no little vituperation. There was much in the explanation that reflected no credit upon the Happy Family as young men who bear the reputation of being generally truthful. There was more not calculated to raise Slim in his own estimation. Through it all he sat ponderously in the saddle, his face red and uncomfortable, his eyes round and solemn, and said never a word.

"Say," Weary ventured, after the worst was over, and Slim might be supposed to understand fairly well the situation, "have yuh got any lunch left, Slim? I feel hollow clean t' my toes."

Slim turned and glared. "Well, by golly," he ejaculated, "you've got gall!"

Weary did not press the matter, though he eyed longingly the bulky package behind Slim's cantle.

When they turned the noses of their horses toward home Slim led the way. And the sight of his broad back and the atmosphere of frozen displeasure which surrounded him were not conducive to easy conversation—nor was the emptiness that oppressed them. They spoke no word except to their horses, and it did not better their tempers to think how rough was the road they must journey.

So they rode till they reached the welcome level again, and knew that the Flying U coulee lay just before. Then, at a point where the coulee trail showed black against the yellow-brown of the prairie, Slim stopped and faced them determinedly.

"I got a few things t' say t' you fellers," he began, ominously. "You've had yer josh, an' I hope it's done yuh a lot uh good. By golly, yuh don't look a real heelarious bunch, t' me! But I want yuh t' understan' one thing: I've stood all yer roastin' all winter. Yuh kep' me from gittin' wolves where I could a-got 'em if yuh'd kep' yer yawp shet. By golly, I'd a-done a lot better if I'd a-read yuh the riot ack away las' winter, when yuh kep' singin' yer song about me runnin' t' Denson's t' see Mis' Bixby! I didn't run there, but, by golly, I'm a-goin' to from now on! I'm goin' there right now, an' I ain't comin' home till I git good an' ready! An' I don't give a darn whether the cow gits milked er not, t'-night." It was Slim's duty to milk the cow, and it was a duty he had never before shirked.

"'N', by golly, they's another thing. I'm goin' t' ast the Countess t' go t' every darn dance in the country—an' t' hell with the hull bunch uh yuh! An' if yuh got any remarks t' make, make 'em right now, 'n' I'll git down an' fight the five uh yuh.

"By golly, I ain't goin' t' take no more off'n you fellers, 'n' the sooner yuh settle down t' that fack, the more peaceable the ranch'll be! 'N' don't none uh yuh ever say 'Injun' t' *me!*"

He set his face resolutely toward the home of the Countess Bixby, and the Happy Family stood silently and watched him out of sight. When a dip in the trail hid him from them, they turned and rode thoughtfully homeward.

The Mysterious Heathwole

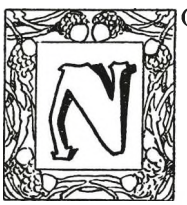
By Howard Fitzalan

Author of "The Blucher of Wheat," Etc.

In this very novel and well told story Mr. Fitzalan depicts the adventures of a philanthropic freebooter known as the Mysterious Heathwole, who has some peculiar ideas as to what constitutes right and wrong. When he strives to put these ideas into effect—his motor boat is a very necessary adjunct, by the way—he falls afoul of the authorities and of some other people, all of which makes very interesting reading.

CHAPTER I.

HEATHWOLE, THE MANY-SIDED.



OW that it is all over, and stagnation reigns as before, it is time for some one who knows to make the information general. Prejudice in the matter would make the account worthless, and a wrong point of view worse than worthless—which would be harmful. Our second Robin Hood has gone from among us: gone to that bourne from which there is no return, perhaps; again, perhaps he is living in another part of the world under another name than the one by which we knew him, and carrying out his own peculiar ideas in his own peculiar way.

There are some who have made of him a hero, a second champion of the poor and oppressed, one who had no thoughts save for others. This is not true. He was a man like any one of us, who had the same passions as other men, and who worked for his own aggrandizement sometimes, even as do the rest of us. But with him, I believe, others generally came before himself, though when he worked for himself he did his work with that vigor and determination, strength and will, which characterized everything else to which he put his hand.

On the other side, there are people who look upon him as a black and bloodthirsty ruffian, reckless of the law, of morality, and of everything except his own unlawful desires. Some of us will not soon forget that it was he who created a veritable reign of terror in the Chesapeake; and caused those who had gotten wealth in a way unmoral to clutch their belongings tightly and grow pallid with fear whenever the name of Blackbeard was mentioned. "Blackbeard the Second" was what he was called by those who hated him; but I prefer to think of him as a successor to that merry freebooter who reigned in Sherwood Forest a thousand years ago, and who, if history is correct, championed the poor and aided them with money wrung from the unlawfully rich.

The latter class will dream eternally, perhaps, and wake in cold perspiration from the vision of the long, shark-like boat, and the man sitting within it in motorist's mask and goggles. They will see him raise a black-gauntleted hand in which he holds a ten-chambered Luger pistol; they will hear his sinister commands, and obey them; then go on their way with fear and rage in their hearts. Over and over again in dreams this will come back

to them; live with them; and never cease to be a cause for terror. They do not believe that he is dead, for his shadow is always with them.

And now, perhaps, I should tell the story. How did all this happen, and why? I have begun wrongly. You must bear with me, my masters. In truth, I have a tale to tell; but so full of it am I that I must necessarily begin with the end instead of the things that led up to it.

So, as this story of the second Robin Hood progresses, you will learn all that I know; and I flatter myself that I know more of him than does the rest of the world. His career as the flamboyant press has painted it glitters with gaudy deeds and plays to the gallery; actions, some of them, without rhyme or reason, done from a desire for effect or for the money which was to be gained.

Therefore, I will tell you of him; of Eleanor Parlessor; her brother, Holliday; of Osgood Paca, once mayor of Baltimore; and, it may be, egotism will not allow me to leave out the details concerning myself, Thomas Eldridge Jephson—Tom Jephson—at your service.

Some five years before Heathwole came to be one of us I made my first acquaintance with him in Japan. It was really a very small matter. I had hired a rickshaw to take me over the city, and when it brought me back to the dock of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, the rickshaw man demanded a certain extortionate fare. It was near to midnight, and there were no white men about; but there were many rickshaw men, big, brawny Nipponese, with evil-looking faces and great muscles bulging out of their brown skin.

I would have paid the fare, and thought nothing of it; but I knew the charge was nearly treble what I should have paid, and it irked me considerably to be cheated. I therefore gave the rickshaw man what I considered to be his proper fare, and set off to find a *sampan* to take me out to the steamer. I hadn't gone three steps before my man had me by the sleeve of my coat pouring out fierce expostulations. The other rickshaw men gathered themselves together and looked toward me, shambling forward.

It was about this time that a man in the uniform of the Japanese Transport Service, a first mate or engineer, to judge by his stripes, passing along the Bund, noted my plight and came forward. He was perhaps six feet in height, but so broad were his shoulders and thick his limbs that he did not appear to be especially tall. His face was one that I did not forget: a long, straight nose was the predominant feature; a mouth that seemed but a slit across his face, so thin were his lips; large ears that protruded from the sides of his head and were rendered more prominent by the fact that his hair was clipped very short. His visored cap was pulled well over his face, but in spite of that I could see his bushy eyebrows, seemingly a straight line of hair, and the big, black eyes, sunk cavernously into his head.

He came forward and several of the rickshaw men saw him. One of them cried a warning, and all of them fell back except my own importunate. The man in uniform looked at me keenly.

"What's the row?" he asked. His voice was of heavy timbre, but there was something melodious in it, and, although he was plainly an American, it lacked any nasal intonation whatever.

I told him briefly what my man demanded, and also the time I had employed him.

"Uh-huh," grunted my officer. "You were going to give him two yen, were you? That's too much. If you had given him ninety sen, which is all he deserves, you wouldn't have gotten into trouble. These people always overcharge anyone who pays them too much." He turned swiftly on the rickshaw man, and his right hand gripped his shoulder. For the first time I noted his hands. They were scrupulously clean, but were large, knotted, heavily veined and sunburned into intense brownness. Never before had I

seen such heavy, powerful-looking hands. Evidently the rickshaw man felt the weight of the one on his shoulder.

The officer said something to him in Japanese in a tone which betokened that he was not at all averse to dealing out corporal punishment. The man replied in a subdued tone. The officer then demanded ninety sen from me, which I gave him; and my protector bestowed it on the Japanese with an admonitory curse, or what sounded like one. The rickshaw man got between the shafts of his conveyance and rattled noisily away.

"Remember," said the officer, "the charge is fifteen sen an hour, and it is bad policy to give them more than that. Good-night."

"Oh—er—good-night," I stammered. "I'm immensely obliged to you."

"That's all right," he responded, gruffly, and went off down the Bund. I got my *sampan* from the edge of the dock, and the Japanese boatman rowed me out to the *Coptic*.

I was about eighteen then, and was on a tour around the world with my father. A great many things happened in the five years that followed, chief among which was that my father died. He did not greatly trust me, for I had been somewhat of a harum-scarum youngster, so that I found myself at his death with only five thousand dollars a year allowance. The rest of his money and the principal of my income was tied up in such a way that I could not touch it until I was thirty-five. No doubt this was a wise provision, but I felt it very keenly at the time.

Another thing that happened—and the thing that chained me to Baltimore—I fell in love with Eleanor Parlessor. She was four years younger than I, and I don't believe I had ever seen much of her until she came out on her eighteenth birthday at the first Monday german of the Bachelor's Cotillion. I mention her only briefly now because I want to speak of Heathwole; but later you will hear more of her—a great deal more.

During these five years of which I speak I had never forgotten the face of the man who had helped me out with the rickshaw men. Sometimes it annoyed me that this man's features would so constantly intrude themselves upon me. I could assign no reason for it, but, nevertheless, time after time his face would come to me, waking and dreaming. It was rather a peculiar state of mind, and somewhat perplexing. The man was in no way connected with my affairs, nor had he exercised any influence on my life. He was no doubt fifteen thousand miles away from me, pursuing his duties in the Japanese service, and absolutely forgetful of the fact that he had ever helped a youthful American named Jephson out of a petty scrape.

Now, I can quite well explain this obsession: that is, if there is any reliance to be placed on the saw which says something about events foreshadowing themselves.

The next time I met him was in my own home town. I was down in a part of it where I had no excuse for being, and where I should not have gone attired in evening clothes and an opera hat. I had been to see some stupid play at the Academy, and left before it was half over. Not wishing to go to the club at so early an hour, I wandered along the streets, and finally found myself somewhere near the vicinity of Marsh Market, without the slightest idea as to where I was. There was a cheap music hall in front of me which advertised a free performance and a peculiarly odious brand of beer. I cannot tell you why I pushed back the swinging doors and went into the place, passing through the bar to the auditorium. I sat myself down at one of the greasy tables, and allowed my ears to be offended by the raucous voice of a woman, long past her youth, who ambled about, heavily coquettish, and sang a ballad with a most pronounced *double entendre,* which same was vigorously applauded by the gang of young hoodlums who formed the major portion of the audience.

In conformity with the established practice, I had ordered a drink; but

just before the waiter returned with it, two very tough young men with billy-cock hats stuck on the sides of their heads entered, and did me the honor of noticing me. "Pike the gent in the stovepipe," I heard some one say. "Get next," said some one else. The remarks were followed by the drawing up of chairs to my table; and the sitting down of the two very tough young men.

The waiter came back with something he called a cocktail, but which I much feared to taste, and I paid him for it, giving him a small tip. "The gent says to bring two more of the same, Ed," remarked the loudest of my two enforced companions, who sported a huge red scarf with white dots in it, and a large piece of glass cut in the form of a diamond.

The waiter looked at me dubiously, then responded to the young tough: "Say, now, none of yer kiddin'. We don't want no rough house in here."

The red-scarfed youth turned his nut-like visage to me. "Say, ain't that all right, Willie?" he queried. "Ain't you good fer two drinks?"

I surveyed him calmly, and told him that I wasn't there to pay for anything except what I drank myself.

"Oh, Chauncey!" said the other, in a high falsetto. "Mercy on us!"

The waiter looked visibly annoyed. "Say, cut it out, now, Dyke," he said. "When a gent comes in here, he ain't gotter do what you say. You cut it out, see!"

The man called Dyke consigned him pleasantly to the realms of Cerberus; and then turned to me with an ugly look about the jaw. "Say, now," he said, "I guess you think yer some better than us, hey?" I did not reply. "Well, now, friend, we wants a couple of drinks. Do we get 'em or not?"

"You do not," I replied. I drank my cocktail, much to my stomach's annoyance, and got up, and walked out of the hall. The two hoodlums followed me. The waiter waved a rag energetically.

"Say, mister," he said, "you better stay in here. One of them mugs is a devil uv a scrapper, and he's haff loaded ter-night."

I thanked him and passed out. The two followed me, and a few paces away from the resort the red-scarfed one, Dyke, an enormous brute, caught hold of my arm. I pushed it off. The next moment he dealt me a blow in the face that sent me staggering to the wall.

I threw up both hands in self-defense, and stood there. I can't fight. No one knows that better than I do. Dyke went for me, and caught me a blow on the nose. I hit wildly, missing him every time; and a perfect rain of blows descended on me. I covered my face with my arms and staggered back to the wall. Suddenly the blows ceased, and I heard a squeal from Dyke, and a curse from his companion.

Looking up, I saw a stranger standing there. One heavy hand held Dyke firmly by the shoulder while the other held his companion. "At it again, are you?" came from the stranger, in menacing tones. "I thought I'd given you fair warning? You move, now, my beauty, and I'll break your face for you." This to Dyke, as the stranger released him and took a police whistle from his pocket, which he blew shrilly. Dyke turned quickly and his fist shot out. Somehow, I didn't notice how, the stranger caught his arm and whirled him about. Dyke collapsed with a yell.

"My wrist's broken," he moaned.

Meanwhile I took out my handkerchief, mopped my bleeding nose and picked up my opera hat, which I set on my head. When the police came up, I was looking more presentable. There were two of them, and they looked agitated.

The stranger nodded to them. "These two toughs want thirty days at hard labor. I'm pretty tired of their plug-ugly style. They assaulted this gentleman here. He'll prefer the charge and I'll come around later and see the lieutenant about them. This man, Dyke, has been doing all he could to get his sister down to his own level. You know Mrs. Emory's taken the girl over. I want him behind the bars, and I'll

put him there. Here, take hold of them."

He released the two men, and a policeman promptly took them over. The man relighted a short brier pipe, and wiped his hands with his handkerchief. "I'll see you at the station house in half an hour," he said, and went away.

The station house was only a few squares away, so we walked it. I briefly informed the two officers of what had happened, and how. But I was not very much interested in the case. The men had been punished. Only my curiosity with regard to the stranger who had interfered prompted me to go to the police headquarters.

Finally my curiosity vented itself in words. "Who is that man who helped me out?" I asked.

"That," said the policeman I spoke to, his tones full of intense admiration, "is Mr. Heathwole."

"And who is Mr. Heathwole?" I wished to know.

The policeman grinned. "Now, there you got me, sir," he admitted. "He's got money, for one thing, and another he's a fierce scrapper. He's set up a mission down in the slums around here for getting girls—young girls—out of their bad ways, and giving them another chance. He puts up the coin for the mission. It's got twenty rooms, and there's a nice lady named Mrs. Emory runs it. A girl can get a room there and food and clothes if she'll do a little work. This Mr. Heathwole's been raiding the kind of men that lives on women, and he's knocked out more bullies down here than you know. He can fight like a streak of lightning. The marshal give him a deputy policeman's position so's he can arrest people if he wants ter. I don't know nothing more about him 'cept that he's doing a lot of good and helping us out. The men down this way hate him like poison, but the women think he's a sort of tin saint."

We entered the police station, and the prisoners were committed on my charge: their names, ages and lack of occupation noted on the blotter, and my name entered as preferring the charge. Vigorously protesting, the two were taken off to their cells.

Several moments later Heathwole entered and immediately began to talk to the lieutenant on the desk. The conversation ended with the lieutenant saying: "I'll leave a note for the judge. They'll get thirty days, all right."

Then Heathwole came over to me. I offered him my cigarette box, but he refused, indicating his pipe.

"Glad you pushed the charge," he said; then added, severely: "You ought to know better than to come down in this district dressed as you are. It was a fool trick, in my opinion."

As he spoke the match dropped from my fingers, for a sudden flood of recollection overcame me. "I remember you now," I gasped. "It was in Nagasaki. You helped me out of a trouble with some rickshaw men."

The man started for a minute, then smiled. "I remember, too," he said. "Always in trouble, eh?"

CHAPTER II.

THE WESTVIEW COUNTRY CLUB.

He had changed very little since I had seen him before. He was still clean-shaven, although the bluish tinge to his cheeks and jaw showed that if he had wished to raise beard and mustache, he might have had very full ones. His big, black eyes were as bold, aggressive and domineering as before; and his lips as thin and as hard; his ears were as prominent and his hair as close-clipped. The only change that I noted was that he was not in uniform. He was dressed very well, indeed, and quite unobtrusively. His sack clothes were of dark gray, and had been cut by a good tailor. He wore a turn-over collar into which a black scarf was tightly knotted, and a soft, gray, felt hat, pulled a trifle over his eyebrows. He was undeniably ugly, but there was nothing coarse about his face or his get-up, only a certain fierce domination.

"My name," I said, tendering him

my card, "is Jephson. I'm mighty glad to have run across you again."

He took the card, looked at it and thrust it into his pocket. "You ought to be," he said. "That man Dyke would have made mincemeat out of you. You can't fight a little bit, can you?"

I hardly liked the tone in which he said it. "I haven't found it necessary to be a pugilist," I returned, stiffly.

"Pugilist be hanged!" he said. "Every man ought to know how to defend himself. You better go in for athletics." One of his huge hands gripped my upper arm so tightly that I set my teeth in my lips, so great was the pain. "Soft, soft," he said, letting loose of the injured member. "You brace up and take exercise," he recommended. "Well, my name's Heathwole. Good-night."

I started forward eagerly. "Won't you come up to the club with me and have a drink? I'd like to have a talk with you."

He consulted his watch. "Well," he meditated, "I live down on the bay shore, and I make it every night in a boat——"

"Come up, won't you?" I urged. "I'd like to show you our clubhouse, if you haven't seen it. The Baltimore Club."

When he heard the name of it, I noticed a change in his demeanor. Anyone who lives in Baltimore knows what the name of that club signifies. Although I must say I was a little sorry to see that it influenced him at all. Evidently he saw what was passing in my mind.

He did not reply for some time, during which he made me exceedingly uncomfortable by eying me from head to foot with rather a contemptuous air. "I should have been able to place you before," he said, finally. "Now I can tell you what you are. You belong to one of the best families." The sneering accentuation which he placed on the two last words was almost unbearable. "You belong to the best clubs; you know all the so-called nice people; and you've never done anything in your life, nor thought anything that some one else hasn't thought for you."

I faced him in some anger. "Have I done anything to make you insult me?" I asked.

"You have," he retorted, promptly. "You spoke about taking me to your club in the manner with which St. Peter might speak when he was welcoming a spirit into the gates of heaven. You imagine that because I don't run with the people that term themselves exclusive—because I don't know them—I necessarily wish to know them—don't you?"

In justice to myself, I don't believe I had consciously formed this idea; perhaps unconsciously I had. At any rate, I was not accustomed to such a direct accusation. "Why, er—nothing of the sort," I finally ejaculated, indignantly. "I didn't think of any such thing."

"Well," he responded, with a grim smile, "you're quite wrong. I do want to know your crowd. I have my own reasons. I'm not going to crawl around and be humble, however. I don't recognize your God-given superiority. But I was thinking this very evening that I'd have to make the acquaintance of some people to get me into the Westview Country Club."

"Oh!" I ejaculated. It was hard enough to keep pace with this man's evolutions.

"Are you a member of that?" he asked. I admitted the fact.

"H'm," he muttered; then he turned swiftly on me. "Will you put up my name for membership in the club?"

I was visibly taken aback.

"You won't," he sneered. "I thought not. I'll find some one else, then. It doesn't matter. Good-night."

He walked swiftly away and out of the police station before I could catch my breath. When I did, I hurried after him and began to walk along side by side with him.

"I didn't say I wouldn't," I hastened to affirm.

He looked at me with a certain contemptuous amusement that I distinctly did not like. "Look here," I said, hotly; "what do you imagine I am, anyhow? Because I can't fight—hold my own against a couple of ruffians—am

I therefore a child? What's amusing about me, anyhow?"

He had a habit which I began to notice: the habit of not replying for so long a time that one imagined he was not going to reply at all. Finally he said: "I don't know that there's anything especially amusing about you except that you are existing by right of ancestry. You have done nothing to put yourself in a prominent position, and yet you hold one, and affect the right to look down on people who have honestly worked to attain the things that you have. I don't blame you for not wanting to put up my name for your club. I'm not well-bred, and, according to your vernacular, I'm not 'nice'—thank Heaven! You needn't apologize. You haven't hurt my feelings. They're pretty well case-hardened."

"I didn't say I wouldn't put up your name for the club," I again affirmed. "On the other hand, it will give me pleasure to put it up to-morrow and have it seconded. There'll be a board meeting in three days, and my uncle is chairman. So I can get you in easily enough—and I will."

He stuffed his pipe with a practiced hand, and presently said: "Now that's kind in you, Jephson. I'm sorry I said what I did say. But before you do anything of the kind, I want you to know that I'm not your sort. I've spent most of my life with hard men—tough men; and I haven't any easy, graceful manners such as you and your crowd have. I don't care a rap for conventions, and I'm liable to violate some of them."

He paused and lit his pipe.

"I don't think," I said slowly, but with growing conviction, "that you are capable of doing anything petty or mean. And, after all, that's the main thing, isn't it?"

He threw away the half-burned match. "Maybe it is," he admitted; "but I'm rather surprised to hear you say so. Look here, Jephson, you've been very decent about this. Now, I'd like you to go down to my place to-night. It's not far from the Westview Club, by the way—about two miles, I should say. Maybe you know it. It dates back to colonial days, they say; and some people named Randolph used to own it. I've taken it for the spring and summer."

"The old Randolph house," I cried, in some surprise. "Well, I should say I did know it."

"Will you come down with me to-night, then?" he asked. "We'll take a cab, stop at your house, and give you a chance to change your clothes. Then we'll drive down to the dock and get into my motor boat. My place is twenty miles from Baltimore, but I can make it easily in half an hour——"

"What!" I ejaculated. "Easily?"

"Very easily," he replied. "Will you come?"

"Why—yes," I replied. "Then to-morrow we can go over to the club, and I'll put up your name. All right."

He hailed a cab and we got into it. I looked at him in some surprise, wondering about this motor boat which could make twenty miles easily in half an hour. "Do you know," I said, when we were on our way up Charles Street, "you must have a wonderful boat—that's a good speed in a race; but to make it easily, as you can, means that you can put a half more on in a race."

"So I can," he replied, briefly. "That was my line, you know. I've been the chief engineer of an ocean steamer, and I've held positions in that line ever since I was a kid. I began as a coal passer in the navy at sixteen; and I've been everything in that branch of it—stoker, fireman, and all the grades of engineer. My last command was on a turbine yacht; and what money I have now I've gotten out of my patent on the turbine—an improved engine that'll do a lot more than the old. I sold the patent for a pretty big sum. Now I'm experimenting with motors—and compressed air, if you must know." He smiled rather arrogantly, I thought. "However, you'll see my boat, and if you know anything about motor boats, you'll grant it's an improvement. And it's only the beginning," he added, with some pride.

He said very little more, relapsing

into an attitude which seemed to indicate that he was in deep thought. When the cab pulled up before the apartment house where I have my quarters, I asked him if he would come up.

He shook his head. "I'll wait here," he responded. "Don't get to dreaming up there, though."

I went to my rooms, threw some pajamas, collars, brushes and toilet articles into a handbag, and discarded my evening clothes for a suit of flannels, a negligée shirt, and a stock-collar; my pumps for a pair of tan shoes, and my opera hat for a felt. Picking up my bag, I went downstairs and reëntered the cab.

"Black Dock," directed Heathwole, and we drove off again. He presently resurrected himself out of his meditations and accepted one of my cigarettes.

"I suppose you know most of the people at Westview," he commented.

I assented. "I'm going to live at the club myself this coming month," I said. "I do a bit of riding, some tennis and some golf, and I have a little catboat lying in the boathouse now."

"I don't mean the club people altogether," he said. "There are lots of people who have country houses down there. You know them, too?"

"I expect I do," I replied. "I've been spending most of the summer at Westview for some ten or twelve years. My father was one of the club founders, and we had a cottage on the club grounds for a long time."

He nodded. "I want to know about a certain girl," he said. "She rides a roan mare with a white star on its forehead. Her hair is yellow, and her eyes are—golden brown, I expect you'd call them. She's a little thin, maybe; but her figure's the sort I like—supple, and all that. Her complexion is about as fair as any complexion can be, and she always has pinkish cheeks."

He paused for a moment, and drew a deep breath.

"I don't mind telling you," he began, in a burst of confidence, "that the only reason I want to get in with the Westview set is to meet that girl. A man can't tell anything about a woman until he meets her; but if she's up to the standard of her looks—well." His confidence came to a quick cessation. "At any rate, I want to know who she is. She comes past my place almost every day on horseback, and while I've been around lots of the time, she never seemed to see me at all. Until one day——" He paused again.

The cabman pulled in his horse with a jerk, and the cab came to a standstill. "Black Dock," he announced, in a voice devoid of emotion. We got out of the cab, and Heathwole tendered the cabman a dollar.

The man eyed the coin, and then looked reproachfully at Heathwole.

"Say," he protested, "you wanter cough up 'nother samoleon. Whatcher think this is—a street car?"

"Now, look, my man," said Heathwole, patiently, "you'd better get your cab off this dock if you're not hunting trouble. If you want another dollar, you get down here and begin to collect it."

Looking at Heathwole in the electric light, he was not the sort of a man to give hopes of collection by force. The jehu muttered something inarticulate, whipped up his horse and got away to a safe distance. Then he reined in his horse and gave vent to a torrent of profanity which must have taken him years and years to accumulate.

Heathwole paid no further attention to him. He walked along the dock, greeting the watchman, who sat on a raised pole, and donated a cigar. The watchman pointed to a craft moored a few yards away.

"There she is," said Heathwole, indicating a long, low-lying craft, which looked more like a covered canoe than anything else. Its back was rounded and slippery, and there was apparently no way of entering it.

It was perhaps thirty feet long, and seemed to be made of some sort of shiny stuff, which I took to be aluminum. In shape it had the rotund peculiarities of a fat Havana, but in looks it reminded me of a shark.

Heathwole dropped lightly into one of the rowboats moored close by, and

paddled out to where the craft lay. He took something from his pocket, which he fitted into an aperture, and threw back a part of the boat's back, revealing an opening large enough for several men to enter. He jumped into the craft and disappeared from sight. I could hear a wheezing and puffing, like the short, quick gasps of a winded runner. Presently Heathwole appeared and, leaning out of the craft, moored the rowboat to a stake. He followed this action by grasping the steering wheel and pushing his foot heavily downward. The shark-like craft darted seaward, but presently turned and came back to the dock.

"Climb down into one of the rowboats," Heathwole directed. "Chuck me your bag."

A moment later he was helping me into the boat, which shot out into the bay with what seemed to be the swiftness of an arrow. The only fact that recalled to your mind that the boat was moving was the chug-chug of the engine behind us. The sharp nose of the craft cut the water cleanly like a knife, and when sometimes a wave dashed over the bow, it simply fell back from the rounded sides. The steering wheel and the seat on which we sat were one-quarter of the entire length from the point of the bow, and the waves were spent before they reached us.

It was easily seen that we were going at a speed which was something marvelous, even in these days of heavy horse-power. Fortunately, Heathwole had provided me with a mackintosh and a pair of goggles, otherwise the fine spray, cut into the tiniest particles by the boat, might have cut bits of skin from the face and wetted my clothes.

The objects that flashed by us: red-and-green-lantered boats, heavy scows, long, clean-limbed sailing craft; heavy, squat coasting steamers, and, along the land, the glinting purple of the electric-lighted suburbs, soon resolved themselves into a kaleidoscopic panorama.

"This is great," I said.

Heathwole did not seem to hear me, but the sound of my voice had evidently roused him from his thoughts.

"The girl I was speaking of," he said; "I saw her lots of times. Then one day she tried to take a fence near my place. Her hunter was spent, and so missed it and rolled her over. I cut into the mix-up, but found that nothing serious had happened. She told me so herself. Then she got on her horse again."

I recalled with mild interest the fact that Heathwole was anxious to meet some girl who lived at Westview.

"I asked her if she would accept my horse," he continued—"told her that her own was pretty far gone. She declined. I then asked her her name. What do you think she said?"

I informed him that I had no idea.

"She said," he pursued, answering his own question: "'If you wish to know me, you can find it possible to meet men at the Westview Country Club who know me. If you really want to know me very badly, you will find out who I am. If you don't, why, then, nothing's lost,' or words to that effect." He eyed me morosely. "Well, I do want to know her."

"You'll meet her, no doubt," I said, cheerfully.

"She wore a peculiar ring on her finger," he added, still hoping for elucidation. "It was a coral rose with a diamond snake head in the rose—— Well, what's the matter with you? Look out, you came near making me run down that scow."

"I beg pardon," I said, humbly.

Sudden suspicion gleamed from his eyes. "You recognize that girl, don't you? Who is she?"

I looked at him miserably. "She's the girl I want to marry, Heathwole," I said. "Her name is Eleanor Parlessor."

CHAPTER III.

HEATHWOLE PROPHESIES.

I recall distinctly that Heathwole did not say a word to me for fully half an hour after I had enlightened him as to the name of his inamorata and my feelings toward her. We passed out of the Patapsco and into the

Chesapeake; and after a while he reduced the speed of the boat and brought her to within a few feet of a little covered boathouse built over the water by means of heavy piles. The motor boat drifted gently within it to a pair of landing steps, revealed by her searchlight. Heathwole invited me to get out, and after securely mooring the boat, and working a beam which brought a heavy bar before the boathouse entrance, preventing either egress or ingress from the water side, he snapped on a small electric arc which he carried in his pocket, and led me out of the house.

We tramped up the gentle slope and into a private road, a moment afterward coming into view of the Randolph house. When we reached the portico, the door was noiselessly opened by a diminutive Chinese in purple robes, who bowed very deeply before Heathwole and backed along the hall to the enormous dining room, where a cold collation was spread.

I do not remember that we said anything of any particular moment, and when we rose, Heathwole held out his hand and bade me good-night. The Chinese bowed before me.

"I show master his loom," he said, in purring accents.

Heathwole having taken himself off, I followed the Chinese to a white-painted bedroom, which contained nothing save a dressing table, a small iron bed and a washstand. Everything was in white, and a feeling of cleanliness prevailed. I soon found myself in pajamas, and in the dark.

I smoked several cigarettes pondering over my adventures of the night; and the thought of Heathwole being enamored of Eleanor Parlessor brought a cold chill to me whenever I allowed the thought to come to me. Toward this strange character, so different from anyone I had ever known, I entertained a peculiar feeling of admiration and fear. The fact that he cared for Eleanor boded no good for me, I thought, for if such a man loved a girl, I was quite convinced that he would spare no efforts to win her. How, I meditated, could a weak woman prevail against a man of his strength of will and iron inflexibility? I must confess that I was unworthy enough for a while to decide I would not further his aims by putting him into the Westview Club. The idea, however, was a little too petty for me to entertain very long, so I dismissed it. I had passed my word to Heathwole, and I would do my best for him. Anyhow, whether I took him in or not, he would get into the club somehow; and if he got in despite of me, I should have made an enemy not easy to cope with.

The result of my meditations was that I determined to propose to Eleanor the next day. For nearly three years I had been in love with her, and had danced attendance at her beck and call. It was true that during that period she had many violent fancies for other men, and dispensed with me for weeks at a time, but sooner or later she was always back to me. I had been her only constant suitor since the time she "came out." I suppose the reason lay in the fact that none of the other men could get along with her.

She was a girl with a very pretty will of her own, and had evidently been born with the impression that the world was made for her, not she for it. She looked on favors done as merely the things that should be, and was surprised that people should expect gratitude—to be humored and favored was her right. But to have her requests denied or her humors contested meant violent wrath, and interdiction for the daring one. Eleanor had never tolerated anyone who was not submissive to her dictates. She found plenty of men who were willing to be her slaves, but so arrogant was she that in a very short time the last straw had been added, and the camel's back dislocated. Then I was again called into requisition.

Some people are under the impression that I did not know what a puppy dog I was making of myself. That people called me "Nell's poodle," "Eleanor's messenger boy," and other things of the sort, I knew quite well. But, you see, I was in love with Eleanor, not in-

fatuated, and I knew she was not in love with me. In fact, I questioned whether or not she could ever love anyone but herself, for there is no denying the fact that Eleanor was selfish to the core. Me she liked best of all; and I had grown so accustomed to the yoke that I was not ashamed to own to myself that she liked me simply because she could get more out of me than anyone else she knew. She had grown accustomed to have me waiting her orders, and was very much at a loss when I was not in attendance.

You will wonder, no doubt, that I was able to love a girl while seeing her faults so clearly, because, according to the adage, "love is blind." I don't know. Heathwole once analyzed my character perfectly—this was some time later. He said: "Tommy was born with a brain, perceptiveness and capacity, but the Lord forgot to throw in any backbone and determination." I suppose that is true enough. I live among these people, I see faults, but, in spite of that, I want their good opinion and their good will. So it was with Eleanor. I loved her, and I wanted her to love me; and I took the only course I knew —that of pleasing her. Probably, had I the courage to deny myself her company for a month or so, and refuse to have anything more to do with her after she had committed a peculiarly flagrant insult, she might have grown to care more than she did. But I had not "the backbone."

I awoke next morning early, with the cool sea breeze blowing in my window, and got up to watch the green breakers glinting in the early sunrise. After smoking a cigarette, I pressed the button, and another Chinese servant appeared, whom I told that I wanted a bath. He said he would make it ready.

Looking out from the house, the full glory of the sunrise on the bay made one wonder how it was possible to sleep and miss all this. The Randolph house stood on the crest of a grassy slope running up from the bay shore, which was about ten feet sheer below the point of the slope. There was very little shore to speak of, the slope being hidden from the view of passing boats by the thick underbrush and herbage that grew up, apparently, from the water, and the occasional trees and alder bushes which completed the tangle of vegetation. The house itself was hemmed in by spreading oaks, maples and sycamores, and, while the bay was visible from the house, the house was almost hidden from the bay.

Running back toward the road, the forest thickened and was impenetrable in spots, the only way of threading it successfully being by the narrow carriage path that ran through it. The Randolphs had been, in their day, lords of the surrounding country, and their own private grounds had been untouched by plow or harrow, being kept rather in the form of an English private park or private preserves. In the cool of the early morning, quail and pheasants hopped about among the underbrush with their shrill chirps, and I could even observe a lean red fox stealing cautiously along in the vain hope of laying his paws upon one of them. Then I remembered that it was from the Randolph grounds that the Westview Club got their foxes.

How Heathwole came to take this house I do not know. It had been offered for sale many and various times, but the price was so high that no one had taken it over. The project had been contemplated of cutting it up into small farm lots, and I thought the work had been started. But Heathwole's presence there seemed to belie that idea.

After a bit, I took my cold bath, and descended into the dining room. Heathwole was already there, scanning a copy of the afternoon paper of yesterday. He greeted me pleasantly enough.

"I've got a great deal of work to do to-day," he informed me, when we had sat down to the table, plentifully garnished with honey, marmalade and preserves, and bearing also a huge dish of bacon and eggs, another of fried sole, and a third of hot bread. "So I shan't see much of you. If you want to go over to the club, Meh Ling will drive you over in my trap; and if you like,

I should be glad to have you come back again to-night. You can telephone me. I have a phone here."

I thanked him, but said I thought I'd stay at the club. "Suit yourself about that," he said, gruffly. With that, he buttered a roll and began to eat, and said no more for some time.

The paper he had been reading was propped up against a carafe, and as he ate he glanced at it, occasionally turning the reverse side up to finish some article. One seemed to hold his attention for quite a little while. He read it once, and then began to read it over again. I could see his bushy brows contract, and a red flush come into his cheeks, and presently, with a sudden, quick movement, he started up from the table and tore the paper across and flung it to the floor.

"Infernal rascal!" he muttered, then went on eating his breakfast in profound abstraction.

I eat but little in the morning, so I finished before he did, and lighted a cigarette, while the Chinese refilled my coffee cup. Rather interested in what had caused him to tear the paper, I pointed to the torn sheet, and the Chinese handed it to me.

I glanced over the first page of the newspaper. It was not hard to tell what had caused his wrath. It was the fact that the city council of Baltimore had passed, by a small majority, the bill which was to hand over to the Consolidated Railways, for one hundred years from date, the franchise for operating trams or street cars in the municipality of Baltimore. This franchise had been put through, as I knew quite well, by that clever rascal, O'Donnel Hawks, who was responsible for more municipal corruption than any man in the city. I knew him quite well, for, sad to say, he belonged to a good family, and, consequently, to the same clubs I had on my card.

The majority had been so small that it would be necessary for the mayor to sign the bill before it could become a law. But there was hardly any doubt as to what Osgood Paca would do in this instance. This young lawyer was O'Donnel Hawks' tool, while Hawks in turn was the henchman of John K. Peterson, the master rogue. Paca had been put into the mayoralty simply because he had a clean reputation and his connections were good. I knew perfectly well that Osgood would sign the bill, because Hawks would make him do it.

The object of this bill was to shut out all competition, and make it impossible for anyone to say whether the Consolidated Railways could or could not do anything they pleased. Recently this corporation had been guilty of several gross acts of arrogance, and a Washington firm had applied for a franchise to operate in Baltimore, in competition with them—thus the bill.

The whole thing was a steal from the public; and meant that for a hundred years the city of the Chesapeake would be compelled to pay five-cent fares with limited transfers, while other cities had the three-cent fare and unlimited transfers—and money is very scarce in my home town.

Of course the newspapers were howling about it, and threatening to impeach Osgood Paca if he signed the bill. Nevertheless, I was quite sure that he would do so.

I looked up at Heathwole. "This is rotten, isn't it?" I said.

"Rotten!" he shouted. "Damnable, that's what it is. And it's the work of a couple of your precious friends—Hawks and Peterson. Thieves, that's what they are. Thieves." He relapsed into scowling silence.

"And what's worse," I ventured, "is that Paca will surely sign the bill."

He did not answer; but when I looked at him, I must confess that the sight of his face frightened me. It was like the smile on the face of a corpse—except that this smile was full of cunning malignancy. His face was as set as before, his eyes as staring; but the corners of his mouth were twisted upward into the hardest leer I ever wish to see—and I don't especially wish to see more of that particular one, either.

"Don't do that," I implored.

He stared, as unseeingly as before, past me, and apparently addressed the empty air. "So *you* think Paca is going to sign that bill, do you?"

His contemptuous tones moved me to sudden anger. "I know Paca hasn't the backbone to refuse to sign it," I exclaimed. "Hawks put him into office, and the fruits of notoriety are too sweet, in Paca's estimation. He'll sign it. He'll be afraid not to."

The grin faded away from his face, and he looked over at me. His voice sank to a lower pitch than I had noticed before, but so strong was it that it seemed to awaken the echoes of dead and gone Randolphs who had sat in this very room.

"Jephson," he said, "Mr. Paca is not going to sign that bill. Mark my words. Sometimes I'm a prophet. Mr. Paca will not sign that bill."

For some time afterward the echoes seemed to repeat what he said. As I stared across into those insolent black eyes, so full of apparent knowledge of power, I felt quite convinced in my own mind that what he said was true. I did not try to argue it. I took him on faith.

"No, he won't sign it," repeated Heathwole again; and then he laughed —a jeering, mocking laugh, that grated on me to such an extent that I got up and left the room.

CHAPTER IV.

ELEANOR WILL HAVE NONE OF ME.

This story is about the second Robin Hood. Perhaps you will wonder why, as yet, nothing has been said of what he did that made the reign of terror along the Chesapeake, and caused the unlawfully rich to tremble in their patent leathers. Patience, my masters, I will come to that presently. When I digress, as I shall do presently, to myself and to my affair with Eleanor Parlessor, it is only because Eleanor figures largely in the career of my modern outlaw; and her character can be shown in no better way than in showing you just how I fared with her.

When I returned to the dining room I did not find Heathwole; and the Chinese boy, who had met us the night before, and who seemed to take precedence over the other servant, told me quietly that master had gone to his work, and that he had given orders that he must not be disturbed. He, Meh Ling, would drive me over to the Westview Club, if I so wished.

I did so wish, and went upstairs to throw my things back into my bag. When I came down, I found Meh Ling holding in a very spirited chestnut mare, attached to a dogcart. When I had clambered in, he got in also, and started the horse through the woods.

It is beautiful here in spring, with the soft breeze from the sea filtering through the trees; the chestnut buds giving out their sticky perfume; magnolias glittering against a background of green; and the sunlight glancing in from above the intertwined branches. Squirrels darted about and chipmunks squeaked; a green garter-snake trailed across the road, leaving the mark of his body behind him. Occasionally quail rose in little flocks, and pheasants uttered their startled cry.

Once out in the road, we went swiftly over the two miles that lay between Randolph house and the Westview Country Club, and soon the glittering green of the golf links and the copses to the north where the course lay were revealed as a background for the white granite château which stands on the crest of the hill, overlooking the sea, and is called the clubhouse. Down the slope, the boathouses and bathing machines cast dark shadows on the brown sand; and the sticks and spars of the yachts at anchor stood out starkly. Moored near by were numberless catboats, flat-bottomed rowboats and catamarans; while in an inclosure to themselves, staked and roped off from the rest, lay four motor boats and half a dozen launches.

The clubhouse is a large one, and has forty rooms for the accommodation of such members as wish to retain them for the summer. Besides this, the club has built about twenty-five cottages on the ground, which it rents out to other

club members who have families, and who wish to live at Westview in the sultry months. The adjoining land is dotted with the country houses and family mansions of Baltimore's chosen few; and to live at Westview or in the vicinity generally means that one is of the right sort. Otherwise it is nearly impossible to rent or buy houses there.

There is nothing slow about Westview. For the spring there are the steeplechases, the hunts and the horse show; for the summer, tennis, golf, yachting, swimming and motoring; for the fall a combination of them all; and in the winter the club is the rendezvous of sleighing and skating parties; and the crest overlooking the sea is turned into a toboggan slide.

And they were a happy, healthy lot, these Westview Club people—strong, muscular, pink-cheeked and sturdy-limbed from their cross-country chases, their golf and their cold plunges. They went their little ways in the city—not that they went very far; but the city toil was only the thorn that accompanied the rose. Some of them went into their fathers' law firms and others were the employees of banks and big trust companies. Some were doctors in a poky sort of way, others operated real estate offices and sold the land that had once belonged to their ancestors and the ancestors of their friends. Few of them lived in the present so far as the business world was concerned—few of them amounted to anything in business; but they did it because, perforce, they must do something in order to have enough money to keep up with the style of living that their wealthier forebears had created. The desire for great wealth had not come to us of Baltimore yet. We were content with the fact that we were well-bred, and lived a decent, fairly clean life.

Some of the lads who had an income that sufficed for their small needs did nothing; but most of these went in strongly for athletics or something of the sort. Of course, there were the worthless hangers-on of good family who lived on their friends; but really so few of them were there, that we can afford not to count them.

I had often wished I were more like the crowd in general—that I took an interest in their Monday germans and Friday assemblies; their receptions, their coming-out parties, theater crowds and after-theater suppers at the big hotel or at the homes of the people giving them. Of course, I took some sort of interest in them, but that and the Country Club end of it made up the lives of these people—for their business was not their real life. I, unfortunately, was born with an ambition, and the lack of will-power and concentration to succeed. I pottered about with my verses written after the fashion of the French ballades and my frescoes of the modern French feuilletons, vainly seeking recognition at the door of literature, and being repeatedly denied. Perhaps, had I strength of will enough to give up either one or the other, I might have achieved one of two things—a success as a society man or a success as a writer of a certain æsthetic kind of literature. But both things were so much a part of me that I could give up neither—failing at both.

I don't think I had any enemies. I did not advance enough opinions, nor was I strong enough in my likes or dislikes. I undeniably had family, and was a tolerably decent sort of fellow, queer though. Being queer, no one sought me out for a bosom friend; and I went on my way, comparatively friendless, though knowing almost everybody in our set well enough to call by their first names.

The trap bowled rapidly up the white-stoned carriage path and drew up at the end of the *porte-cochère*. I alighted, thanked Meh Ling, and offered him a quarter. To my surprise he shook his head, smiling blandly:

"Me master Heathlole's boy. Thankee you, no can take *cumshaw* him fliends. Good-by."

He drove out then, and I wished that we had that sort of servant in the houses where I had gone to house parties and week-ends. I strolled around the base-

ment floor and looked into the billiard room, where I found Holliday Parlessor practising with the attendant.

"You're just the man I wanted to see," I informed him. He made a shot and looked up at me, standing with his cue serving as a rest. He was a short fellow with a lean, dissipated face, and blond hair brushed so flat on his head that it looked as though it were painted there. His eyes were narrow and shifty, and his mouth weak. There was nothing in him to remind me of Eleanor.

"Sis is up in the writing room, I believe," he said. "She told me she had some letters to get off—about a dozen of them, and it's cheaper to use the club paper than our own. You've no idea how much that stationery bill at Downs' comes to, Kitty."

This nickname was given me as a youngster, the inference being that Tom was turned into "Tom Cat," and from there inevitably to "Kitty" or "Pussy," whichever they preferred. There is a prevalence of nicknames among this crowd.

"See, here, Holly," I said, irritably, "don't you think it's about time to drop that fool name? I've asked you over and over again."

"Oh, all right," he returned, absent-mindedly, as he poised his cue for another shot. "By the way, have you heard the news?"

I did not answer. This question generally means the announcing of some engagement which you have supposed inevitable for months.

"Osgood Paca came down last night. He's in the club now. He got on a joyful toot last night, and told Billy Billingslea that he was going to sign that street-railway bill."

I lighted a cigarette. "Any fool could have told you that," I said. I offered him my case.

He took three cigarettes. "You have such good ones, Ki—Tommy," he apologized. I knew his stock lie—he said it to almost everyone, and thus economized on cigarettes. "Well, anyhow, the thing's caused an awful row up in the city. Billy Billingslea told Carrol Caton—you know he's doing something on a newspaper—and Carrol hot-footed down to his office, and they've got out an extra. I was just talking to Arthur Puer over the phone. He wanted me to tell Osgood he'd better stay away from Baltimore to-day or he won't answer for his safety."

"H'm," I said, for I could not forgive Holliday that trick about the cigarettes. "Nell's in the writing room, is she?"

"I guess so," he said, lighting one of my cigarettes and slipping my match box in his pocket. I reminded him of it, and he laughed surprisedly, handing the match box back—another of his tricks.

I left him in some disgust—I think I'd be rude to him if he were not Eleanor's brother—and dropped in the barber's room for a shave, after which I went upstairs, and, after wandering around for a while, finally found Eleanor Parlessor sitting in one of the little writing rooms, a pile of sealed envelopes before her, at which she was gazing speculatively.

She was in a white riding-habit with a white stock-collar and a small straw turban, trimmed with some white rosettes. Her small, arched foot, in its patent leather boot with tiny spur at the heel, was tapping meditatively on the floor. At my entrance she looked up in a vexed sort of way, but when she saw who it was, she got up and came forward, holding out her little pink hands and smiling prettily.

"Do you know, Mr. Man," she said, gayly, "I was just on the point of writing you; and was wondering what to say. And I was going to ask you to do the very thing you've done—come down here. I've been fearfully lonely without you."

I did not enlighten her as to my sudden resolution to come having nothing to do with the wish to see her. Whenever I tried to break away from her, poor, weak fool that I am, she always summoned me back, and greeted me in just the way she was doing now. Then for the moment I seemed to see the real love-glint in her eyes; and was, accordingly, deceived.

"Were you honestly lonely without me?" I asked, in that ridiculously tender way peculiar to foolish lovers.

She smiled brightly at me, scrubbing an ink spot on her pink thumb with her handkerchief. "I was, honestly, Kitty dear." She rubbed harder at the spot, then looked up at me again, and brushed a speck of dust from my lapel.

Then I lied. "And I came down because I've made up my mind to play the man at last and quit being the fool," I said, trying to make my tones sound emphatic. That absurd and insulting name of Kitty had put some new life into me. "Eleanor," I said, and I reached forward and took her slim hand in mine; "Eleanor, you've put me off lots, and I've kept from saying it because I was afraid you didn't care for me; but there's an end to all things—not of my love, but of my patience. You know I want you, sweetheart——"

She allowed me to kiss her; but then she said very quietly: "You are a dear, good Kitty, but you oughtn't be absurd," and she pushed my hands away from her and clasped her own across her breast. "Really, you shouldn't be an absurd Kitty," she added, reflectively, and as though speaking to some one else.

I couldn't stand that. I got up and tried to look very stern. "If you see anything absurd in a man asking a girl to be his wife, I must confess that your sense of the ludicrous is keener than mine——"

She nodded her small head sagely. "It is, Kitty dear."

"And *don't* call me Kitty," I burst out. "I'm sick and tired of that name. It's unmanly and it cheapens me."

"Sometimes it suits you," she said, very slowly. "Wasn't that outbreak something like a kitty's? But anyhow, Tom, it doesn't matter what I call you. I care for you lots, for you're a dear, good boy, and you've done lots for me. I don't really think I care any more for any other man—in fact, I believe I care for you more——" She raised one hand protestingly to keep me back. "But can't you see that isn't love? Not the kind of love I've imagined."

"You've been reading fool novels," I muttered. "That's the only place where that sort of love exists."

She put up one hand and brushed back a wisp of her marvelous yellow hair. "Existent or not, I believe in it," she said. "But leave that out—what have we to marry on? You know that we're living on our debts, we Parlessors. It's no confession to you, for you *know* it. I shan't have any money—anything of my own. I've got to marry some one who has enough to keep us going—and you——"

"I've five thousand a year," I said. "And when I'm thirty-five, I come in for all my money."

"Ten years on five thousand a year—besides having to help out the rest of my family," she said, just a little wistfully, I thought. "No, it couldn't happen, Tom. I'd have to have clothes—and the sort I like don't come cheap. I'd be unhappy unless I had them. I'd have to cut some sort of a dash—we couldn't do that on your five thousand——"

"If you cared," I began, angrily; "if you cared——"

She nodded. "Yes, if I cared. But, you see, I don't care in that way. I'm selfish where you are concerned. I think more of myself than I do of you, Tom—and that's not love. Perhaps I'll always think of myself more. Perhaps I haven't met the right sort yet—or——"

She hesitated, and her eyes sought the floor.

"I suppose now," I said, as coldly as I could, "that you'll go back on what you said before and tell me that you have met some one that you care for more than——"

"Do you want me to be honest?" she asked, lifting her eyes.

I gritted my teeth. "You can't hurt me much more than you've done already," I said.

"There's a man I don't know at all. I've seen him lots of times. The other day Wild Rose bolted with me—I lost my seat—was hanging from the saddle. He sprang out of the road and actually

stopped her with one tug. When I righted myself he was standing there as cool as you please. Now I don't know, Tom—but he was so strong, and he looked as though he could have torn the horse's head off if he'd chosen. That sort of man would do anything."

"The liar," I muttered. "He said you tried to take a fence and your hunter stumbled."

She stretched out her hands with an appealing little gesture. "You know him, Tom—you know him?"

I got up. "Yes, I know him, Nell." I suppose my voice was very weak. "His name is Heathwole. I'll bring him over some time and——" But I fancy my voice broke and I got out of the room before I made an exhibition of myself.

I could hear her as I went away, saying over and over, with a certain soft intonation that I had never heard before: "Heathwole. Yes, his name might be Heathwole. Heathwole——"

She was not thinking of me at all! She had even forgotten that I had gone out of the room hurriedly for fear that unmanly tears would come into my eyes and make me ashamed before her.

No, it was only "Heathwole," softly over and over again, in a way I've heard other girls speak of the men they're going to marry. Heathwole—confound him!

CHAPTER V.

THE PIRATE SHOWS HIS HAND.

I don't exactly remember what I did for the rest of the morning. A blow like the one I had received is one not easily gotten over. I suppose, in my poor, weak way, I wandered out in the copses and sat down under the trees and railed at fate. I'm not sure that I didn't lie at full length and bury my face in my hands—and I'm not sure whether my hands were dry when I took them away and dabbled at my eyes with my handkerchief. But you are not interested in what I did. This is the story of bigger things than I could ever have done, and a stronger man than I. But let that rest. I've promised enough. Let me fulfill my promise.

I remember that before I went in to see Eleanor I had telephoned to my rooms to have my old negro servant, Jerry, pack some of my belongings into portmanteaus and send them down to the club. When I got back, one of the club servants informed me that my things had arrived, and asked me how long I intended to stay. I swore at him, and I told him not to ask questions. Which was an exhibition of childish temper such as I am given to at times. He, however, supposed I was drunk, and was used to that sort of thing; so he took the portmanteaus up to one of the rooms overlooking the sea and laid me out a change of clothes.

There was to be a dance at the club that night, and all the folks from round about Westview were coming; so I got into some clean linen and a dinner jacket, and presently went down to dinner. Here I saw my uncle, Mr. Lessington, and arranged matters with him for posting Heathwole's name at the club, and having him second it. Uncle Jim is the chairman of the board of directors, and I had rather an idea that Heathwole would get in the club if he recommended it. And Uncle Jim took my word that he was all right, and promised to do what he could.

Now that I had the iron to enter my soul, I didn't care much how far it was pushed, so I suggested to Uncle Jim that I invite Heathwole over for the dance. He agreed with me that it would be a good idea. Uncle Jim always likes to see a man before he recommends him; so I got Heathwole on the telephone after I finished dinner, and invited him over, telling him that Eleanor Parlessor would be there.

He accepted with some alacrity, and promised to be over before nine o'clock. Uncle Jim and I sat out on the veranda and discussed things in general.

"Osgood Paca is down here, I believe," he said. Uncle Jim is a conservative with a big "C"; and he hates socialism and radicalism, and all that sort of thing. A tall, broad-shouldered gentleman of about fifty-one or two,

who would have looked distinguished even if attired in burlap sacking. But, although one of nature's aristocrats, Uncle Jim believes in a square deal for every man, and even if he were one of the shareholders in the Consolidated Railways—as he happened to be—he looked on the proposed franchise as a steal of the first water.

"They say that Osgood will sign the bill," commented Uncle Jim.

"He says he will, but I don't think so," I said. Now why I said this with so much conviction is a matter which I am unable to state explicitly. It simply shows my trust in Heathwole.

"Hawks has made a pretty rascal out of young Paca," said my uncle, a little sadly. Osgood had been in his office when he was starting his career as a lawyer. "He was a nice boy," sighed Uncle Jim. "I must have a talk with him. He must see that what he contemplates is impossible. It is outrageous, Tom, and I can't believe that he really will do it."

One of the club servants brought us out coffee and liqueurs, and almost on his heels came another, who informed me that Mr. Heathwole was outside and wanted to see me. I told him to bring Mr. Heathwole in, and he came a minute or so later. He was in evening clothes, I was glad to note, and he wore them with that peculiar distinction which was all his own.

"Uncle Jim," said I, after I had shaken hands with my friend of yesternight, "this is Mr. Heathwole—my uncle, Mr. Lessington."

Heathwole eyed him keenly as he took his hand. "I rather think I've had some correspondence with Mr. Lessington," he said, and sat down.

"Why, bless my soul, yes!" agreed Uncle Jim, with a little excitement. "You must be *the* Heathwole—the man who's running the mission." Uncle Jim is chairman of the Benevolent Charities. "You've done a good work, sir; a good work," Uncle Jim spoke very warmly. "They needed a man like you down there. On my word, sir, you've done more to clean up that neighborhood than the police."

Uncle Jim's eyes fell on me. "Of course you mayn't know, Tom, but Mr. Heathwole here has a mission down near Marsh Market, for the reclamation of young girls—and all that. He's the man who laid up the prize fighter, Tim Doughtery. Bless my soul, sir, I've laughed over that many a time! One of our ministers saw the affair—a poor, weak soul he is, but honest and kind and good for the work. He says that this fellow Tim interfered. He's the chief of the bullies down there, Tom," he explained, parenthetically. "He swaggered up to this gentleman, and then"—Uncle Jim chuckled in high glee—"he began to see stars, did Mr. Doughtery, and when he came to, he found himself in a hospital with a fractured jawbone—wasn't it?"

Heathwole accepted one of my cigarettes. "The only way to deal with brutes is to be brutal," he said. "Practical philanthropy is my motto. Not that I mind a fight—but you haven't any fighters here——"

Uncle Jim chuckled again. "No, not to your notion," he said. "But they thought they were fighters——"

"People think a lot of things," said Heathwole, almost rudely. "And, by the way, Mr. Lessington, your mission would do lots better if they threw out some of those meek and mild parsons and put in some men who could handle themselves in a fight. You've got to beat things into that sort of people. They're like bad dogs—when you've beaten them up, they'll follow you and lick your hands. Why, there isn't a man down in that settlement who'd interfere with me now—not that it's anything to brag of, for none of them can fight."

I don't know that Uncle Jim appreciated this advice so bluntly given, but he did not say so. The talk drifted to other channels, but I'm afraid that Uncle Jim and I kept it up, for Heathwole grew absorbed in something else, and his replies were almost monosyllabic.

Finally my uncle reverted to his hobby—family. "The name Heathwole," he said, reflectively; "it's English, isn't it? Why, bless my soul, Amy Lester

married a Heathwole—he was some sort of a cousin to Lord Wolverhampton——"

Heathwole cut in sharply. "Well, I'm not," he said. "I'm not related to Lord Wolverhampton or any other lord; nor am I related to anybody I know of—at all. You'll have to take me as I am—I haven't any family to bolster me up. Not a bit. My mother died when I was six, and put me into an orphan asylum just before her death. I stayed there until I was fourteen and then went off. I've been on boats most of my life since—brief history it is—and there's no family in it, Mr. Lessington."

"Why, bless my soul!" exclaimed my Uncle Jim. "Quite so, Mr. Heathwole; quite so." Heathwole's outbreak had been very sudden and quite bitter.

People were beginning to come in now, and I saw Eleanor Parlessor standing near one of the French windows talking to Jervey Landis. I crossed over, after excusing myself to my guest, and spoke to her.

"Well, Nell," I said, calmly, "I came over to know if you'd like to meet a man named Heathwole. He's just come, and he wants to meet you."

Jervey Landis scowled at me. "Why, I don't mind," returned Eleanor. "If he's nice, bring him over." This little byplay was for the benefit of Mr. Landis.

"By the way, Jervey," she continued, "Leonard Barker was asking for you as I came up. He's in the billiard room, I think."

Mr. Landis took the hint without a smile. "Oh, all right," said he, sulkily, and went away. I beckoned to Heathwole, who got up from the table and came over. I presented him to Eleanor.

"I thought you would succeed," she said. "I fancied you looked that sort."

"It wasn't a hard matter," he returned, laconically. "I thought, Miss Parlessor, that your manners were somewhat neglected and needed attention."

I could have grinned in unholy joy. A flush crept along her satinlike cheek. "What do you mean, Mr. Heathwole?" she asked, coldly.

"Just what I said," he returned, promptly. "I did you a service, and was not thanked for it—not even a word of thanks. Of course, I couldn't insist on thanks until I had been properly presented. That would have been unconventional—oh, so unconventional!" His tone was absolutely maddening, and Eleanor was getting redder and redder. "I heard of a man once who wouldn't let another man save his life because the would-be savior was a perfect stranger to him. Now, you know, I liked that man. He was well-bred—he followed out the ethics of convention. By Cæsar, he died for conventions, Miss Parlessor!"

Now had I said this, or any other man I know, Eleanor would have been a stranger to me or to him all the days of her life. But to Heathwole's tirade she only returned in a very low voice: "Why, I'm afraid I was neglectful. I was rather sorry I didn't tell you my name and ask you to call. But, really, I was quite sure you could manage it easily."

I stared at her in amazement, and then begged to be excused. Eleanor acceded with an alacrity which I did not quite fancy. I went back to Uncle Jim.

"Your friend," said Uncle Jim, mildly, "is an unusual sort of man—isn't he?"

I agreed that he was.

"Nevertheless, he is a *man*," pursued Uncle Jim, reflectively. "He's giving up his time and his money in a great work—his muscle too." He smiled and took a grip on my arm. "Tommy, that man, Heathwole, is more feared around Marsh Market than the devil himself." He paused to light a cigar, "He's different from us, Tommy, and I don't think his breeding is of the best; but I like your man Heathwole, and I'll see that he gets in the club."

He rose. "Let's go and see if we can't find Osgood now, Tommy," he said. "I want to talk to him about that bill of his."

We found Osgood in the smoking

room, talking earnestly to Arthur Puer, his secretary. "I tell you, Osgood," said Puer, "they're determined that you shan't sign that bill. They know that you're coming back to-morrow morning in your motor boat, and Black Dock is going to have a crowd of people from the Citizens' Alliance there. They'll keep you from going to the office—sure as fate. There won't be any violence. They'll simply keep you away——"

"The police——" began Paca. He was a handsome man of some thirty-five years, with the classic face of a statesman of the old days, but a peculiarly weak mouth. He had evidently been drinking; his hair was disordered and he was still in blue flannels.

Puer sniffed contemptuously. "The police—huh," he said. "The police are with the Citizens' Alliance. They won't interfere. Besides, these people are not going to hurt you. If you go by rail, there'll be another crowd waiting for you at the station. And, failing these two, a lot of them are going to collect in front of your office. Don't be a fool!"

Osgood Paca flushed angrily and ran his fingers through his hair. "I won't be a fool," he cried, fiercely. "I'll cheat the lot of them—you'll see. My machinist, Legg, is off now, but he'll be back here at the club by eleven. I'll go to Baltimore to-night, and get in my office before daybreak. Then we'll see who'll sign this bill. Am I a child to be played with or am I the mayor? I tell you, these people are trying to take the law in their own hands—and I'll not allow it."

My Uncle Jim put a hand on his shoulder. "Osgood, lad," he said, "you've been drinking. You don't mean what you say, do you?"

Osgood Paca looked at him, sobered. "Mr. Lessington," he said, stiffly, "I'm sorry that my actions don't meet with your approval, but I see my duty, and I'm going by that road. I'm sorry—but it really won't do any good to argue the question with me. I've quite made up my mind. I'll go to the city in my motor boat to-night—just as soon as my man Legg comes back. He's down the way now visiting some friends of his. When he comes back—he reports at eleven—I'll go to the city. I'll not be bullyragged out of my duty."

My uncle drew himself erect and looked at the mayor with a cold smile. "I'm sorry, Osgood, that you think I'm capable of bullyragging. Good-night, sir."

Paca sprang to his feet. "I didn't mean——"

"Good-night, sir," reiterated my uncle, coldly; and he went away. As he seemed to be in a mood that was far from conversational, I left him, and wandered to the windows, where I could hear the music and see the dancing. Presently I saw Heathwole come out of one of the anterooms and cross over to my side.

"Where's Miss Parlessor?" I asked.

"She's going to dance," he returned. "I don't dance myself—it's very well for children."

"How do you like her?" I asked.

"Like her!" He looked at me in some scorn. "She's there—all there—only too much. When she cares for some one more than she cares for herself, she'll be a—divinity—yes, a divinity." It was the first time I had ever heard his voice soften; then he said, abruptly: "I'm to ride with her to-morrow."

"Ah," I said, indifferently—or with a semblance of indifference. We remained silent for a while, and I lighted a cigarette. "By the way," I said, "it looks as though Paca will sign that bill, after all."

"How so?" he asked, gruffly.

I rehashed what Arthur Puer had said, and also the words of my uncle and of Paca. "So he's leaving at eleven o'clock in his motor boat," I concluded. "He'll get in Baltimore, and go straight to his office. There he'll send private notes to his henchmen, and while the people are waiting for him at the dock and station the bill will be put through."

"Oh! will it, though?" was all I got from Heathwole. "That's rather clever of him leaving at night and getting

into his office before daybreak—very clever, isn't it?" He took out his watch and looked at it. "Nine-thirty," he said. "Well, I must be off. I'm obliged to you, Jephson, for what you've done for me. Say good-night for me to your uncle—I rather like the old man. So long."

He left me as abruptly as he did most things; and I stood on the balcony smoking and meditating till his trap came up, and he jumped in, tossed the stableman something, and drove away at what I considered a highly unnecessary rate of speed.

I went into the clubhouse again, and wandered about trying to get a word with Eleanor alone, and find out how she fancied Heathwole. Not that I expected she'd tell me, but still to bring about the matter negatively. But Eleanor was much in demand, and I determined to wait until twelve o'clock, when the dance would be called off and walk over to her place with her. I fell in with Miss Gilloway, whom I hate, and was obliged to talk to her for a while—silly, gushy girl, who fancies that she's literary because she reads Bernard Shaw and professes to understand him. Finally tearing myself away, I went into the reading room, and picked up one of the current magazines.

I was reading when Arthur Puer came through and interrupted me, something like an hour or so later. "Well, he's done it," said Arthur.

"Done what?" I asked, with little interest.

"Gone," he returned, sadly. "Gone to the city—Paca, I mean, you idiot. You take it like a little thing."

"It's little to me," I responded, indifferently, and went on reading. Puer quitted the room in disgust, I suppose, and went elsewhere to confide his troubles.

It must have been half an hour after that when there was a great commotion in the front of the club. There was a scurrying of feet on the porches, and some little feminine shrieks. Human curiosity was too much, so I went out there.

Legg, Paca's motor-machinist, or chauffeur, whichever you like, was standing in the center of an excited crowd of men in evening clothes and girls in low-cut bodices. He was holding a whisky glass in his hand.

"Gone—he's gone," he wailed. "And it ain't my fault, Mister Puer; it ain't my fault. I didn't know nothing. I didn't."

Puer seized him roughly by the arm and shook him vigorously. "Speak up, you fool," he said. "What do you mean—gone? How gone? What's happened? You're back here with the boat. You haven't been to Baltimore and back——"

"No, sir, no chance," he wailed. "I ain't been to Baltimore—and Mr. Paca—poor Mr. Paca——"

Puer was growing enraged. "If you don't speak up I'll do something you won't like," he shouted, in desperation. "Now what's the trouble, you blockhead?"

The chauffeur faced him with more composure. "I ain't no blockhead, sir, and I guess you'd be a little shook up if you'd seen what I've seen. It ain't often you sees a real live pirut——"

"A what?" demanded the enraged Puer.

"A pirut—sir. A pirut in a long, black motor boat, faster'n I ever seed before. This here pirate with his goggles on, and a big black pistol—that's what he was—a pirut—a regular out and out pirut——"

The mayor's secretary dropped his hands to his side and looked helplessly around. "The man's drunk, that's what he is," he said. "Now, see here, Legg, where is Mr. Paca? Sober up and tell us. He left here with you not twenty minutes ago in his motor boat. Here you are back and no Mr. Paca—now where is he?"

"The pirut's got 'im," returned Legg. "And I ain't drunk, neither, Mr. Puer. When I say the pirut's got 'im, that's what I mean, and I can't say no different. The pirut's got 'im. Yessor."

"That's a new one on me," I heard Holliday Parlessor saying. "I've seen

snakes and toads and turtles, and little red devils, but a regular pirate is a new one on yours truly." A laugh followed. "And I thought I was an expert," he added, regretfully.

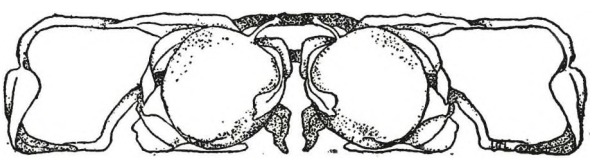
Legg looked appealingly at Puer. "Mr. Puer," he said, "I ain't got nothin' to tell but God's own trewth; and I swear by all that's——"

"Cut that out," said Puer. "Get ahead."

"Well, sir, we ain't got no more than haff'n mile upshore, when I sees another motor boat a-comin' after us. I tells Mr. Paca, and he says, 'Some more of those fool friends uv mine,' er words to thet effect. He says 'Put on the third speed, Legg,' and I did it, sir. But 'twarn't no use. This boat kept on comin' up on us—and you know the *Mercedes* ain't no slow poke. Finally this boat shot past us, and I heard somebody in it say 'Pull up there. Heave-to.' Mr. Paca, he says, 'Go on Legg, I don't want to talk to nobody.' Then I heard a pistol bang and a shot hit the bow, and I guess I slowed up all right. Mr. Paca he was furious, and he cussed me out, but jest then this long, black boat come up alongside us, and the man steering her pointed a big gun at Mr. Paca's head. He said 'Jump in here, Mr. Paca, or—you can guess the rest.' Mr. Paca cussed him out, too, but jest then the boat come a little nearer, and the man dropped the pistol for a minute, and grabbed Mr. Paca by the coat collar and hauled him into his boat. Mr. Paca kind of disappeared under the seat, and this boat ups and aways like a streak of greased lightning. That's God's trewth, gentlemen; God's trewth."

"Well, I'll be——" Puer checked himself in time, and looked helplessly around. Then he said with a little laugh: "Osgood's cleverer than I thought he was."

TO BE CONTINUED.



NEVER HEARD OF WHITTIER

THE old saying that "a prophet is not without honor, save in his own country," seems applicable to poets as well in some cases—at least, so thinks a certain gentleman who, having occasion to go to Danvers, Mass., bethought him of the opportunity to visit the old home of John G. Whittier, whom he greatly admired. Strolling into the old Berry tavern, he inquired of the group there if they would kindly inform him where he could find the Whittier House. Blank stares answered him for a moment, then a young business man answered: "Whittier? Whittier? Oh, you mean Joe Whittier, the contractor. He lives at Danversport."

"No, no; I refer to John G. Whittier."

"John G. Whittier? Never heard of him. The only other Whittier in this town is Clarence Whittier, janitor of the Town House. He lives in Essex Street."

The stranger became both amused and impatient, and said: "I am talking about John G. Whittier, the poet. He's dead, you know. I want to find out where his home was."

"Oh, well," said the young business man, with a sigh of relief at his ability to impart information, "if it's anybody who's dead, go right over to Will Crosby, the undertaker, across the street. He'll tell you all about it."

The Leasing of the Open Eye

By W. S. Fitz-Gerald

In this country the power of the press is indeed mighty, whether it be that of Park Row or of some isolated community. Occasionally, however, your journalistic Jove overreaches himself, as in Mr. Fitz-Gerald's clever story

T was just a low-down show, beneath the notice of an oil-belt Greaser; and if we singled anyone out for special execration, it would surely be Ashbell Sump, the mismanager-actor. We wept to see this lump of obesity leaping round like a barefoot coon among the rattlers of Webb County, trying to play the youthful hero—a rôle he's about as much built for as a pack mule, or old Jupe Homer, that shovels mud corner La Paz and Main.

Yes, sirs—and ladies—the man has committed himself to the infliction of a bum spectacle on Blooming Grove, an offense not to be wiped out by all the waters of the Terra Blanco. We feel strongly about it and must speak our mind, though it hurt us—and him.

Just think of the stands we *have* had! Can we forget the "Let Go or Die" Entertainment Company? Or the "Paducah Peddlers"? Or the Gallup Lectures on the Good Roads Movement? Or Tilly Titus in "A Good Thing for Mother"? Ah! the *Open Eye* beholds these, and closes in disgust on last night's galashalootins of Mr. Sump, in gout-slit slippers, unworthy of a forty-cent "Rouse-mit-'em" sale at Blaschke's, and an outfit Miss Sheldon wouldn't let black mammy go near on a twenty-five-cent grab-bag day at Lipstate's!

Here's our advice to this Sump: Next stand let him use business cartridges in his mush melodrama, put a bullet-proof blanket on his live burro, and dole out cans o' brandy to his company, whose antics last night tore us with unintended emotions of wrath and disgust, so varied and abrupt that the perspiration froze on our face. Panhandle papers please copy!

Mr. Ashbell Sump, seated at breakfast in the Imperial—a frame shack thirty-five by forty—let his eggs grow cold; and no wonder. The *Open Eye* was propped in front of him, erect, loud-voiced, damning. Mr. Sump gazed at the editorial, and gazed more, even as a man of feeble wits. He was unprepared for this stroke.

True, he had not called on the editor of the *Open Eye and Rustler;* had placed no business with him. But then if he, Ashbell Sump, actor-manager of the great "Why Women Love" Company, decided to ignore the myriad maws of the Texan editor, and preferred the publicity afforded by "dodgers" left on residents by a nigger who swore a dreadful oath to remain sober two whole days for the purpose—if *that* were his choice he'd like to know whose business it was.

It seemed a sound line of reasoning, but curiously lacking in comfort. With chills at his spine, Mr. Sump read again. The sting, *qua* sting, was bad enough—wounding to his pride, personal and professional. But it didn't end there; not by a great sight. It went hundreds of miles further.

Mr. Sump had been long enough in Lone Star Land to see ahead of him the lurid course of this written curse. Rapid "exchanges" of papers would carry it swiftly down from the Texan Panhandle to the cotton belt, until, worsening as it sped, it should finally assume plague-like proportions, only to be stayed by the Rio Grande and the Spanish tongue.

For Hyperion Orlando Sheldon had said it; beyond that it were folly to ask the "why" of the thing. It loomed large in the *Open Eye* of Blooming

Grove, which led the minor Texan sheets as a Poland China hog doth in San Saba lead the common kind.

His whole life was Texan. He came from nowhere to take a course at the Add-Ran, in Deaf Smith County. A man of science, he had lectured on the curculio fruit pest at San Antonio, and at El Paso on the "Criminal Neglect of the Railroads to Prevent the Propogation of Johnson Grass on Their Lands." He kept in bottles samples of the soil of Texas, from the Staked Plains to Corpus Christi, and whosoever wished might consult them free. He was also an authority on artesian wells, on rice growing, on edible nuts and hogs; cotton-seed products, too, and non-game birds, with the grasses of the Gulf Lands, more especially zacate blanca and sacahuistle.

An old pioneer he, sole survivor of the road survey from Texarkana to El Paso. A man of adventure, who could tell what it was to be lost for days amid the dense chaparral and cactus, mesquite and huisache way down on the hills of Starr, and among the bayous of Sabine.

Is it a wonder Ashbell Sump was crushed? His carload of scenery; his hayseed band of twenty; his street procession; the preliminary pictures of Vesuvius erupting; the baking-powder samples for each lady and two Mexican cheroots for the men—these things notwithstanding, and box seats at five and twenty cents! It was all up.

Henceforth the rest of the company were worse than useless, a terror and a menace, even, like Johnson Grass of the *mesas* to a farmer on hundred-dollar black land. They'd have to go and shift for themselves. They might go. But he sent them far, with the stroke fresh upon him.

Mr. Ashbell Sump pushed his eggs away across the flimsy cloth. There they were, fried to his liking, "upright," golden-domed, flanked with side orders of wide range. But here was no time for sensual indulgence. He lit a cigar and went forth. Half a block away he met Luther Confucius Baldwin, real estate, the first man he had called upon—almost the only man, the man who had rented him the opera house, which was likewise the schoolroom, partly a drug store, and wholly given to rats.

Luther knew; he could see that in his eye, an eye of pity, somewhat shot with admiration. Besides, he had a copy in his hand.

"You've seen the lashin' Ed'r Sheldon's handed you out?" he asked. An absurd question, but an opening.

"I was aghast," the actor said. "The man's ruined me. What's the good of my company, now?"

"*He* don't seem to think much of it, anyways," Luther remarked. "Fact is, Hyper's full o' politics just now—chock full; and he'd attack anybody, simply to show how independent he is. They say he's after a commissionership for Deaf Smith County, and wants money and time to play his game in Austin. I shouldn't wonder if he leased the *Open Eye* for a few months, like he leased it last year to the Reverend Sparks, o' Waxachachie."

Mr. Sump was gazing straight at his friend.

"Leased the paper, did he?"

"Yep. Reverend Sparks couldn't get the boys to church, so he took a lease o' the *Open Eye* and preached at 'em in a way they couldn't escape. Cute notion, huh? It's this way, Ashbell. Hyper Sheldon don't care a rap about *you*, either way. Only, he *must* play the 'No fear or favor game,' don't matter who he tramples on. See? Didn't he call me a swindler last Friday? Didn't he say I'd been a-sellin' rainless sand for black cotton soil to poor devils from Sweden? But he don't mean anything, even when he makes you curl like a bunch of mesquite grass! And you'll see—Hyper'll jump his own way when his plans mature. He's a great boy. So's his girl," Mr. Baldwin added, strangely, producing a packet of Dallas Pride and beginning a chew.

"I don't mind what he says about me," he went on, cheerfully, "and as to you—why, he's never even seen you, Ashbell, has he? So why should *you* mind?"

Mr. Sump had resumed his vacant stare. "No-o-o-o," he said, slowly, "he's never even seen me. I doubt if anyone else has, except on the stage." Saying which, he turned and walked swiftly back to the Imperial, and up to his "suite," whereof the dividing lines were bales of cotton and sacks of rice, side lines of the landlord when guests were scarce.

Manifestly in a hurry, the actor plunged into the property boxes of "The Parson's Wooing," and in eight minutes had robed himself as the hero of that great comedy.

He looked in the glass. For toilet purposes it was little better than a distorting mirror, but it served still further to embitter Mr. Sump, to force upon him the glaring injustice of Editor Sheldon's remarks, so insulting to his pride of person. He made, he was satisfied, an ideal minister of religion —imposing as to bulk, and without the handicap of extreme youth.

And with a last touch to his tie, he strolled once more down Main Street, pausing before an adobe house he knew was the printing and publishing office of the Blooming Grove *Open Eye and Rustler*. Hyperion Orlando was within, and busy at his case. Clearly a man of dignity; irascible, possibly, and pompous, accustomed to be looked up to—ay, and looked *at* from afar.

Entering, the visitor extended a card. It was taken slowly and read aloud: "The Reverend Liveous A. Scragley, Ph.D., of Yoakum." "Glad to know you, doctor! What can I do for you? Say, Doxy, bring a chair for Dr. Scragley, will you?"

A tall, thin, smileless girl came from an inner room with a hard stool, and set it down near the guest.

"My daughter, Eudoxia," Mr. Sheldon said. The lady bobbed, hurried forward to shake hands, gazed intently at the newcomer, hesitated, withdrew and returned, bearing a comfortable parlor chair for herself, which she placed very close to him, and sat upon to await developments.

The portly "parson" coughed and began:

"Mr. Sheldon, I'm from Yoakum, and do not intend to return. The climate is—ah—feverous, and the people a hard case. Stony ground for the good seed. I would like to 'found' a chapel, though I do not 'find' one."

"A witty thing, sir," the editor approved, and the doctor bowed and smiled.

"But," the Reverend Liveous A. Scragley went on, "as there is no establishment for me here at present, the ingenious thought struck me that I might hire a pulpit in the form of a spirited and respected local newspaper, of which I might secure the use for a term, and so commune with a possible flock. Do you, Mr. Sheldon, know of any editor in Deaf Smith County who would like to take a rest—who has other interests, perhaps, or to whom—the rains have failed, and times are bad—a few dollars of ready money might be a consideration?"

At first Mr. Sheldon knew of no such colleague, and held out slender hopes of meeting the like—except, possibly, in the case of the Alvarado *Bulletin*, or the Nacogdoches *Sentinel*. "Times were *not* so bad, sir; cotton was up, stock doing fine, irrigation planned, oil being struck to the south and the east." But soon he began to veer. The *Open Eye* looked out upon Lone Star land for seven hundred miles. The doctor must know how respected the paper was, how weighty the words of its editor?

Still, if he might say so, this weight, long and widely sustained, was not acquired without mental pressure. Others might lease out their papers as one does a—well, a durned hat store, sir; but Hyperion Orlando Sheldon—never, sir, never! And yet, sir, the more he reflected on this fortuitous meeting, the more it struck him that here, possibly, was an occasion for a little rest, a little change of scene, for this delicate girl —and, above all, doctor, words of more than earthly wisdom for the Blooming Grovers, among whom were many seekers after truth.

"But"—and Editor Sheldon drove one fist into his other palm—"it must

be no mean commercial transaction with me, sir; I insist on that. No lease in the ordinary sense, but rather a temporary cessation of my power in favor of a minister striving to reach the hearts of my people."

His visitor appeared profoundly moved. It ended in a month's lease at a hundred and fifty dollars, which decision and figure were not reached without vast circumlocutory haggling.

"You can edit the paper, all right, I reckon?" It was Eudoxia who spoke. Her voice rasped and grated on the ear like a vague threat.

"Why—er—well, yes, Miss Sheldon, I think so. There is, at least, *some* assistance, I suppose?"

"There's Gustus, our all-round man. Gustus!" Her roar could be heard two blocks away. A small negro appeared, in seeming surprisingly meek, clad mainly in a sweater of emerald green.

"Gustus, this is Doctor—er—er——" Her father passed her the card. "The Reverend Liveous A. Scragley, Ph.D., of Yoakum. Dad's lending him the paper for a few weeks to preach in."

"Yeuss 'm." The *Open Eye* might have been leased to a jack mule for all Gustus cared. He remained, however, to prompt and advise his mistress during the interview. A foot shuffle, a slight cough, apologetic, self-deprecatory, brought his presence to the company at intervals.

"There's a lot of things, doc," the lady went on, "that are important on the business end." ("She's the business end," her father chimed in.) "Yes, the business end. I'm the actin' editor and manager." She fixed her pale blue eyes on the new lessee. "And o' co'se I can put you next a lot."

"I should be most grateful, Miss Sheldon. I suppose there are advertising contracts running or pending?"

"Chiefly pendin'. They want rustlin' up. They're comin' on, though. Gustus, bring the 'Comin' On' book, and a file o' copies for the las' three months. An', Gustus—ask Mr. Volkus to step in, 'cos we want to draw the deed. You've got the money with you, doc?"

It was a lady of alert mind, Mr. Sump thought; a mind that moved fast. He didn't like the look of her.

"Yes, I have," he said, and paused.

There was a sound without of scraping and stamping, a familiar cough, as of apology for being alive at all, and Gustus glided in, book-laden and accompanied by Attorney Nat Volkus, land abstractor, notary public and authority on titles. Introductions followed, and courtesies, explanations, good wishes. A deed was drawn, largely following the curious conditions and phraseology of the masquerader. It was signed after vast verbiage, the money paid over, witnessed, toasted in rye; and with this last rite, Mr. Volkus, hat on heart and blessings on his lips, departed with a fee of three dollars fifty.

Things had moved with bioscopic celerity. The lessee hoped it was all right. He tried to analyze his feelings, and failed.

One clause the editor insisted on. If, through inexperienced handling the revenue of his paper decreased, such shortage was to be made good by the lessee. "But Doxy here will give you all the points." Herein was consolation.

Miss Sheldon drew her chair, already close, much closer. "On the circulation side, don't forget the socials. See here—gimme that, Gustus—'The Misses Frajacimo and Spangles arrived in this city yesterday from Jackson, Mississippi, escorted by Ecequias Madrigal and Holkum Nutt.' Put them things in and get Gustus to run and ask 'em for their subs. See?

"An' mind you, deny the rumor that Mrs. Weigher Koerth died o' chicken pox at Humble. And, say, Sam Grenshaw's borin' for oil in Cherokee, and Costy Hudson's leased his public weighing machine to Mrs. Jabelik—Mrs. Jabelik, of all people!"

"Curious," murmured the doctor; it seemed expected of him.

"Then there's the lodges round about and *their* doin's. Oh, I *tell* you! 'T's see. The Improved Order of Red Men—Kickapoo Tribe No. 25—they're givin' a mask ball, with a manicure set in Cocobolo wood as first prize for the

ladies. Don't forget *that*. Nor the Firemen's Street Fair at Shiner. Nor the sessions and meetin's comin' on—Mr. McHenry, of Cuero, reads a paper on 'Cabbages as Truck'; and Wat Doherty, of Corpus Christi, one on 'Packing Bunch Onions.' Don't lose sight o' *them*, neither," she urged.

"I will not," the doctor said, coloring uneasily and moving on the hard stool. "But the advertisers?" This end of it seemed to him more solid, more immediate; that clause worried him. "The advertisers, Mr. Sheldon?" There was a touch of real anxiety in the query.

The appeal was vain. "She has the business end entirely," he was told. "All I've got to remind you of are the special articles. There's one on 'Purchased Legislation,' and another called 'Is the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad Asleep?' H'm, yes, and I fancy a third on 'A World of Greed and Gall.' They're all in type, eh, Gustus?"

"Yeuss, suh."

"The 'Comin' On' book has a lot of business about due. Only wants a bit of hustlin. 'T's see." Miss Sheldon was rapidly scanning the pages, strangely scrawled in brownish ink, and not unmarked with egg.

"There's the August Flower Liver Rouser: he's all right. The Electric Bitters man: copy and signed order from O. Inabnit's drug store, with sep'rit testimonials from Joe Gotobick, of Colusa, California, and Fannie Bot, of Verbena, Alabama.

"Oh, yes, an' there's 'Herbus,' for dumb chills, croup and stomach failure. She—it's a lady—promised me a quarter col., same as the Smart Weed Backache man, and the Dynamite people, of San Angelo"—a lull—"there's small bits due from the Texan Wonder Corn Cure, the Tidal Wave Starch, the Mexican Curios Company, the South McAlester, Indian Territory, Coal Company—only their Fancy Parlor Lump, though, and the Santa Fé Road.

"Likewise the Malthoid Roofing and Jack-Screw people, the Pioneer Hardware House; the Silver King Saloon; three assay companies, and the Anti-Heart Flutterer, as well as the Banco Minero; Simmon's Mustang Liniment, and the——"

"But," broke in the doctor, now hot and cold over the bond he had given to maintain the revenue, "how can I see to these things and edit the paper, too?"

"Oh, let Gus do the editin', while you run around."

The doctor wondered whether those who quailed before the *Open Eye* ever suspected its searching rays were directed at times by an undersized nigger in a glaring green sweater.

"Ah!" he said, like one reassured—"oh!"

"You have omitted some, Eudoxia," her father put in, in his most imposing manner. He had listened attentively, waving off each item with ponderous arm. "Of my own knowledge I recall the Oil City Steam Laundry; the Banner Hog-Fence man; Chitwood, the cheap tailor; the Nickel Store, and Hickey and Dismukes' Meat Market; not to mention Leary, the Cough Killer, and the Sure-Hatch Incubators." He paused. "Give me the book. Why, you haven't entered Pickens, the horse drugs and fancy-candy man?"

"But, paw, he only promised this mornin', an' so did the well-drillers—and, say, doc"—clutching his arm—"don't forget to announce the meetin's o' the Rathbone Sisters, an' the Guess Who Club, an' the Friends o' Man."

"No," said the doctor, simply, and coughed. For by this time Mr. Ashbell Sump had a lump in his throat and a weight at his heart. His plan of revenge as at first outlined had seemed so simple, so epic in effect, masterly in conception, pulverizing in result; but now who knew what infernal trick might not be played on him? He wondered whether Luther Baldwin was in this? He recalled his foolish grin.

"Oh, no," the doctor said again. "But I suppose I may rely on Gustus."

"Yeuss, suh."

That day the Sheldons left for Austin. Hyperion's last words were earnest and emphatic: "Dr. Scragley, I

would ask you to keep the general tone of my paper as it is. It is, and ever has been, most closely identified with my personality. And for urgent private reasons I do *not* wish this transaction to be known. Of course, be as outspoken as you please—fierce, denunciatory, even; trumpet-noted, scathing, pitiless."

"I will be all that, and more," his *alter ego* vowed with fervor.

That night at eight the new editor handed Gustus his first leader, with oddly blended feelings of shyness and defiance. There was little need for either. Gustus would have set up any conceivable combination of the English tongue, lauding or vilifying any creature on the earth's surface, not excluding himself. It mattered not at all.

And yet, that article should have caused the very wool of his scalp to uncurl—even a mechanical typesetter to stand still, so lurid was it, so audacious, so whelmingly self-denunciatory and abject, so outrageously hurtful to every hitherto proclaimed and known principle of its supposed author—Hyperion Orlando Sheldon!

This unconscious oracle was made to review his past life, now seen to have been studded with heinous atrocities, only relieved by lighter shades of dishonesty and double-dealing, meannesses, lies, misrepresentations, oppression of the widow and the fatherless, with complicated cases of blackmail. The whole gamut of our tongue was ranged in fierce invective, in crashing arpeggios of self-curses and epithets most luminous, wide-ranging, subtle, all-embracing—leaving nothing to be said, little, even, to the conception.

One instance of limitless and contemptible meanness was gone into at immense length. This was the wicked and unmerited onslaught upon that magnificent actor, Ashbell Sump, Esquire—"lately seen here with his talented company"—whose honor and integrity, only equaled by his business capacity and wondrous delineation of character, were household words wherever Old Glory waved, from Alaska to Panama. What led to this culminating crime of a staggering career, he could not say; he supposed it due to degeneracy and drink.

No pen can even faintly tell, no lips relate, the effect of this amazing revelation on the Texas press, from the New Mexican border to the oil fields of Beaumont. Dozens of editors recklessly invaded valuable commercial space to air their theories of this thunderbolt out of an azure sky. Under the caption of "The Closing Eye and The Open Mouth," the La Grange *Banner-Democrat* had a rending article of the order "I told you so all along." Its purport was, the man had ever been a base fraud, a whited sepulcher, a lath painted to look like iron, that had long imposed on a bright community. It occupied half a page, already paid for in advance by Mr. Grisly's "Ten Nights In a Bar-room" Company, who were to give a performance in a tent on Shindler's lot, in that city.

The advertising end of the *Open Eye* was right enough these strange days. It was more. Every man in Eudoxia's "Comin' On" book *did* come on, money in hand—ay, sir, and more with them. The revenue so throve and waxed fat that its guardian deplored the non-insertion of a clause concerning his share of such increment.

For there was demand for the paper such as had never been dreamed of in Texan journalism. Next day came another chapter of whirling scoundrelism—awful, inexhaustible in its sinful variety. And next day again yet more, and again more, changing ever, prismatic, torrential, kaleidoscopic, lava-like and trailing, black and fiery in alternate flashes, infinite in degradation, devious and horrible, pitiful in depth and degree.

It was long ere the electrical discharge smote the long-respected and happily unconscious Sheldon. He and Eudoxia spent four days in the capital, where he strongly urged the repeal of the Boll Weevil Prize Act, and entered a protest against the use of the Senate Chamber for public dances.

These and other moves made he, not forgetting his agitation for the removal

of restrictions on the sale of paregoric, his diligent lobbying in favor of "Jim Crow" street cars, and a new penalty for dynamiting railroad trains. Then, finding the senate three shy of a quorum, he went west into El Paso County with his daughter, on a visit to a rancher-politician, just eighty miles off the railroad.

"No," he had said, to the faithful Gustus, "don't send me a single copy. I want a complete rest, and so does Miss 'Doxy, Gus. Guess things'll go on placid and calmlike till we get back."

"Yeuss, suh," Gustus had said.

More than a fortnight passed away. It was a glorious morning that found Mr. Ashbell Sump in his shirt sleeves gasping with mirth over a slang dictionary and the State almanac, flanked by four volumes of Lombroso "On Criminology." He had gone off on a new tack. Yea, he had sunk to new profundities, such as shocked and convulsed even himself, now old in the study of boundless infamy.

"You had it on us, all right," a voice said—a thin, level voice, of no emotion. "Sign this."

He leaped up. "I will sign nothing, madam, but what I have already signed. Your father blighted my company, from the Panhandle to the Sugar Bowl by the Gulf, and I was willing to pay for my revenge. And I've got it!"

His last phrase was drowned by a loud explosion that filled the little room with roaring shock. Gasping, terrified, with heart wildly a-beat, Mr. Sump realized he had been shot at. Something tore his blue percale shirt beneath the left arm; he had been burned, even—as it were by powder. He was in the presence of a maniac.

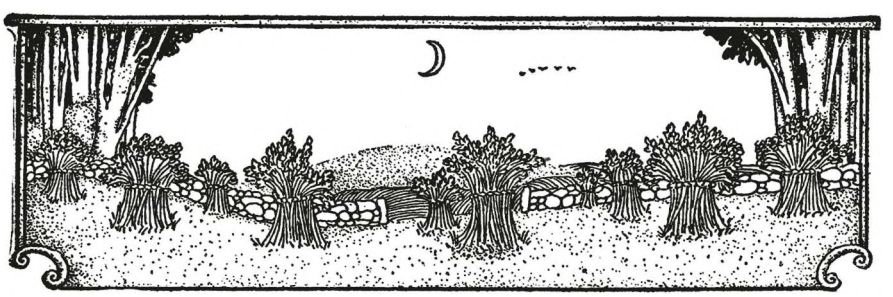
"Sign this," he heard through the smoke. There was pen and all extended.

Absolutely without volition, with no knowledge of the deed, he signed his name. What followed he could never coherently describe.

Something flew at him; something seemed to smite him, soul and body at once. Lacerations shot from all the cardinal points, and many in between. Some creature, or collection of creatures, tore, mauled, beat, pounded, dragged, shook, battered, cut and threw him back and forth, as he had been a prairie dog rather than an actor-manager of two hundred and sixty pounds.

He remembers a cloud of adobe dust, and some questions at the depot, which he was without power to answer.

It was a matter of weeks before Mr. Ashbell Sump saw what he had put his name to. When he *did*, and could distinguish it from the yellow-fever symptoms of the canal zone, his landlady put him to bed and got a trained nurse from Parsons, Kansas. He did not even, later on, announce his retirement from the profession, but, on the earnest advice of the only friend that was left him, he made for Atoka, of the Choctaw nation, where he began life over again on four hundred acres of oats.



The Girl of the Third Army

By George Bronson-Howard

Author of "The Ruling of the Fourth Estate," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Leola Fentress, a San Francisco girl who on the death of her father inherited a fortune and the San Francisco *Leader*, conceives the idea of assuming a masculine disguise and going out to the far East as war correspondent for her newspaper. This whimsical idea she carries out, and as Gilbert Bayne she in due time arrives at Newchwang and becomes one of the great army of newsgatherers there, who are vainly seeking a chance to get to the front. Despite the fact that the Russians have threatened to shoot any correspondent found in the interior, Leola and Chling, her Chinese servant, make a dash into the forbidden zone, whither Saxon Winship and James Staffren, two friendly members of the "Third Army," as the war correspondents are termed, have preceded her. They have not gone very far before Chling's quick ears detect the hoofbeats of pursuing Cossacks.

CHAPTER IV—(*Continued*).

LEOLA did not hear the sounds nor understand why Chling's horse gave a sudden dash forward at breakneck speed. Of one thing she was determined—she would not be outridden by a Chinese servant, hampered by leading a pack horse—she, who had been bred on a ranch in California; so, touching her horse with her spur, she urged him forward with soft cries.

The noise of their own progress prevented them from hearing the Russians behind them; but Chling knew they were coming, and did not allow his wearied pony to lag for an instant. They rode like embryonic cyclones, the sparks flying from an occasional stone in the path struck by the horses' hoofs. The wind whistled past their ears with a sharp whirr and bit into Leola's auricular organs like a keen, invisible knife. Over one hill and down another, the tongues of the ponies hanging out red and dry, their jaws covered with foam, their sides sweating wet.

Suddenly a gully, formed by an old canal, long disused, and hardly a decent jump for a horse if seen in time, came in the way. Chling noted it only when on its edge, and dropped the halter of the pack horse, digging his own steed for the leap. As the pony took it gracefully, the boy uttered a warning shout, but too late. Leola had failed to perceive the ditch, and her pony went into it, falling upon his knees and pitching the girl high in air. She fell straightly on her head, and, more from fright than from the actual blow, went into unconsciousness.

When Chling had reined in his own mount, he turned just in time to see Leola's pony raise itself to its forefeet and give out a terrified neigh. To his consternation, Chling saw that the pony was riderless. Giving his own horse a quick kick, he rode back and seized Leola's horse by the bridle rein, then, leaping from the saddle, he caught the pack horse also, who was browsing

This story began in the October number, which can be obtained through any newsdealer. Price. ten cents.

about at the side of the road. Holding the reins of all three in one hand, he stepped into the gully and struck a lucifer on his baggy pantaloons. He saw, doubled up before him, the body of his master, limp and apparently lifeless.

He gathered the tiny form into his arms. At the same moment the Russians thundered around a turn of the road, and the three horses held by Chling, alarmed by the sudden uproar, and thinking it a stampede of their kind, gave sudden, sustained jerks at the reins. It took Chling by surprise, laden down as he was with the body of the girl, and, as a consequence, the force of the pull dragged them both to the ground.

It was too late now to escape the Russians, Chling knew full well. He thrust his hand into his master's pocket, and took from it the wallet containing the rouble notes, which he hastily concealed in a slit of the gully, digging at the earth with his long finger nails to cover it up.

Chling was an honest Chinese, and his act was prompted by nothing save a desire to save the money until his master could claim it. Long dealing with Russians had taught him that there was no perceptible difference with regard to honesty between the Russian soldier and the Chinese coolie.

Then Leola's servant rolled over and over until he reached some thick bushes, which effectually concealed him from sight. He had no thought of deserting Leola, but he knew that he could be of more service free than captured, and he also knew that it would be useless for him to attempt to conceal her body when the horses were close by. It was his master that the Fengqui pursued, while he was but an insignificant factor, uncounted, but still able to do something to circumvent their amiable intentions toward the one person on earth for whom Chling would have willingly died.

The horses, running down the road, retracing the steps they had taken, were seized by the Russians, and even their dull *moujik* brains understood the significance of the riderless horses. While two troopers held them, the sergeant and the remaining two pushed forward, and found Leola in the gully.

"The mad Americanski," grunted the sergeant.

"*Da,*" agreed the first trooper, joyously. "And he is unconscious."

"Then you had better carry him," ordered his sergeant.

The brawny-limbed Siberian lifted the light figure of the disguised girl without trouble, holding her in one arm.

"Yah!" he ejaculated, expectorating contemptuously. "He is small—a boy."

"Nevertheless, he is a milord—and rich—else why should Lieutenant Basil Basilovitch send us to fetch him—or kill him."

The lights of the little inn for which Chling was making, and which he had missed by such a narrow margin, were glimmering faint in the distance, and the sergeant ordered that they should proceed toward it.

The inn was surrounded by a wall of mud several feet thick and twice the height of the average man, while on its eminences reposed broken shells and pieces of scrap iron, held tightly by the mud, and preventing bold marauders from entering unawares. A great gate of wood, criss-crossed with iron bars, prevented entrance in that manner, if those behind it so willed.

The sergeant beat upon the gate with the heavy butt of his cavalry pistol, and roared out, in such Chinese as he could muster, a command for the landlord to open the door. A short space of time elapsed, and a little peep-hole in the door was opened, two oblique eyes taking in the measure of the would-be visitors.

Seeing the uniforms of the Russians, the gate was hastily unbarred and the horses allowed to enter. The Russians dismounted, giving their reins to numerous *mafoos* who gathered around, staring. Then, following the lead of a little dried-up Manchu with a piping voice, they entered the front room of the inn, where several Chinese of the lower middle classes, evidently on their way to Peking, were smoking their thin pipes with acornlike cups, and chatter-

ing volubly about nothing in particular. At the entrance of the Fengqui, they arose from their squatting position on mats by the fire, and one by one left the room.

With a commanding gesture, the Russian sergeant ordered the little wizened Manchu to follow them, and, upon his compliance, shut the doors at both sides of the room. Then, in the smoky light of the kerosene lamp suspended from the ceiling, he examined the prisoner. He tried slaps, punches and kicks, but as none of these seeming to have the desired effect of awakening Leola from unconsciousness, he desisted and looked sourly on the girl's fresh young face.

Leola's military coat was open at the collar, and showed beneath a blue stock, pinned with a gold horseshoe. The first trooper — Vasiloff, whose thoughts were wholly upon the money which the mad foreigner was supposed to be carrying—noted this pin.

"It would be well to search this foreigner's pockets," he said, pushing himself forward eagerly. "Then, if there is nothing to be found——" He eyed the pin speculatively.

But a search of Leola revealed only a few copper sen and some silver pieces or significant sums of mace and candarines. These were thrown on the table in disgust.

Vasiloff reached forward and took the horseshoe pin from the blue stock about Leola's neck. "This will make him alive again," he said, his bestial face overspread with a broad grin, and, without saying more, he deliberately thrust the pin into the thigh of the recumbent war correspondent.

He was right. His vile idea was effective. Leola came back to consciousness with a piercing, feminine scream. Vasiloff looked satisfied with himself.

The girl blinked her eyes, pressed her fingers to her forehead and groaned. Then she looked up and took in the unkempt, unwashed, whiskered faces of the five Siberians. Repressing a natural impulse to faint again, she compressed her lips, wondering if she were dreaming. She arose to her feet.

"Spo Russki?" inquired Vasiloff, ingratiatingly.

"Ne spo Russki," she returned, faintly.

The sergeant, who was from the Baltic provinces and who, consequently, spoke a certain variety of German, pushed Vasiloff out of the way.

"Sprechen Deutscher?" he queried, briefly and incorrectly.

She replied in the affirmative, and sank down on one of the mats by the fire. Her head felt as though it were confined by burning hoops of iron, and it seemed that her temples were attempting to expand and burst the hoops. The details of her ride came to her, and she remembered that she had been thrown from her horse. Now she was in Russian hands. Where were Chling and her ponies?

Raising her eyes, she poured out a rapid flow of Stanford College German, only half of which the sergeant understood, for he, too, spoke the Teutonic language with the construction of another race. However, he made shift to explain, and succeeded, for the girl groaned aloud in her agony of spirit.

So this was to be the end of the great journey which she had planned! She was to be ignominiously captured and taken back before she had put twenty-five miles between herself and Newchwang. She was not yet aware of the death penalty, but was soon to learn it.

The sergeant, meanwhile, had been mustering up his entire stock of German, in order to explain to the American just what he and his comrades desired, and, having arranged the words systematically in his mind, he brought them out:

"To me have been given orders you to bring back—whether you are dead or alive, it nothing matters, for you are a spy and not my country's friend, for you have disobeyed the military rule, and outside the lines you have gone. If I bring you back dead, Lieutenant Basil Basilovitch, whom I have the honor to serve, will angry not be at all."

He paused to note the effect on the girl. She stared incredulously. She imagined he was endeavoring to fright-

en her, and, by that token, took courage herself.

"You are speaking nonsense," she returned. "You dare not kill me. My country would have you hanged."

The sergeant smiled laboriously, and drew from the inner pocket of his tunic a piece of paper, very dirty and very crumpled. It was the order which Jimmie Staffren had read to Saxon Winship, stating that all correspondents found within the forbidden zone would be considered spies—and the penalty. Leola realized as she read it that she was entirely at the mercy of these bestial peasants, and her heart sank within her.

"But we do not wish to kill you," went on the sergeant. "If to us you will give the money which you have, we will take you back to Newchwang and deliver you to Lieutenant Basil Basilovitch."

"Suppose I refuse to give you this money," she asked, almost tremulously.

The sergeant tapped the barrel of his cavalry pistol significantly.

There was nothing to do save accede. Leola thrust her hand into the pocket of her tunic; to her surprise, she did not find the wallet which had lain there so snugly an hour before. Then she began to fumble wildly about in her clothes; but she found nothing.

"You have already taken my money," she cried, in sudden anger.

The sergeant denied it, and the other troopers loudly chorused his denial.

"I cannot help it, then——" she almost wailed. Then she remembered that she must be brave. "I have no money," she said, with dignity. "Some one has stolen my purse."

But the sergeant took this only for an evasion. "Where have you hidden it?" he demanded.

"I have no money," she persisted, stoutly.

The sergeant eyed her in perplexity. Then an idea came to him. "He has it hidden beneath his clothes," he declared, loudly, to his brother Muscovites. "Let us not kill this man. Let us strip the clothes from him and find where he has concealed it."

He repeated his words to her in his Baltic German. For a moment she did not quite understand, but when the full meaning of the thing flashed upon her she stood horror-stricken, sick and dizzy. Rather death than that.

"You shall not search me," she said, as quietly as was possible under the circumstances. "Perhaps the money dropped where I fell—perhaps——"

The sergeant advanced with a threatening gesture. "We have not the time to speak further on this matter. Will you give to us the money, or shall we strip the clothes from you in order to discover where it is hidden?"

"I have no money," she cried, despairingly.

The sergeant gave the word, and the soldiers closed in on her. Vasiloff laid hold of her tunic and whisked it from her shoulders, while she stood, powerless, in the grip of the brawny sergeant.

"My God! my God!" she almost shrieked, forgetting her German and speaking in English. "I swear I have no money. Spare me—not that. I am not a man——"

Vasiloff struck her heavily on the mouth.

CHAPTER V.

THE RESOURCEFULNESS OF THE CHINO.

Although Chling's brain worked deviously and along the lines of the Oriental, nevertheless its turns and twists led to the point by indirection as well as if not better than the Caucasian's by ingenuous simplicity. An Anglo-Saxon servant would have allowed himself to be captured, along with his mistress, and sturdily, honestly and without guile, would have flung defiance in the faces of her enemies; which would probably have resulted in harm to the object of his devotion.

Chling, however, allowed the five Russians to take the supposed Gilbert Bayne; to carry her away, along with horses, provisions and supplies; and not a single protest or indication of his presence did the wily Chling give. When the captured and captors were

out of sight, he rose from his recumbent position among the bushes and crawled along the gully until he located the wallet containing the ruble notes which he had hidden away. This secured and concealed in a fold of his flowing robes, he stood erect and surveyed the darkened landscape—incidentally the situation.

Away to the left a few faint flickers of light indicated a settlement of some sort; to one familiar with Manchuria and its denizens, the tents of some nomadic Manchus or Tartars. For money, nomads of their kind would do anything in reason. Homicide, singly, was worth, perhaps, a tael. For five, more, maybe, but at that rate per head.

Now, in his mistress' wallet Chling had enough money for several thousand deaths. He struck out briskly for the lights.

There was a peculiar, catlike step to Chling when in his normal condition, but now it amounted almost to the leaps of a panther. The inn in the distance faded out of sight, and the lights of the nomads' tents grew steadily brighter.

Then Chling heard the pad-pad on the hard-beaten road, which invariably proceeds from trotting horses in the distance. He stretched himself upon the hard ground, his ear pressed against it. The sounds proceeded from five horses.

Five horses—coming! Europeans, evidently, from the way they rode. If Europeans, what else save Russians? Chling hastily arose and his progress continued by leaps and bounds. It was evidently necessary to squander ten taels instead of half that sum; that was the only aspect which the approaching horses gave to the case. Chling, being an Oriental, disliked spending more money than previously thought upon. Also, being an Oriental, the killing of ten men instead of five in order to save one whom he loved and respected, was a mere incidental.

As he was walking toward the oncoming horses, and they were proceeding at a fairly rapid pace, it was but a short space before he found it necessary to seek the shelter of a weeping willow tree at the side of the road, to avoid detection when they passed him by. For a Chinese "boy," domesticated in the service of Europeans, is as different from the average Chino as the Filipino differs from the Japanese.

So he stood behind the weeping willow, and the little cavalcade came into sight. Chling's almond-shaped eyes peered out of the darkness, felinely, and the moon, coming from behind a cloud, threw its cold, clear light on the faces of the oncomers. There were two Europeans, two Chinese servants and a pack pony, and they were proceeding at a leisurely gait.

When the identity of the riders became evident to Chling, he stepped quickly from behind the weeping willow and ran to the middle of the road.

"You please man-man [stop] masters," he shouted. "You please man-man."

The sight of the blue-robed figure with yellow, long-nailed hand outstretched, speaking to them in the dialect of North China Pidgin, and blocking further progress, caused the two Europeans to rein in—an example which their servants did not fail to imitate.

For the moon had revealed the fact that—wonders of wonders to Chling! —these two men were not only not Muscovites, but were of his master's own race and profession. He had seen them in Newchwang talking with Gilbert Bayne.

Briefly, it was evident that the war correspondents of the London *Daily Transcript* and the New York *Examiner* had taken very seriously their resolution to cross Manchuria, for sitting soldierly in the saddles of the first two horses, clad in warm riding clothes, fur-hatted and gloved, were Saxon Winship and James Parkhurst Staffren!

"Hello!" ejaculated the latter.

"Chin-chin, master," returned Chling, gravely. "Me wantchee have speak with you. You belong allee same 'Melican, allee same Inglis—yes."

"Well, boy," demanded Winship, impatiently, "what do you want?" This was their first check, and it looked as though it was to be a serious one. This boy knew their nationality.

"Me wantchee you make big chop-chop, master. Velly bad thing happen. Much bad. Me lide along load here qui-qui from Newchwang with my master—name him Missir Blayne, you savvy?"

"Bayne, Bayne!" exclaimed Winship. "You are Mr. Bayne's boy—Mr. Gilbert Bayne's boy!"

"Allee same," agreed Chling. "Me think much better me get on plackee horse, tell you all ploper and lidee chop-chop allee time."

Impatiently Staffren ordered Chling to mount the pony ridden by his servant, relegating the latter to the rear with the pack horse. When Chling was properly mounted between the two correspondents he told the story volubly and with fullness of detail; and since both correspondents were adepts at Pidgin, the truth was gradually forced in on them.

"That boy in the hands of Russians!" Winship's tone was very grave. "I hope there is an officer among them," he added.

"Why?" agreed Staffren.

"Because he may get decent treatment. If it's a case of common soldiers, I feel rather sorry for the little beggar. Hang it all, it's a mighty hard case!"

Unconsciously they had urged their horses to a faster gait, and were now proceeding along the road at a fair speed. The lights of the inn were plainly visible, and Chling ventured his opinion that the Russians had stopped there to search their prisoner.

"Russ, he make big steal," asserted Chling, solemnly. "For why I take money from Missir Blayne while he like dead. I know I no take. Russ he steal can do." Chling produced the wallet for Winship's inspection. "Have got plenty money. Take some money, catchee coolie Chinese, makee kill Russ," he supplemented, explaining the scheme he had in mind before meeting the two correspondents. That it was unnecessary to go further after meeting two of Bayne's own race did not occur to the faithful servant. Yet to Staffren and to Winship it did occur, and they talked in whispers.

"What are we going to do?" Staffren asked, in perplexity. "If we mix up with these Russians we stand a lovely chance of never getting to the front at all—and——"

"Nevertheless," responded Winship, "we'll get young Bayne out of this fix. We must, whether we get to the front or not. If we didn't, we'd regret it to the end of our days."

"Oh! yes," conceded Jimmy, reluctantly. It was not that Staffren lacked bravery, but his mind was set on reaching the Yalu. He had sunk his own identity in that of his paper's correspondent, and his duty was plainly to proceed to the Yalu, setting aside all matters of feeling and conscience which did not affect the paper's welfare.

So he looked gloomily at the prospect ahead of him while he tacitly bowed to the decree of Winship. But Jimmy was far from pleased with it. He cursed young Bayne for attempting the impossible and landing himself in scrapes which made it necessary for other correspondents to risk their prospects in order to drag him out.

A few rods from the inn Winship pulled in his horse and took his Luger pistol, containing nine rapid deaths, from his belt. Staffren did the same, and both correspondents alighted.

"You give me pistol, master—please," requested Chling. "Me fight can do. Me shootee velly stlaight. Missir Blayne he show me how can do."

Winship opened one of his saddle-bags and handed Chling a small-bore automatic revolver. "That's the inn, is it?" he queried of Leola's boy. Then relapsing into Pidgin: "You think Russkis have gone inside—yes? You makee talk with master house; you let in we—savvy?"

Chling nodded affirmatively and walked toward the barred gateway in the mud wall. He knocked tentatively

—a knock known to a certain secret tong throughout China, which has many adherents among the sons of Confucius. Then, hearing a shuffling in the inner courtyard, he knocked again—this time with more vigor.

The peephole was opened, and a pair of Mongolian eyes showed. In Chinese a voice inquired the worshipful business of the august knocker.

Chling replied that he convoyed two thrice-blessed sons of imperial heaven, and that they would fain cease their journeying at the yamun of the highly respected one with whom he held converse. The bolt was shot back, the chains released and the door swung open. Chling, followed by Winship and Staffren, revolvers in hands, entered. The same little, wizened Chinese who had admitted the Russians confronted them. At the sight of the two Europeans, the color of his face, in the failing flicker of a kerosene lantern, changed from saffron to almost the same shade as Winship's.

"No can do," he asserted, vigorously. "No can do. Me no savvy Fengqui belong. No can do. No beds for Fengqui have got. No chow for Fengqui have got." He wrung his hands and allowed Buddha to be the judge as to whether he did or did not speak the truth.

But as he spoke there came from somewhere within the pagodaed structure opening from the courtyard the shriek of a—well, it sounded to Winship like the shriek of a woman. The Englishmen listened intently.

Again the cry rang out. It expressed total helplessness and a great fear. Winship became keenly alert. He pointed his Luger at the mendacious Celestial.

"You hear," he said. "You hear." The shriek was heard again. "Makee much noise—you show where—savvy?" Winship injected considerable menace into his Pidgin, and the Luger waggled unpleasantly. The Manchu whined.

"Me no can," he protested—but the cold steel touched his cheek. He gave a bound and a leap, but Chling caught him and whispered something in his ear—venomously. The wizened man subsided and turned across the courtyard.

"Me take," he said, abjectly. Winship pushed Chling out of the way, and Staffren followed him. The Chinese opened a door and promptly left the circle of light. Winship, Staffren and Chling rushed into the house and the room.

They saw the figure of the person they called Bayne, his tunic lying on the floor and the rough hands of a Siberian clutching at his shirt. The little, rounded form was struggling furiously, and the Russians were giving vent to cries of irritation, as Bayne's fingers dug into their faces, and his small, booted feet struck their shins. One of them raised his fist and struck Bayne in the face.

So absorbed were they in their prisoner that they paid no heed to the three men who had just entered. They had their backs to the door, and the lamp's light did not carry to the edges of the room.

"Loose him!" The words, spoken by Winship in very bad Russian, were the first intimation to the Siberians of the presence of the newcomers. When they turned, to see the pistols of two Europeans and a Chinese leveled at them, the sergeant gave a cry like a mad bull and pulled his own cavalry pistol. Immediately Winship fired, and the bullet, catching the sergeant in the wrist, caused him to drop the weapon with a cry of pain.

Leola Fentress, released, staggered back to the wall, her face in her hands when she thought of the great shame which had been averted so narrowly. For the moment she hardly believed her rescue to be true, and even yet she did not see that it was Winship who was her rescuer.

But, meanwhile, the Russians realized their position to the fullest extent. To return to Lieutenant Basil Basilovitch without the man they had been sent to apprehend meant a certain time in the guardhouse, perhaps a knouting. To lose the loot which they were

so near to getting hurt their pleasure-loving souls to the utmost.

The fact that the three newcomers had the drop on them was nothing to the Russians. They held their lives lightly, and did not fear death because they did not understand it. So, with concerted motion, the shot which caused the sergeant's weapon to drop was the sign for a rush—and a rush they made, drawing their short sabers and pistols at the same time.

A little puff of flame spurted out from Winship's pistol, and the first man dropped. The next moment Vasiloff hurled himself against the stalwart Englishman and encircled his neck with the grip of a bear. Choking and struggling, the two staggered across the room, and Winship's pistol was forced from his hand, dropping to the floor, also. His right hand shot out and clutched Vasiloff's weapon, which he wrenched from the Siberian's grasp. Instantly a second trooper, noting the danger of his companion, struck the pistol from Winship's hand and picked it up himself; but just as he had consummated this action, a ball from Chling's automatic weapon—in the using of which the Chinese was not as proficient as he had claimed—evidently aimed for the Siberian's head, struck him in the breast, and he turned his attention to Chling.

To Winship it seemed as though the bear hug in which the Russian had enveloped him would crush out all life if not soon released. The Englishman saw the short saber strapped to Vasiloff's side, and his hand seized that. Immediately the Russian perceived his intention, suddenly released Winship from his embrace and plucked the saber away by the hilt.

But Leola Fentress now had come back to a realization of life, and noted the identities of the men who were fighting for her. With a shrill cry, she darted toward the combatants and, seeing the Luger pistol belonging to Winship lying on the floor, picked it up.

It was at the same moment that Vasiloff stepped back and whirled the saber about his head—a glittering circlet of blue flame in the enfeebled rays of the lamp—and aimed at the weaponless Britisher, powerless to defend himself.

Instantly Leola's newly acquired weapon clicked automatically with a sharp report, and Vasiloff clapped his hand to his head, stood waveringly for a moment and then went down in a heap.

The fifth trooper, observing the fate of his comrades, ducked between Chling and Staffren, and, butting headforemost into the door, shot out unnoticed into the blackness of the night.

The three Europeans and the Chinese boy looked from one to the other, each a smoking weapon in his hand, and each accountable for a dead Russian on the floor.

Leola Fentress, choking back a threatening attack of hysterics, held out both hands gratefully.

"You have saved my life—and risked your own to do it. I haven't the fitting words at my command with which to thank you—so take it for granted."

Winship and Staffren took the outstretched hands and gave each a perfunctory clasp. "Oh! that's all right," said Jimmy Staffren, awkwardly. "You were in a fix."

"But how did you know?" she cried. Then she noted Chling. "You dear, brave boy!" she cried, impulsively; then colored when she realized the feminity of the exclamation. She gave Chling her hand, and he took it warmly into his yellow claw. At the same time he extracted a wallet from his clothes. "Belong master," he affirmed. "I take when you like dead, so Russ no steal."

She was about to say something complimentary to his thoughtfulness, when Winship gave a sudden exclamation.

"I say, weren't there five of those Russians?" he asked, excitedly.

"Yes," agreed Leola; "there were five."

"Well, there are only four here. Where's the other? Chling—where's the other?"

The boy, with a quick glance about him, sought the courtyard. A moment later he returned.

"Have got away—chop-chop," he explained. "Go out gate, take one piece horse, ride very qui-qui for railroad."

Winship looked blankly at Staffren. "Got away," he muttered. "Got away."

"Damn!" said James Parkhurst Staffren, gloomily. "Damn!"

"Why, what's the matter?" inquired Leola, advancing a step. "What's the matter?"

"Matter enough," returned Winship. "There's a Russian trooper on his way to Hai-Ching-Tsien, just five miles from here. A Russian railroad station it is, and there's three sotnias of Cossacks quartered there."

"Swell chance we'll have to make the Yalu," interjected Staffren.

Winship eyed him for a moment, then Leola. "Well, you're in it, Bayne. We can't leave you now. But we're in a deuce of a hole. If that Russian reaches Hai-Ching-Tsien and warns the Cossacks, they'll chase us across Manchuria until they catch us—and when they do catch us, our chances for getting out of this alive approximate those of a snowball in hades. To be in the forbidden zone means death. But if there was any possibility of clemency, there will certainly be none when they find we have actively resisted the soldiers of the czar and killed four of them."

"Well, what had we better do?" inquired Leola, tremulously.

"Do!" returned Staffren, speaking before Winship could form the words. "Do! Why, get on our horses and ride like the wind and take our chances for life—and get death, I suppose. But we'll make the trial. It's better than being trapped here like a lot of gophers. Come on."

Without more words they rushed out of the room and into the courtyard.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RIDE TO THE MOUNTAINS.

The old wizened Chinaman barred their path with cries for money and wails at his fate that such things should have happened in his inn. Impatiently Winship tossed him a twenty-ruble note and bade him be quick in bringing out the horses belonging to both parties. The old Manchu had no wish to trifle with the death-dealing strangers who had meted out such swift judgment to the Russians he feared so greatly, and it was not long before the ponies were ready again for their travels.

"Poor little beasts!" said Winship, compassionately. He was a great-hearted man and loved animals. "They've been ridden too far already at one stretch." He sighed.

"Well, it's their lives or ours," broke in Staffren, sharply. "So up with you, Saxe. And you, too, young Bayne. Be quick, now. Minutes mean a lot in a game like this. You, Ling, bring those pack horses around. Chop-chop, now, you heathen devil; chop-chop, or I'll give you something that'll make you fear me more than Buddha."

By such adjurations as these, the two frightened boys belonging to Winship and Staffren forgot the time-honored "wait" of the Orient and hurried into their saddles. There was no need to instruct Chling to haste. He had mounted his pony, after helping Leola to hers, and was holding the pack horse by the halter rope as before. Incidentally he added to the words of Staffren with regard to his servant's ability a few choice Chinese insults of his own, which caused the other boys to flush.

Finally in the saddle, the little party made for the west and the far distant goal—the Yalu. As the small hours of the morning grew apace, the air took on a colder tang than before, and, at the pace they rode, whistled past their ears and nearly froze them.

Leola, in a state which threatened fainting at any moment, rode with Winship and Staffren on either side, and between gasps explained how she had managed to find herself in such a predicament.

"And a silly young ass you were, too!" said Jimmy Staffren, brutally. James was a strong man, and he disliked effeminate youths. "You might

have known you couldn't make any such journey as that."

"Jimmy!" Winship's tone was stern. "If you will reflect, my boy, you will find that Bayne's plan was precisely similar to our own, and unless you wish to cast stones at your own idea, you had better refrain from criticising his. His situation was wholly due to the fact that he was taken by surprise and outnumbered, and he behaved himself as creditably as any man could have done under the circumstances. Incidentally, Bayne saved my life in that fight we had—and I'm grateful. So, if you don't mind, we'll cut out recriminations and criticisms."

Jimmy subsided, muttering, and Leola felt a glow of gratification sweep over her at Winship's words. He, at least, had a good opinion of her, even if her fellow countryman had not. She resolved that so long as she was possibly able to hold out, she would give Winship no chance to alter his opinion of Mr. Gilbert Bayne.

As they rode, Winship told her in a few words of their own experiences: how they had sailed up the Liao-ho in a junk and landed a few miles below the place where she had been rowed across; how their Chinese disguise had misled the Russian customs officials, and how they had discarded it after passing the forts, knowing that they could not hope to keep up the deception when meeting Chinese.

"But that's neither here nor there," broke in Jimmy. "The main thing to consider now, Saxe, is: how are we going to evade these Russians? They will be surely sent after us. That fellow didn't have any superfluity of acumen, of course, being a trooper, but he knew enough to make Hai-Ching-Tsien, for he rode off in that direction. Now, there's the railroad in front of us, and those two lights down there mean sentry boxes. We had better make a detour to the left through that little grove of scrub oaks and weeping willows, if we want to avoid those sentries."

The wisdom of Staffren was taken in good part, and the course of the cavalcade was altered. They forsook the Peking road, and, riding through a rice paddy, made their way to the clumps of trees which effectually hid them from any searching eyes in the sentries' boxes along the railroad.

In the distance, winding tortuously between the foothills, the black rails stretched in both directions. It was the branch of the Trans-Siberian road running between Newchwang and Mukden, and incidentally Port Arthur, and was guarded all along the line by soldiers of the czar. The correspondents reached the tracks and urged their horses across silently. In the distance was heard the faint hoot of a locomotive, which drowned whatever sound was made by the hoofs of their steeds.

Breathing relief as their ponies' hoofs again planted themselves on the alluvial soil of the hills, the little party made a wide detour and regained the road. As they were about to turn another winding which would shut out the vision of the railroad, Jimmy Staffren, ever cautious, looked backward.

He gave a sudden cry of alarm. "Look!" he commanded.

Behind them, waving to and fro, were the lights of many lanterns, shining fitfully and intermittently and held by, perhaps, a dozen pairs of hands.

"What does it mean?" inquired Winship. Staffren eyed him contemptuously for the moment. Staffren was of the West, and had lived at army posts with his father, an old campaigner against Geronimo and others of that chieftain's ilk.

"Why, they're looking for the place we crossed the railroad, of course," he returned, "and it won't take them very long to find it in this clayey soil. So I'd advise you to hasten that horse a bit if I were you, Saxe—and you, too, young Bayne."

"Hadn't we better abandon the pack horses?" inquired Winship, when his steed, touched up by the spur, showed signs of leaving his humbler brethren in the rear.

"I would as soon die by a bullet as by starvation," returned Staffren. "No, we'll keep the horses so long as we can hold out. Chop-chop, there, Ling,

chop-chop!" The latter remark was addressed to his servant.

As Leola rode she began to realize what it meant to be caught by the Russians at this stage of the game. To be returned to Newchwang without attaining her ends would have been gall and wormwood to her proud little soul; but to be taken prisoner by the Russians and executed without having gained anything in the shape of success to repay her for death, was a hardship which she had not fully understood before. When it did come to her with all the sickening details she was hardly able to hold her knees against her saddle. She was young, and she was a woman—and life had just begun to open up with its possibilities before this danger threatened. For the first time since she had started on her perilous journey she bitterly regretted that she had ever made any endeavor to prove that a woman was as able as a man to be a war correspondent.

And what excuse had she for attempting the almost impossible? Social position, even a certain amount of publicity, were hers. She was the sole possessor of the twenty millions which Harmon Fentress had spent his life accumulating. Her name was writ large on the blue book of San Francisco. Through her deceased mother's relatives the portals of the exclusive society of the South would have been thrown open to receive her. Thanks to her San Francisco friends and her fortune, she would have been warmly welcomed among New York's élite.

She was as pretty as a Watteau picture; as winsome as the latest actress to capture cosmopolitans with her *ingénue* ways; fit by inherited and cultivated talents to enter and become one of any society of talent in the world.

In fact, there was hardly anything dear to the heart of the average woman that Leola Fentress could not have had; and yet this dissatisfied young lady had forsaken the luxuries, comforts and adulations of civilization to come out into a barbarous country at the risk of her life, the only reward of her actions, up to that time, having been the sneers of the men she wished to emulate and a very narrow escape from something which terrified her to think upon.

And now she was in a position not fraught with such results as the other, but still one which promised death, at least. Had she followed out her natural impulses she would have dropped from her horse, lain on the ground and sobbed, and when the Russians came up, explained her sex and thus have been spared. This she might have done successfully, for she knew that Russians regarded pretty woman, but, to her great credit be it said, she did not.

She was riding very close to Winship, and she noted his approving glance. Somehow it lifted the burden of trouble from her soul, and for the moment she forgot that she was cold, hungry and miserable—very miserable. The old spirit which had made Harmon Fentress a millionaire—that sturdy Anglo-Saxon grit which had brought him over the Rockies in a camp wagon and had made for him a fortune in the golden days of '49—came to her assistance, and she held her poise of being unafraid without showing in her eyes that she was otherwise.

They were riding at a good gait now, and, in spite of her sore, strained limbs, she managed to keep abreast of her fellow correspondents. Little was said, and they rode on in the cold, clear light of the dawn, which was breaking behind them. It showed them the Peking road in front and a bare, cheerless country, frosted in some places, muddy in others; flat lowlands with the mountains rising out of the blue mist some miles to the fore.

Chling was the one to give the next alarm by suddenly calling out in his squeaky voice to the masters to "Man-man" for a moment. The party drew up, and Chling dropped from his horse and to the ground, listening intently. Before half of one of the precious moments had elapsed, he was on his feet again.

"Lide—lide chop-chop!" he said, his tone indicating that he had been awak-

ened out of his usual stolidity. "I hear plenty men come—Lussmen, mebbe—plenty lots, allee same." He held up his yellow hands, opening and shutting them three times. "Allee same," he said, gravely, nodding toward the hands.

"We've got to ride, Bayne," said Winship, looking with compassion on the pretty face, drawn and cold. "We've got to ride much faster than we've done before. If we can make those mountains, we might possibly get away. If we can't——"

Chling flung himself back into the saddle, spurs bit into the sides of the shaggy beasts bestrode by the party, and they dashed madly down the road. The wind whistled through Leola's fair hair—for she had not recovered her cap—and there was something very winsome in her appearance. Winship's heart was warming toward this frail, delicate, handsome lad who bore hardships so bravely and uncomplainingly, and the feeling that he had for him was hardly the one which he felt for the average man whom he made his friend; it was more that he felt toward a pretty woman. Not that Winship had suspected for a moment that Leola was her own true self, but something subconsciously whispered it to him and he knew it, vaguely, yet was not himself aware of the knowledge. This accounted for the feelings.

Again Chling called the party to a halt. He had been riding close to Leola with his pack pony behind. They reined in their horses, and Jimmy Staffren swore savagely when, following Chling's outstretched finger, he saw his servants and his pack horses vanishing down the road, going the other way.

"The traitors! the thieves!" he broke out.

"Go ahead, Jimmy!" cried Winship. "We're losing time. Besides, we'd have to leave them sooner or later. The deuce with it!"

But Jimmy was not so easily appeased, and, though he rode as before, the thought that they were now without their provisions and dependent on those carried by Bayne's servant made him angry with himself. That this effeminate youngster should have a servant so much superior to his own and Winship's irritated him more than he was able to voice. But it was not mere irritation that gave him his black spell. Those ponies carried provisions for four while Leola's carried only enough food for her and servant. Now, if they did manage to escape, it would mean very short commons for them all, and he would be forced to accept favors from the boy he had "ragged" so unmercifully.

They were in the open country now, and had sped along for some distance. Chling, always on the lookout, looked behind him, and, without slackening speed, touched Winship's shoulder. The Englishman turned in his saddle and craned his neck. Back perhaps a mile, their steel saddlery shining in the faint morning rays, the fur dolmans of a company of Cossacks bobbed to and fro. From all conjecture, they must be gaining rapidly on the little band. He called Staffren's attention to the fact, and Leola could not but see also. But it did her yeoman service, for she straightened in the saddle and gripped the pommel with her free hand, determined that she would never risk falling into their hands after having ridden so far.

In front of them the mountains were becoming more and more distinct, and three miles more would bring them there. If they could but make them, it might be possible to find some place where a stand might be taken. There were such places in mountains—that both Winship and Staffren knew from previous war experience—places where a handful of men might hold out against an army. Such a place might be found. The thought, which came first to Winship and whispered to the others had given all a half hope which possessed them as they urged their horses on.

Suddenly, with a sound like an enraged hornet, something flew by Winship's ear. He was too well versed in warfare, however, not to connect the whirr with the sharp, tack-hammer re-

port borne faintly to his ears. The Cossacks were firing as they rode.

The first whirr was, of course, but an unwelcome precursor of worse things to come. Cossacks are not, as a rule, excellent shots, but a number of them firing unceasingly could not but do serious damage ere long. Looking back, Winship could see the little puffs of white smoke, and the sharp cracks sounded ominously in his ears.

The Cossacks were getting their range with the first few shots, and now that they had it, the bullets sang perilously close to the ears of the fleeing correspondents. A sharp grunt from Chling was the first indication that anything had happened. His pony wavered and stepped uncertainly, glaring with great eyes that rolled pitifully. Without ceasing in his ride, Chling pulled the halter of the pack pony forward and leaped from saddle to saddle, leaving his wounded mount behind to waver for a few moments and then pitch headlong to the ground.

The mountains were very near now, and the line of brown track leading up their rocky slopes was perfectly visible to the oncomers. So quietly had Chling effected his change of steeds that it was not noticed and did not cast a further damper over the spirits of the party at the time it happened.

They were riding almost neck and neck now, like jockeys on the last length of a course. The three correspondents' heads were bent low over the ponies' necks, and their knees held the sides of the saddles with the grip of desperation, while the riders rose high in air at every gallop, seeking to lighten the burdens of their steeds as much as possible. Chling had the most difficult task of all, for he was riding a pony already laden down with provisions, and was forced to make his journey sitting sideways, like a woman. Fortunately for him, the little Chinese was a light weight and did not add materially to the horse's burden; but the pony itself was a slower one than the others, and in order to keep it well in pace, Chling jabbed intermittently at its sides with the long blade of his knife, causing the beast to whinny with pain, and to endeavor to throw him at every step; but Chling had served his time as a *mafoo*, among other things, and the attempts were futile.

Leola was gasping for breath, and it seemed as if every particle of strength had left her body; only the sheer determination to keep with the others held her in the saddle. Her breath came in short, choking wheezes, and her lungs pained her; there was a shooting pain about her heart, and some one seemed to be sticking red-hot pins into her limbs. If they could but make the mountains! Her eyes were glued on the panorama before her. If they could but make them!

The shots from the pursuing Cossacks still whirred and whistled; and, without warning, Staffren's pony gave a shrill neigh of pain, stiffened out on its legs and went down in a heap. Staffren, skillful rider as he was, could not avoid the entanglement that followed, and a moment was lost in extricating him from the tangle of reins, stirrups and saddlebags. He stood erect and looked down at the beast which had carried him so faithfully.

"He's gone," he said, with an attempt at quietness. "You people ride ahead. Go on—ride ahead. You senseless fools, I tell you to leave me here. You don't want to fall into their hands, too, do you?"

"I won't leave you," said Winship, doggedly.

"There is no need to leave anyone," panted Leola. "This is a strong pony of mine. He'll surely hold two. Climb up here, Staffren. I don't weigh very much—and——"

"I'll do nothing of the sort," cried Staffren, furiously. "You people are a couple of blithering fools. Go ahead, as I tell you, and let me alone."

"You heard what Bayne said, Jimmy." Winship's tones were very even. "It's a chance, and a good one, too. Suppose the beast can't carry you very far. There's the mountain track. We stand some show when we manage to lose ourselves up there. Take my advice and follow Bayne's suggestion.

Otherwise we will simply stop where we are."

In the distance the Cossacks had noted the halt of the cavalcade, and had ceased firing; but they were urging their horses at a great speed, and their faces could almost be distinguished from where the correspondents stood. The prospect appealed to Staffren strongly, and he realized that what his companions said they meant. So, with a muffled curse he leaped into the saddle which held Leola, taking the front.

"You sit behind, Bayne," he said. "I'll hold the reins and the stirrups. Perhaps we can make it."

Again the party started, but at a slower rate, for Leola's pony objected to carrying almost treble weight, and asserted his objections forcibly. But Staffren had not been bred in the West without learning something about ponies, and within the second moment after Staffren had bestridden him, the pony became aware of the fact that resistance was useless, and sullenly responded to the appeal of Staffren's spurs. He struggled along gamely, endeavoring to keep pace with Winship's horse, and almost succeeding.

The Cossacks now resumed their firing, and the balls from their carbines threw up little flecks of mud and sand around the pursued. But the path to the mountains had been reached at last, and friendly rocks and stones hid the correspondents from view.

It was perfectly evident, however, to all that the pony carrying Leola and Staffren could not last much longer at the stiff pace of hill climbing at which they were going. The beast was wheezing and pawing, his tongue lolling out of his mouth redly and his jowls covered with spume. Nevertheless, having found his master, he put every effort into the attempt, and laboriously and at a fair pace the little party threaded its way through the great bowlders and rocks and up the steep mountain incline.

When the summit of the first spur had been reached, the pony carrying the double load gave vent to a loud, piercing sound, a cross between the cry of a human in pain and the neigh of a stricken equine. Staffren knew the danger signal, and hastily threw his leg over the saddle, dropping to the ground.

"Get down, Bayne—quick!" he ordered, and as the supposed youth followed his example, Staffren caught him in his arm, disentangling his little tan boot from the stirrup.

Like a stricken tree, the pony slowly rocked to and fro; then—his weight taking a rightward incline—toppled slowly and disappeared over the side of the cliff.

"We'll have to run for it now," cried Winship, also dismounting. "Here, Bayne, you're the smallest. Get on that horse—quick. Don't talk about it, dear boy, if you want to have our lives preserved. Get on, please." He caught Bayne and pushed the supposed youth toward his mount. Leola, recognizing the voice of authority, mounted Winship's steed.

"Now, you and the Chinese boy take the lead," commanded Winship; "and we'll sprint along behind you until we can find some sort of place where we can hold out. Go ahead with you, Bayne."

Leola touched the beast lightly with the spur, and it resumed its progress, Chling on his pack pony following more slowly; while behind the two ran Winship and Staffren, Lugers in hand, and turning their heads intermittently in order to be warned of what they did not want to see.

Both of the men were trained athletes and kept up the lope easily enough, for neither of the horses which they followed was in a physical condition to go at a very rapid pace.

Out of the distance behind them they could hear the clatter of horses' hoofs on the stones and rocks, the slipping and pawing of the ponies not quite sure of their foothold, and the occasional rough curses of the pursuers. It was only the winding path that saved the correspondents from instant annihilation, for the Russians were hardly more than a few furlongs behind them.

But before they had proceeded far

the fur dolman of a bearded rider of the plains, who was mounted on a shaggy, white Mongolian pony, turned the corner of a bowlder they had just passed. Instantly Winship's Luger spoke out and the man fell limply from his saddle. His horse galloped forward, then hesitated and turned to the rear.

At the same moment, in single file, half a sotnia of Cossacks wound snake-like into the tortuous path behind them. The next turn was well in sight, and without looking behind again Winship and Staffren stretched their legs to their utmost capacity and ran for the protection offered. The cracks of the carbines were much louder now, and the balls came so close to ending the lives of both correspondents that they involuntarily bent their heads as they sped along the slippery mountain path.

But a welcome sight awaited them when they turned the bend. Young Bayne and Chling had dismounted and were leading their ponies up the steps of what seemed to have been formerly a temple to Buddha, but which now, deserted and crumbling, stood, Sisyphus-like, directly in the path, seemingly trying to mount the hill itself so slopingly and angularly had it been built.

"Come!" cried Leola. "Come!'

They stood not upon the order of coming but came at once, following the supposed youth, the servant and the two horses into the cavern-like blackness of the pagodaed edifice. The great iron doors, long rusted by the rains and snows of the mountains, yielded unwillingly to the muscles of the three men who pushed against them, but finally, with many protesting creaks and gratings, they closed just as the Cossacks were to be seen riding furiously up the eminence.

With strong fingers that did not waver, Saxon Winship pushed back the iron bolts which would make their haven of refuge secure from their enemies. Then, stepping backward, he stumbled over something on the floor —a human body. Hastily striking a match, he looked down—to see the pale, sweet face of the person whom he knew for Gilbert Bayne.

"Bayne has fainted!" he said, a great tenderness in his tone. "Poor little beggar! It's hard lines he's been put to this."

And Jimmy Staffren, remembering that young Bayne had risked his own safety in proffering his mount, failed to make any remark which disparaged the very youthful war correspondent.

CHAPTER VII.

WITHIN THE RUINED TEMPLE.

Winship had little time to show compassion for Bayne, however, for uncouth cries and barbarous oaths from the outside told both correspondents very plainly that the Cossacks had arrived. Winship picked up the frail form in his arms and carried it further into the room. Then he tore off his fur-trimmed riding coat, and, making a resting place for Leola, laid her senseless body upon it.

"Come, Jimmy," he said, "we'll have to inspect this place and find its weak points. There are sure to be places where these Cossacks can make an entrance, and we must find them. It we can manage to hold out here, thanks to the provisions that Bayne's boy has been thoughtful enough to keep, we shan't starve; and they may have to go away for reinforcements."

"Yes," Jimmy's voice came from somewhere in the darkness; "that's likely enough. But how are we going to find our way about in this Stygian blackness?"

"Can do, master," said Chling, alertly. "Lantlun have got in saddle. Can get."

"Bless that boy!" ejaculated Winship. "He's a jewel." But he said it under his breath, as much praise spoils good Chinese servants.

Hardly more than a few seconds elapsed before a little flash of flame came from the lower part of the place and showed Chling's yellow face bent over a small dark lantern such as those used by burglars and suburbanites.

The application of the match to the wick produced a steady, unwavering flame, yellow-forked in the blackness.

The trapped correspondents looked about them. This was evidently the main room of the temple, for at the extreme end was a raised henge of granite on which stood, ranged around in a circle, a number of images rudely carved from stone, grinning Oriental grins out of curved lips and saturnine eyes. In the center of the half circle, however, there was a vacant place.

"Big Buddha, he gone," explained Chling. "This joss-house no like, go 'way find more ploper one. Little josses, they say, they no belong velly big ploper joss."

The place was absolutely bare of anything in the way of furniture—four stone walls rising to a tesselated roof on which were painted grotesquely bearded ogres with terrifying eyes, and dragons spitting fire from long-fanged mouths and wide nostrils. These mural decorations were done in colors and were remarkably horrible in the half light of the shaded lantern.

"You stay and look after the horses, Jimmy," said Winship. "Chling and I will investigate those steps. I shouldn't wonder if they led to the pagoda."

"Yes, master," broke in Chling, eagerly; "belong pagoda go up near Gotama—no man he go; only big priests. Go near sky and talkee with Buddha."

Laughing a little at the superstition in the explanation, Winship bade Chling go ahead to the stairs, promising him the protection of the foreign God in case Buddha should grow angry. Reassured by the words of the infallible, Chling proceeded across the temple space and to the narrow steps cut out of the solid rock of the mountain. They led to the roof—that was plain—and where the distance to the roof had been approximated Chling's hand came in contact with a little door, built hypothenuse-like to the roof itself. This he pushed open and ascended, holding it back for Winship to follow him.

As the door opened, a flood of light was let into the temple, which for the moment had almost the effect of making Winship lose his balance. He blinked his eyes several times before he scrambled after Chling, to find himself in a rounded space, apparently placed directly on the roof of the temple.

Here were a few musty rolls of writing and a raised stone, worn to an extreme smoothness by the knees of the priests who had prayed there. The stone faced the open side of the pagoda and the horizon. Afar to the east a golden rim of sun was casting shimmering rays over the desolate waste of country; and the blue of the sky hung over the mountains.

Below, dismounted and in groups, their horses picketed together, and their pistols and sabers naked in their palms, were as many as two sotnias of Cossacks—one hundred and twenty men. The rays of the sun fell upon their white blouses, and shone on their gilt buttons, lighting up each one into a separate luminary; while from the steel in their hands the rays flashed cold and white, ominous and menacing.

The Cossacks were evidently deliberating on the best mode of attack, and it was plain that they did not take the affair seriously, for they laughed and joked among themselves like schoolboys at a frolic. Winship felt himself drawn back by restraining fingers on his blouse.

"They no have see," whispered Chling, warningly. "They see much bobbery can make. You savvy?"

Winship's eyes followed the direction of the yellow finger, and saw, lying on the ground beneath, a long ladder of wood which had evidently been used at some distant date for reaching this very pagoda in which the two men now stood. If the Russians noted the ladder, as Chling had done—and Winship gave them credit for some little brains—things would indeed go seriously with those within the temple.

"You stay here, Chling," he whispered back to the Chinese. "You have gun, eh?" Chling nodded. "Plenty cartridges?" The Chinese boy again assented. "I'll tell the others about

this. Now, you keep watch here, and if one of them tries to put up that ladder, shoot him, and then call for me—if I'm not up the steps by that time."

"Can do, master," nodded Chling, and Winship withdrew from the pagoda, lifting the slanting door and descending into the darkness again. However, he carried his lantern with him, and soon made out Jimmy Staffren removing the saddles from the two ponies, while they eagerly devoured hay, a quantity of which he had taken from the saddlebags and thrown to the floor before them.

"Well?" asked Jimmy. Winship explained in detail.

"We'll have to keep our eyes on the ladder! If the Russians ever make up their mind that they'll carry that pagoda willy-nilly, they'll sacrifice any number of men to do it. There are only three of us to defend it."

"Four," came a voice out of the darkness—"four! I'm all right now."

The pitiful tremor which shook the voice belied the assumed rightness which the words claimed. Winship turned the lantern on the quivering lip and shivering frame of Leola.

"I can shoot," she announced, bravely; "I can shoot excellently. I am a good shot!"

"Very well, Bayne," conceded Winship, kindly. "But for the moment you had better rest as much as you can. There's no immediate danger——"

She stamped her little booted foot. "Don't tell me that, Winship," she cried. "I know when there is danger, and I want to take my share in it."

"Oh! you'll have your share in it, never fear," put in Jimmy Staffren, grimly. "I don't see any way in which you can manage to avoid that, my boy." He returned to the horses and removed their bits and bridles, piling up the paraphernalia in a corner. Then pulling over Leola's bags of provisions, he sat himself down on a saddle and proceeded to open one of them.

"Danger is danger," he said, sententiously, "but as I haven't eaten anything for some twelve hours, the inner man tells me that if he isn't soon revived I won't be able to face danger when it comes along. So I think I'll eat—what do you say?"

"Chling's guarding," assented Winship; "and for myself, I think it's a bully good time for a feed. Eh, Bayne?"

Leola nodded, though the prospect of food was hardly one to appeal to her in her highly wrought state.

"I'm ashamed to think that I—that—I——" she began, speaking to Winship.

"Fagged out," he broke in, cheerfully. "Oh! that's all right, Bayne. You're not as strong as the rest of us."

"I'm delicate, am I not?" she interrupted, her eyes ablaze. "I'm not fit to stand hardship, am I? No, I suppose not."

"Oh! I say," protested the big Britisher, "that's hardly fair, Bayne. I didn't mean all that when I said it, you know. You're a bully sort of a youngster and you held out like a Spartan. I cheerfully eat each one of those words, my boy. Here, have a pull at this. You're nervous."

He produced a brandy flask. She hesitated for a moment, but fearing to arouse more suspicions as to her "delicate" frame, she placed it to her lips and drank what would have been considered a fair portion at one time. The warm liquor burned her throat, and she coughed and choked, but it went to every part of her chilled system, replacing her feeling of cold with a gentle glow. Winship followed her example and passed the flask to Staffren, who was engaged in opening a tin of sardines. Staffren was equal to the occasion, and handed it back, half emptied.

"I knew there was something wrong," Winship continued, in his light tones. "I haven't smoked for ages." He felt into the inner pocket of his tunic and brought out rice paper and tobacco, from which he proceeded to manufacture a cigarette. He handed the materials to Bayne. "It'll do you good," he asseverated.

"My—my—hands are cold," said Le-

ola, miserably. She had smoked only on two occasions in her life, and then had made a bad botch of it.

"Oh! that's it, is it?" Winship placed his completed cigarette in his mouth. "Then I'll roll one for you." Which action he proceeded to take and handed the paper tube to the girl after a few seconds' manipulation. "Now for a light." He struck a match and proffered it to Leola, who, not daring to refuse, ignited her cigarette, after which he proceeded to take long puffs on his own, breathing out the blue smoke through mouth and nostrils, and exhibiting the keenest satisfaction. The girl, on the other hand, puffed furtively and with a distinct desire to throw it away. She welcomed Staffren's interruption.

"Well, the can's open," he said, in a satisfied tone; "and here are some tea biscuits—tea biscuits for a war correspondent—huh! They're good, though. Spread the sardines on them. Here's the box, here's the sardines. Wade in. There are no serviettes, and the waiter don't want a tip. So make your meal." After thus delivering himself, he buried his teeth in a sandwich, formed of two of the biscuits and several of the small fish. Winship prepared a like sandwich for the supposed Bayne, which was handed into that person's hands. Gladly she threw away the cigarette, and, the brandy having somewhat soothed her nerves, ate the sandwich daintily and with satisfaction, producing a kerchief after finishing the food and wiping her lips with it, but secretly and with an eye on James Parkhurst Staffren who had, man-fashion, wiped *his* lips by drawing his arm across his mouth.

"Have another?" he inquired, genially. "All right. Here——"

His further remarks were cut off by the sharp crack of an automatic pistol, followed by a number of like sounds.

"They've discovered the ladder," cried Winship, almost white-lipped. "Follow me."

Staffren dropped the tin of sardines and rushed after the lantern, which bobbed to and fro in the blackness of the temple. Leola, nervously unhooking the Luger which she carried at her waist, followed; and the three correspondents dashed up the steps and into the light of the pagoda.

TO BE CONTINUED.

A POOR ILLUSTRATION

HUDSON TUTTLE, the Ohio lecturer, made an address recently wherein he described the pitfalls of the lecture platform.

"One pitfall," Mr. Tuttle said, "is the unwise choice of examples and proofs.

"A temperance lecturer wished to prove to his audience the deadly power of whisky.

"Accordingly he caused a drop of water to be magnified and thrown upon a magic lantern screen. The picture was a terrible one. Worms bigger than pythons, crabs bigger than elephants, spiders the size of a ship, fought together in the drop of water like fiends in the infernal regions.

"The lecturer now caused a drop of whisky to be added to the water.

"'Watch, friends,' he said; 'watch the whisky's effect.'

"The effect was marvelous; the liquor killed all those ferocious horrors instantly. Their vast claws and tentacles and feelers stiffened. All became peaceful and still.

"An old lady in the front row whispered hoarsely in her husband's ear:

"'Wall, Jabez, that settles me. I'll never drink water again 'thout puttin' some whisky in it.'"

THE VOICE OF THE WIRE

By Lewis E. MacBrayne

The important piece of news which reached the editor of a newspaper at the eleventh hour, and its strange consequences. The tale of a man who was tried and found wanting, and the extenuating circumstances therefor

N that complex yet well-ordered mechanism that moves behind the modern newspaper, Hoskins, the telegraph operator, was but a human cog; but he was an important one. Had the *Herald* been published in a metropolis, rather than in a city of only a hundred thousand population, there might have been several such cogs to the system, and nothing short of an "all wires down" storm could have cut off the current of news flowing in from the world-wide agencies of a great press association; but Hoskins sat at the end of the only copper wire that connected the newspaper with the whole round globe.

Not that the wire plays a vital part in the mere filling of a daily paper. There is many a night when the city staff could perform that feat unaided, and not a few occasions when the suburban correspondents, if left to themselves, would crowd the doings of Congress and the Legislature into the waste-baskets; but these things are subordinate to the news leaders of the day; and a leader may come, as the Lord and the city editor well know, from any unexpected quarter in the whole earth, and come at the eleventh hour.

Urban and suburban happenings rise and fall much as the temperature varies, but the wire talks on all night; and suddenly an obscure mining camp in Colorado or an unmapped village in Manchuria becomes known to all men, and may even be recorded upon a fresh page of history.

That such things as happen must be faithfully reported is the creed of every newspaper upon the wire; and it must needs be the destiny of some men to sit for eight hours at a stretch hammering upon a typewriter before a tireless sounder, just as it is the destiny of other men to take their chances at the throttle of a running engine, or in the fighting top of a battleship.

The time may come when the telegraph wire will operate its own typewriter without the aid of the operator, as it now talks off short messages into written words on the stock-ticker tape. But until that day arrives man must still serve the press wire; at the city editor's call, but beyond his control, forever ordered up and down the line to fill a vacant post or make way for a better man.

"Well, I'm all in with to-night's work," the operator will sometimes say to the city editor, when "Good-night" has been clicked over the wire.

"What's up?" the city editor will inquire, as a matter of form.

"Don't know. I'm ordered to Colchester. Bum town, I hear."

"There are worse on the map," the city editor will reply. "Well, take care of yourself."

At six o'clock on the following night a new operator will stroll in, borrow a match, inquire the way to the operator's room, and without more ado make ready to take the wire.

"Good copy," the city editor's assistant will say, tersely, examining the first sheets an hour or so later. Or he may say other things—in which case the city editor will write a letter to the Press Association at three o'clock in the morning, the sum and substance of which will be: "I know you have to try them upon the dog sometimes, but there are things that even the dog can't stand."

When Hoskins came to the *Herald,* after his predecessor had "broken" that form of a brokerage firm known as a bucket shop, and had been taken in as a partner in partial settlement, Billie Nichols, the city editor, took the opportunity to make a few general remarks.

"What you do when you are not on the wire is your own business, but remember that this is a night job, and it is bad for a man who doesn't take some sleep during the day."

Hoskins' predecessor had gone without sleep for five days in the process of playing his stock-market "system" to its ultimately successful conclusion, and on the fifth night he had been like a ghost, and had alternately gibbered and sobbed over his work. Knowing nothing of this, however, Hoskins merely remarked, in a friendly way, that sleep was the great restorer, and that as he had just come from a train dispatcher's office "up country," he was anxious to "make good," and intended to give his undivided attention to the work before him.

And he did, for at the end of two months the chief operator, who had been bombarded for a fortnight with his messages, wired him that he had been promoted to regular pay; which was twenty-five dollars a week and permanent employment on the circuit. He sent the news "up country" by special delivery, and for two nights lived in the clouds of expectation. Then he came back to earth and to grief.

It was at one o'clock in the morning of what had proved to be a very dull night for news. Nichols had stormed at the city staff for failing to turn up a single good local story, and French, his assistant, had fretted because the wire was slow and unimportant. Both men knew that the whole front page—which meant, specifically, news important enough to be featured—might come in from somewhere within the next two or three hours; but in the regular order of things, a part of it, at least, should have been in sight at midnight.

With the exception of one or two men on call, the reporters had finished their work and gone home. The sounds of the city were dying out, and the voices of the newspaper were speaking more loudly—sharp, metallic voices, which varied as doors were opened and closed; the talking of the telegraph wire in one part of the building, and the endless chatter of the typesetting machines in another.

Billie Nichols paused in his work to listen to them. They were familiar sounds, and they meant that copy was being rushed along from wire to machine, from proofreader to form; and that much fresh type was being accumulated against the demands of the morning edition. His musing on the theory of things was cut short, however, by the reality of the moment, which appeared in the form of a boy whose tow head came into view over the back of the desk with a demand for "more copy."

The city editor handled a lengthy report of a grange debate gingerly. "What did you do with the wad of copy I just sent out, mister?" he asked.

"They ate it up," replied the boy, without mirth.

"Well, rush this in, and then go for the flimsy."

The youth did as he was told, and returned in time from the operator's room. "This was all there was," he reported, handing over one of the long press sheets, bare except for two lines of a dispatch from Washington, which ended in an unfinished sentence.

"French, go and see what is the matter with the wire," said Nichols. "If we aren't up against trouble to-night, I'm no prophet."

"I think he's got a jag," remarked the boy, as he took his solemn way to the composing room.

"Who?" roared the city editor.

"His Nibs in the other room," replied the boy, as he let the door slam.

From the operator's room came the sound of a mellow, babbling voice. Nichols and French paused for a moment to listen through the half-open door. "Shut up, shut up, I say," it said. "You've done all the talking nec'sary tonight. Who cares now wha's going on in Wash'ton? Man mus' sleep—sleep is the grea' restorer——"

Hoskins paused as the two men burst into the room. He was comfortably seated upon the floor, with his back to the wall, and had been addressing himself to the sounder upon the table. A nearly empty whisky bottle was in his right hand, and there was no mistaking the fact that he was very, very drunk, and would presently be ready to sleep.

French destroyed the immediate desire for this by deftly kicking the bottle out of his hand, and heaping upon him the varied abuse of a man who had only recently risen from the sporting desk. "You blooming busted bronco!" he concluded, "why couldn't you have saved your yellow streak until Saturday night?"

But Hoskins disregarded him with a fine show of scorn. "Mr. Nichols," he began, with affected dignity, "I'm all in. Would you min' turning off that key? Look out, look out—there goes Bennington, Vermont, again—they keep trying to call me from Bennington—shut it off!"

He lurched forward in a wild attempt to reach the table and the telegraph key, but fell short of it, and groveled upon the floor in a frenzy.

"Well, I've seen all kinds, but I never knew a man to get them on a single bottle before," said French. "What's to be done?"

"We must have another operator. Telephone for a carriage, and have one here at two o'clock by the latest. You know what it means to the sheet."

When he had gone, Nichols turned to the prostrate form upon the floor. It was his duty now to weigh every chance in favor of saving the news of the wire; and, taking one of them, he soaked a towel in the ice tank, and, placing Hoskins against the wall again, wrapped it about his head like a turban, and waited for results.

He knew, as well as did anyone to whom the policy of the *Herald* was intrusted, that the newspaper must be upon the street before the first toiler went to his work, and that the managing editor would compare it, later in the day, not with the difficulties of the night, but with the corresponding issue of its rival, the *Clarion*.

From the day when, as a green but zealous reporter, he had become a member of its staff, to the time, years later, when he had risen to the city desk, he had never ceased to remember that the *Herald* must be first and best, and that no personal sacrifice was counted too great to attain this result. He had seen the newspaper, in those years, fight its way from small beginnings until it was in the front rank, and had driven all but one of its competitors from the field; and he knew that every day counted now in the final struggle for supremacy. It had become a struggle so bitter that even the rival press associations that served the *Herald* and the *Clarion* played their part in it; and Nichols felt a modest pride in believing that he was doing his best to be in at the finish.

Over in the corner of the room Hoskins dragged himself to a sitting position, and began to beat a tattoo with his heels to drown out the voice of the telegraph wire. All the way from Manila the story of a Moro uprising had throbbed under an ocean and across a continent, and was now being lost on Hoskins' sounder. Even in his drunken stupor the operator realized this dimly, and groped about in the cloudiness of his mind to find some way of communicating with Nichols. He muttered in an effort to find the use of his tongue again; and the city editor crossed the room and poured a glass of ice water over him.

And it was like rain upon a parched earth to him. He could feel his brain reviving under it, and straightway he found his tongue, and was seized with a great desire, while there was yet time, to

pour out his whole soul to the man standing over him. "Because," he said, with an effort to control the thickness in his speech, "I am not so bad as I seem, and if it hadn't been for that wire from Ben—Bennington, Vermont, I wouldn't have sent the boy out for whisky, nor come upon this fallen estate."

"What's Bennington got to do with it?" asked the city editor, in the insinuating tones of one who would be a friend. "Oh, I say, did you know that girl who eloped up Bennington way?" For it suddenly flashed across his mind that there really had been a Bennington story, which French had passed over to him to hold for the front page if nothing better turned up. It was the account of a girl in the train dispatcher's office there, who had eloped with a commercial man under somewhat sensational circumstances. They had been followed into the country by the drummer's wife and a warrant officer, who was seeking to serve a summons upon him for non-support, and they had finally escaped upon an express train, held up at a country station by the girl herself.

"Yes, I knew the girl," answered Hoskins. "I knew the girl;" and he told his incoherent story—of how he had been engaged to marry that girl, having worked beside her in the train dispatcher's office, and of how she had agreed to marry him upon the day that he could earn twenty-five dollars a week; and of his leaving Bennington to better his position, and of his opportunity to try for the press position, and the success that had so recently crowned his efforts.

He had sent the glad news on to the girl, never suspecting her infidelity, and had been waiting for news from her; when, of a sudden, the Bennington dispatch had come over the wire, and caught him unprepared, making a ruin of his hopes and his plans, and leading to the whisky and his final undoing.

Nichols, schooled against sudden surprises, heard the story of his little tragedy in silence, while the wire ticked on of greater disasters in more distant places; and in the composing room the typesetting machines clicked hungrily, and the solemn-faced boy appeared at the door of the operator's room and demanded copy, and would not be turned away.

So the city editor abandoned the fallen Hoskins for the more pressing call of the moment, and, picking up the scattered lines of his work, rose to meet the situation as he had done so many times before in the dark watches of the night; doing such things as concern only men who are bound to bring out their newspaper on time, whether wires are down or live news is not in sight.

When French ran up the stairs with a hurriedly dressed operator at a bare three minutes before two o'clock, Nichols was still feeding out copy to the boy, and the reporters on call were drumming steadily upon their typewriters. At two o'clock the new operator was ready for work, and the *Herald* was once more in touch with its Press Association.

"We'll wait until a new story is started," said the operator to Nichols, who had followed him with brief instructions. "Here's where we come in, now."

His typewriter talked back to the sounder, like a Gatling gun barking under rifle fire. Nichols watched the sheet of paper as it began to move above the roll, and he whistled softly. The dispatch was dated at Bennington, Vermont.

Then he glanced at the prostrate form of Hoskins, and was glad to note that he slept, and was totally beyond the voice of the wire.

"Anything good coming?" asked French, when Nichols entered the city room with half a press sheet. Now that they were on the wire once more, he was anxious to have things happen, that they might make up for the lost time.

"Ripping good story," replied the city editor, seating himself at a typewriter.

"Can't I play it up for you?"

"No; just keep that copy boy occupied and I will have it in hand in

a moment. You recall that story that came early in the night of the girl who eloped with the drummer in Vermont? They held up an express train, and we have just received a story saying that it was wrecked twenty miles out in the country."

"Anybody killed?"

"Yes; the girl."

"Too bad it isn't a local story."

"It is a local story," replied the city editor. "The girl was engaged to marry a man here. We can't use his name, under the circumstances, but it will play up good and strong, and it has got to take the place of all the things that we missed while we were losing the wire."

He turned again to his work, and the rattling keys of the typewriter were added to the other voices of the newspaper, while sheet after sheet was written and hurried into the composing room.

There was a faint ribbon of color in the east when the foreman of the composing room sent down the last form. "And it is only seven minutes late," he said to the city editor. "By the way, that's a corking front page story. Who wrote it?"

"I did," replied Nichols.

"It's a beat on the *Clarion,* isn't it?"

"I rather hope that it is."

"Well, things looked blue for a time there, anyhow."

Back in the city room, twenty minutes later, Nichols ran his eye over a copy of the paper, fresh from the press. The typesetting machines no longer clicked, and the wire had ceased to talk, while the rumble of the machinery in the basement of the building was muffled and hardly disturbed the stillness of the dawn.

The night's work was done, and the record of it stood before him; a printed story, not only of his own toil, and that of his associates, but of the comedies and tragedies of a world that had been woven into it; enough humor and pathos, it seemed, beyond all need of what might have been lost through Hoskins' neglected wire.

From the open windows came the first breath of the new day; a breath that might be tainted before another night, but that was fresh and sweet now. He was seized with a sudden desire to make his escape into the open, and watch the sun rise over the hills.

"Are you coming home?"

He turned about as he heard the voice of French, with the recollection of one thing yet undone. "Not yet," he replied. "Don't wait."

He stepped to the telephone and called up a livery stable. "Send me a closed carriage," he said. "No, charge it to my personal account." Then he went into the operator's room and gathered up the limp form of the sleeping Hoskins.

WILLING TO HUMOR HER

COUNTRY people often have strange experiences when they come to the city, but it is doubtful if they are any stranger than those of urbans who go to places which are "trooly rural." A New York woman recently decided to spend the week-end at a picturesque and secluded little country spot out on Long Island. It was a neat little rustic hotel where she elected to stop, and at the supper table she discoursed glowingly to the buxom landlady on the delight that real country butter and real new-laid eggs gave to a jaded New Yorker.

Her faith in country produce was destined, however, to be rudely shaken, for on coming down to breakfast next morning she was greatly shocked to overhear the good landlady say to her spouse:

"The lady from the city's mighty keen on fresh eggs, John. Run and get half a dozen from the grocer's, while I go out in the yard and cackle."

A CAMPAIGN OF CONQUEST

By W. Bert Foster

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

When fire breaks out on the steamship *Mirrow*, bound for Central America, Bruce Hanson and one MacDowell, two of the passengers, and Duff, a mate, rescue Miss Gratton, the fair but somewhat haughty daughter of a multi-millionaire; her maid, a Mr. Joplin, a pudgy little man who is traveling with Miss Gratton—he is an employee of her uncle, Melville Stump—and a Lascar seaman named Gabe, whose enmity Hanson has incurred and who has already tried unsuccessfully to kill him. The rest of the crew and the other passengers have been gone some time when the seven embark on a life raft and steer for Yucatan. Not long afterwards they come across a deserted yacht, the *Quero*, and take possession of her. There is nothing to show why the little vessel should have been thus abandoned, but when they reach Bluefields they find that it is Mr. Gratton's own yacht, and that he has mysteriously disappeared. They arrange to go on a cruise on the *Quero* to search for him, and at the same time Miss Gratton consents to permit MacDowell to use the boat to further a scheme he has of trying to force President Rivera of the little republic of Sayab to give up a large sum of money of which he defrauded the Scotchman. The plan is to cut the only cable to the outside world and then paint the *Quero* so as to make Rivera think her a British gunboat.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MAN ON THE REEF.

MR. HERMAN P. JOPLIN had elected to continue with the party, although why he had done so Bruce could not imagine. He seemed desirous of keeping Miss Gratton in view, yet the incidents of the unfortunate voyage south had completely raveled such shreds of courage as Joplin had ever possessed.

The agent of Melville Stump did all in his power to discourage Blanche Gratton from attempting to find her father, or explain the mystery of the *Quero's* abandonment. Bruce knew that to be a fact, for he overheard a part of the conversation. And, really, even to a mind as sanguine as Hanson's, there seemed little to be gained in searching the Yucatan coast for the lost millionaire.

The affair reeked of foul play. The young man was sure in his heart that Benjamin Gratton had been murdered by the yacht's crew, and then, for some mysterious reason, the murderers had deserted the yacht. Perhaps they had fallen out among themselves; or their hearts had failed them after obtaining control of the craft, and they had feared punishment if found aboard the *Quero* without her master.

The reason for Gratton's murder—if murdered he was—could only be explained by the cupidity of the *Quero's* crew. Perhaps the millionaire had possessed a large sum of money. One thing which Bruce had learned while ashore looked very strange: in engaging his extra men he discovered that when the *Quero* was at that port the month before, more than half of her old crew had been discharged and new men engaged. He tried to sound the pilot regarding this, but the fellow claimed to know nothing about it.

These inquiries were made, and certain suppositions formed in Bruce Hanson's mind, without any conversation with Miss Gratton. Indeed, the young lady seemed to avoid him, and was

This story began in the September number. The back numbers can be obtained through any newsdealer. Price, ten cents each.

much more friendly with Mac. What Duff had told Hanson regarding the deal Mac had made with Miss Gratton for the use of the yacht rankled considerably in Bruce's mind; but he would not broach the subject to the younger Scotchman. Mac knew his opinion of the scheme to bring President Rivera to terms, and Bruce expected to be back in Bluefields attending to his own private affairs before the raid on Sayab was carried out.

Nominally, the young American was the captain of this expedition to search for Benjamin Gratton, but he hadn't much in common with the remainder of the yacht's company.

They had decided to "hug the coast" on the way north, and to question the smaller vessels which were sighted; but nothing came of either their course or inquiries for several days. The crews of the two or three turtle catchers and coasting vessels which they hailed were unable to give them the least information regarding the lost crew of the *Quero*. News of the *Mirrow's* burning had been industriously spread among the small fry from the ports of Honduras and Sayab; but nothing could the anxious party learn of the *Quero's* original ship's company.

Miss Gratton's face was sufficient to spur Hanson on, although he had no part in the financial arrangement made by the millionaire's daughter with the rest of the crew. She made no outcry; he never saw her weep; but she paced the deck for hours together, a pair of sea glasses in her hand, now and then scanning the horizon—the picture of acute anxiety.

It was evident to Bruce Hanson that there had been close ties between the girl and her father—"the man who never came home." Whatever may have been Benjamin Gratton's peculiarities, his daughter loved him deeply. She possessed, without doubt, a measure of his persistency and ability. Hanson knew she would not give up the search for her father until the last shred of hope had been burned to ashes.

Day after day brought no word of the lost millionaire, or of those who had sailed upon the *Quero* with him from the roads of Bluefields. Mac, without a word of explanation, brought up the pieces of the Maxim from below, fitted them together and tried its range. He gave the machinists who had been saved with them from the *Mirrow* several lessons in the management of the other guns, too.

They ran into Belize, and it was decided to make inquiries there, as they had done at Bluefields, without exciting suspicion. Mac was the one to go ashore, and when he returned he brought several boxes and hampers, the contents of which Hanson did not seek to learn. *He* told himself that he was interested only in looking for Mr. Gratton; when the hunt was ended he proposed to bid the *Quero* good-by.

They went on from the capital of British Honduras and came near the coast of Sayab. Indeed, they hailed a small steamer which plied between the Honduran port and that of Sayab, and MacDowell kept under cover, because he was afraid of being recognized and reported to Rivera. But the steamer was going south, anyway, and Mac seemed relieved by that fact.

"Surely he doesn't propose to try his foolhardy trick while these women are aboard?" Bruce thought, and he determined to put the question straight to the Scotchman, when an incident arose which quite knocked this idea, for the time being, out of Hanson's mind.

They had been running within sight of the coast right along; but not two hours after passing this last steamer Bruce, who was at the wheel, thought it best, after advising with the pilot, to make a detour seaward to avoid a spit of rock, or reef, which extended some miles out from the land. The course of the yacht had scarcely been changed, however, when Miss Gratton, glass in hand, came to the pilot house in much excitement.

"Mr. Hanson," she exclaimed. "I beg of you to take my glass and look at yonder rock. I see something moving upon it."

Hanson put the spokes of the wheel into the pilot's hands and sprang down

to the deck. He accepted Miss Gratton's glasses and swept the arc of the sea line until he focused the lenses upon the blur of black about which the fretted waters foamed.

"You will think it a spout of water—or a bird's wing—at first," she whispered, her voice rather than her features expressing her emotion. "It keeps waving—waving——"

"Ah!" exclaimed Hanson. He looked a long minute at that moving thing upon the rock. It *did* look like a bird's wing; yet a bird would not remain in one place so long. Was it a bit of white cloth—a garment of some kind—fluttering in the breeze? "Señor Yosaye," he said to the pilot, "we'll come about. Call down to Duff and tell him 'half speed.' I wish you to bring the yacht as close to that reef as you dare come. There is something—or somebody—on it."

The girl's hands were tightly clasped, and she watched his face eagerly. "Is it—do you believe——?"

"It may be a bit of wreck has been thrown up there; what we see is likely a piece of canvas fluttering in the breeze. But we'll make sure," Bruce said, quietly.

Nevertheless he passed the word to Mac to get their one boat ready for launching, and half an hour later he had the engines stopped and, with four of the men to row, got into the boat and steered for the rock.

There was no sign of a wreck about the reef; only that white thing flapping lazily. No human being appeared; yet he would not pass even this insignificant thing. They were as yet a long way from the place where they had boarded the *Quero;* it was not at all probable that any trail of the *Quero's* former company could be picked up here.

Hanson rose in the boat, with the lines in either hand, and peered at the pennant of white until his eyes watered in the sunlight. It was not attached to the rock itself, but to a short staff stuck in a crevice. When the boat dashed up to the line of foaming breakers, Hanson saw that this staff was the broken shank of an oar.

He called, and the men with him shouted, too. There was no reply. Glancing along the length of the reef he saw that it was not attached to the land. Between the further end and the shore itself was a wide passage of boiling sea, which would appall any but the hardiest swimmer. At high tide the sea doubtless swept over most of this backbone of rock, too.

But near where this white rag fluttered—and Hanson saw now that it was a torn and bedraggled linen shirt—there was a hollow in the rock. This hollow, at certain seasons, might be filled with water. It was doubtless dry at the present time.

The sailors looked at Bruce for instructions. The reef appeared utterly deserted. If some poor castaway had left this rag attached to the staff as a signal of distress, he had probably long since been rescued, or——

"I must get up there and see what's doing," the young American said, firmly. "Bring the boat in as near as you can without staving her to pieces, boys."

He stood up in the stern and the men turned the boat, allowing it to "back up" to the ridge of rock around which the sea foamed. Just as the cockleshell was lifted by an inrolling breaker, and danger of a general wreck was imminent, Bruce yelled "Pull!" and then leaped into the very crest of the wave.

It was a dangerous attempt; but he made it without fully realizing the peril he ran until he was in the grip of the comber. Then, thrown toward the jagged rock with irresistible force, he had to bite his lip to crowd back the shriek of terror which rose in his throat. In the flash of thought which illumined his mind he saw that the chances for death were big. He had entirely mistaken the force of the wave as it flung itself upon the reef.

More by good fortune than good management, however, he was driven toward a deep pool between two ugly jaws of rock. He had leaped into the comber with arms outspread, and so swiftly was the sea running, that he scarcely sank to his shoulders. Hurried on like a human cork, stung by the

spoondrift and half smothered by the foam and wrack, he was at last flung amid a deafening roar of falling waters into this snug harbor. The sea, rising through the opening, filled the basin in an instant with a green, froth-streaked flood, on the surface of which he was borne as helplessly as some inanimate object.

Then the wave receded, sucking the water back out of the basin. The level of the pool sank quickly, and it seemed to Bruce Hanson as though a giant hand had gripped him by the ankles and was endeavoring to drag him back into the open sea.

But he knew that he must not yield to this. His only hope of safety lay in remaining in the pool and eluding the next wave by climbing out upon the reef. He fought with desperate energy to accomplish this, and finally, diving beneath the surface, seized a ragged protuberance and clung to this until his ears rang and his lungs seemed bursting.

The instant he felt the horrible suction of the sea relapse, he sprang up, gulping down the salt air as his head rose above the circling pool; and, reaching for a ragged shelf above the swirling water, drew himself up out of the sea. But he could not rest. With a roar like the discharge of a battery of heavy artillery, the next wave swept into the gate of the pool, and the spray lashed his back as he swarmed up the rock.

The water rose round him, seething and boiling, until he was waist-deep in it; but he clung like a mussel to the rock, and the wave receded again, leaving him in safety. Then he went on to the summit of the reef, hearing the sailors in the boat cheering his success.

Once out of reach of the sea, he shook the water from his eyes and turned his gaze into the hollow below the fluttering linen. At first glance a cry was wrung from him, and he hastily clambered down into the almost dry basin. There, below him, a body lay face downward upon the rock amid a reek of broken birds' nests, eggs, and here and there a nesting bird that refused to move for either the live man or the apparently dead one by the shallow pool of tepid water left from the last rains.

"God!" burst from Hanson's cracked lips. He staggered down into the shallow scoop in the rock and so came, shaking and horrified, to the side of the supine body.

Was this, by chance, Benjamin Gratton, the man of millions, the father of that tenderly nurtured girl back there on the yacht? Had he been marooned here and left, by his villainous crew, to rot under the tortures of a tropical sun? These questions hammered upon the young man's brain, and for several moments he dared not stoop to examine the body closer.

Then, as though a breath of wind had passed, he thought the thin garments of the man moved. A sigh seemed to flutter from his lungs, and, quickly dropping on his knees, Bruce seized the shoulders of him whom he had supposed a corpse, and turned him over.

The man's eyes were closed, but he breathed gently. His cheeks were hollow, and upon them grew a stubbly growth of iron-gray beard. Evidently he was in ordinary a smooth-faced man, with considerable flesh on his frame; but he was attenuated now, and the reason for his exhaustion was not hard to guess. He was dying of starvation and exposure.

But whoever the poor devil was, whether millionaire or no, there was no time to lose if he was to be saved from approaching death. He was too weak to respond to Hanson's first efforts for resuscitation, and the young man gave this up and hurried to the rim of the basin and cast an eager glance around the reef. The waves thundered in from the gulf all along one side of the backbone of rock; and in places, where they boiled over the reef, no boat could approach within twenty feet or more. His experience in landing assured the young man that he could not get off easily to the boat with this unconscious man in his arms.

Nevertheless, the higher portion of the rock acted like a breakwater, and there was a stretch of comparatively

calm sea in one spot. This, it appeared, was the place where he should have landed. He signaled the men in the boat to row around the rock, and in three-quarters of an hour the *Quero's* tender was brought into the calm in the lee of the reef.

Already Hanson had raised the unfortunate castaway in his arms and staggered down over the slimy and ragged rocks to the edge of the sea. With extreme care the boat was shielded from the rock by the men's coats wrapped about the oars, and Hanson stepped aboard with the unconscious man.

"Give way!" he gasped, falling into the stern sheets. "If we're to save the spark of life left in him, he must have medical help, and have it quick!"

Under the revived force of the men's arms the ash bent, and the small boat dashed out to sea again toward the waiting yacht.

CHAPTER XII.

AGAINST HIS BETTER JUDGMENT.

While they were yet distant from the *Quero,* Hanson could see the line of interested spectators along the rail. He saw the sunlight flashing upon the lens of Miss Gratton's glasses, and his heart throbbed painfully as he thought that possibly he was bringing to her the parent for whom she was in search.

So he covered the man's face and, when they reached the side of the yacht, lifted the unfortunate's attenuated body so that she should not immediately see the haggard face. Mac helped him up the boarding ladder, and as they crossed the deck with their burden Hanson glanced at Miss Gratton. Her face was grave, but the expression seemed one of relief, too. She shook her head slightly, as though reading the question in Hanson's eyes.

"It is not her father," whispered Mac. "She knew that from his length as he lay in the boat. Jove! I never saw so cool a girl in my life."

"Who can the poor devil be?" queried the American.

"Whether he's one of the *Quero's* old crew or not we'd best try to revive him before we speculate upon his identity," said Mac. "I've routed out the medicine chest, and there's some brandy to rub him down, and stuff to dose him with. But ye'd ought to change your own togs, Hanson."

"Never mind me," responded Bruce. And he refused to look for dry garments until an hour later, when the strange castaway had been revived, fed carefully with broth, and had been soothed into a more or less tranquil sleep. They had refused to allow him to speak, so were still unaware of his identity when Miss Gratton knocked at the stateroom door and asked to see him.

"Something in his dress seemed familiar to me," she whispered to Bruce, who let her in. "He was all in black, wasn't he?"

"He had black trousers and vest. His shirt had been used as a signal—it was what you saw flying from the rock. As I remember, a coat lay beside him, too; that was likewise black."

"I believe I know him," and she went closer to the sleeping man. "Yes, that is Bolin. He—he was my father's valet. Burton will remember him, I believe. He was English—and a model servant. He would never have deserted my father had he not been obliged to do so. Will—will he live?"

"He'll be as right as a trivet to-morrow," declared Mac, cheerfully.

The girl turned to Bruce before he could escape from the room. "I have another thing for which to thank you, Mr. Hanson," she said.

Hanson bowed and went to his own cabin, where the Scotchman quickly followed him. "Your clothes are in a nice mess, old man," Mac said, bearing a bundle of garments in his arms. "Better put on these. I guess they'll come somewhere near fitting you. You and I are not far from being of a size."

He threw down the clothing and went out. When Bruce had pulled off his damp and uncomfortable garments, he was amazed to find that the suit Mac had left was the uniform of a naval officer. And it came pretty near

fitting him, as Mac had intimated. "What the dickens is the fellow doing with clothes like this?" thought the American. "Is this more of his craziness? What does he expect to do with a uniform of—yes!—an ensign, I should say? A British uniform, as I am a living sinner!"

Mac during this time had, as second in command, taken entire charge of the yacht, and when Hanson again appeared on deck and went up to the pilot house, he found the *Quero* on quite a different course from what he expected. The yacht had rounded the dangerous rocks and seemed to be making up a great roadstead or bay, for there were misty heights far ahead, and there were several vessels in sight, all coming out from the land, including rather a large steamship. Hanson saw Mac and Miss Gratton in earnest conversation under the sheet-iron awning amidships, and he approached in some heat.

"What does this mean, MacDowell?" he demanded. "Where are you taking the yacht? Her course has been changed, and we are not aiming directly for that part of the coast off which we picked up the *Quero*. I presume Miss Gratton is desirous of learning all that she can regarding this mystery——"

Then he stopped, his jaws agape, and amazement blinding him to everything but the appearance of two of the men forward. They were cleaning up some rubbish and coiling down cables; but it was the sight of their garments which transfixed Bruce Hanson. Having remained aboard at Bluefields, the scrub crew of the *Quero* had been forced to renew their burned and ragged garments from those found in the forecastle of the yacht; but these two men were now neatly attired in uniforms which Hanson saw at once were of the cut of the British navy.

MacDowell had begun to chuckle, evidently amused at Hanson's expression of countenance. Miss Gratton hastened to speak, however.

"Do not blame Mr. MacDowell. It is with my permission he has changed the yacht's course. Bolin can tell us nothing—nothing that we need to know at present. And Mr. MacDowell has an errand at Sayab——"

"Do you know what this means?" burst out Bruce, with anger. "Mac is crazy!"

"Oh, come, old man——" began the Scot. But Miss Gratton, flushing deeply, interrupted.

"I hope I am quite old enough to judge for myself, Mr. Hanson, and the *Quero* is my father's vessel——"

The American crimsoned and bowed. "Quite true, Miss Gratton. I beg your pardon for my seeming officiousness. But do you realize what a foolhardy thing this is that Mac proposes?"

"I have gone over the matter thoroughly with Mr. MacDowell. I approve of what he is trying to do. Indeed"—and her tone was not a little sharp—"I am glad to aid him with the yacht. These thieving Spanish-Americans should be taught a lesson!"

Her eyes sparkled angrily. Hanson remembered the story current regarding Benjamin Gratton's reason for never stepping upon United States soil. He had lost much through the dishonesty of the ruler of some one of these small states, and the laxity of the United States Government; it was plain that the millionaire's daughter felt strongly upon the subject, and that in her Mac had found a willing ally.

"Y' air lookin' very weel in that uniform yersel', Maister Hanson!" drawled Mac, still chuckling.

"By Jove!" sputtered the American, inclined to give vent to his spleen, yet tempted to laugh at the way in which the Scot had circumvented him, "I honestly believe, Mac, that you handed me out this suit on purpose. Expect me to help you in your nefarious and piratical plans, do you? Where'd you get 'em?"

"At Belize. And the sailors' togs, too. Now, Hanson, be a good fellow. All I want you to do is to walk up to the presidency and look handsome while I do the talking. Every man aboard is against you."

"How about Duff?"

"He's on the fence, like a cautious Scotchman, until the time comes. Then he'll go with the majority."

"You are running a big risk, Mac."

"Not at all," interrupted Miss Gratton, scornfully. "I remember that father always claims the protection of the British flag; his yacht is registered at Lloyd's. We are doing nothing piratical."

"But masquerading in these uniforms—it might look very bad for us under some circumstances. I—I am thinking particularly of the danger you run, Miss Gratton."

"Oh, don't consider that in the least, Mr. Hanson," she said, quickly, and it was plain that she entirely misunderstood his attitude. "I am not afraid."

"Which means that she thinks *I* am," thought the American. "Well, so be it, then!" He turned and nodded shortly to MacDowell. "I'll help you in this devilment if you want. We'll likely get in a nice row before we're through with it, though."

Hanson was forced to admit to himself, however, that he was a bit dishonest about all this. Mac's plan of bringing Hernando Rivera to terms smacked of a swashbuckling age, instead of the prosaic twentieth century; and the thing fired his imagination greatly as he deplored the fact that there were ladies aboard the *Quero*. The yacht had proved herself a fast vessel, and when Mac again laid his plan before him, the possibility of working the game successfully grew in his eyes.

At this time it was well known that all the British naval vessels in West Indian waters and the Gulf were painted a dark slate. At Belize Mac had purchased the proper paint, and he knew just the harbor in which the *Quero* could hide away while she was being disguised.

"But, man alive! that's a punishable offense," cried Hanson. "If you wipe out her name——"

"I'm not going to. These Dagoes will never think to look up the list of his majesty's dispatch boats in these waters. You learned yourself that the *Quero* had never been seen hereabout before, until she entered Bluefields seven or eight weeks ago. We'll have to run the risk of her having been into Sayab; but it's not likely she has. Anyway, Miss Gratton declares her father always sailed under the British emblem, and there's a fine one in the flag chest yonder. We'll make a good showing, old man, and as sure as you live I'll bring Rivera to terms!"

Hanson shook his head. "He may line us up against a 'dobe wall and fill us full of lead pellets. That's what will happen to you, I'm told, anyway."

"Yah!"

"Duff's right. You're a 'wild chiel'."

"I'm wild enough to want to get my rights—and I'll have 'em!" added Mac, nodding his head.

Hanson had little to do with the details of preparation for the raid on the Sayabian port. He, like most Americans from north of the tropic of Cancer, possessed a profound contempt for the smaller republics which dot the coasts of the long shank joining the two continents of this hemisphere. And, besides, he trusted in his father's influence and the weight of his American citizenship to get him out of any difficulty that might arise. Hanson possessed a deeper reverence for the power of the state department at Washington than had Benjamin Gratton—or, perhaps, than his daughter.

The latter's affairs were more deeply considered by the young American than were the Scotchman's plans for the descent upon Sayab. He practically gave up the government of the yacht to MacDowell. Of course, Miss Gratton's word was law; if she wished to risk her father's property in this way, it was her own lookout.

Meanwhile where was her father? What had become of him? When this man, who had been his valet, was in condition to tell his story, what would it be? Hanson feared greatly that some tale of horror, or of misfortune, lay behind the finding of Bolin on the reef. He was in and out of the cabin devoted to the sick man a dozen times during the afternoon. Burton had been espe-

cially appointed by Miss Gratton to care for Bolin; but Joplin, being the most useless man aboard, attended the valet likewise.

It was after sunset, the yacht was riding at anchor in the tiny, sheltered harbor known to both Mac and the pilot, and the men had slung the stages over the side and were giving the *Quero* what Mac laughingly called "her war paint," when Bolin awoke from his sleep of exhaustion with some glimmerings of understanding. He recognized Burton, the maid, remembering her from the time she was with her mistress in Europe two years before.

"'Fore Heaven, Miss Burton!" he gasped, his voice like a crow's in tone. "Is it you? Where am I now? Why, this is the yacht again!"

"It is the *Quero,* James Bolin," said the English woman, looking at him strangely. Bruce stood back in the shadow and listened. Only the maid, Joplin and himself were in the room with the valet.

"They've captured her again! My master—how did you get here?" gasped the valet, struggling to rise on his elbow. "Is the master safe? Where is Miss Blanche——"

"It's all right, my dear man—it's all right," Joplin said, soothingly. "I wouldn't try to talk too much now. You're in a bad way."

Bolin glanced at the agent of Melville Stump, and his gaze became fixed. He seemed struggling with some thought—some idea which wrestled with his troubled mind.

"You are—you are—I know you!" exclaimed the valet, at last. "I've seen you before. You came to Lisbon once to see Mr. Gratton."

"Quite right, my good fellow," said Joplin, soothingly. "I was called across by Mr. Gratton connected with matters of the gravest importance—importance to Mr. Gratton and to Mr. Melville Stump."

"That's it!" The man uttered the words in terror, and sat straight up in his berth. His arm stiffened and his forefinger transfixed the astonished Joplin. "You are an emissary of that villain, too! I know you now."

"What—what does he mean?" gasped Herman P. Joplin; and Bruce, who could observe the fat man's face, saw nothing but amazement in its expression.

"You are one of Stump's tools too," gasped Bolin. He fell back upon his pillow, gasping for breath, his excitement almost overpowering his speech. "I don't know how I came aboard the yacht again—I don't know what it means. What have you saved me for? I thought you had abandoned me to my death, as you compassed my master's. Tell me!" he sprang up again, his eyes blazing with unnatural excitement. "Tell me! *where is Mr. Gratton now?"*

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TOPPLING OF AN IDOL.

Joplin, his face gray, the sweat standing on his brow, and his little eyes popping open with horror and amazement, stammered some faint reply, of which neither Bruce, the maid, nor the valet himself took any note. Burton had begun to cry, with her face in her apron. The agent of Melville Stump did not draw near the berth, seemingly frozen to his place by Bolin's words; but Bruce stepped swiftly into the cabin and reached the man's side.

"Take it easy, friend," he said, softly. "You are in no danger. You will not be hurt. It is true you are on the *Quero* again, but you are in the hands of friends. Nobody wishes you ill here."

"Who are you?" muttered the valet.

"I am a friend of Miss Gratton—of your master's daughter. We recovered the yacht——"

"My employer — where is he?" gasped the man, growing excited again.

"Suppose you tell me what happened. Why was the *Quero* abandoned? What was the trouble, anyway? Why were you on that rock——?"

At these words the poor creature shrieked aloud, and writhed upon his bed, covering his eyes with his emaciated hands. "Now I remember! Oh,

God! I remember!" he panted. "They —they left me there. They put me out of the boat, with only a handful of bread. They left me to starve—to die of thirst—to bake in the sun——"

"Sh!" said Bruce, soothingly, his hand on the man's shoulder. "Let us hear it all. Where did you part from Mr. Gratton?"

"It was that devil, Bomber. And he had been master of the yacht for eighteen months, too. I never liked him; but Mr. Gratton was not a man to whom one could give unsolicited advice.

"It was like this: We had trouble with the crew all the way from the Mediterranean. I believe it was Bomber's fault. He called himself captain; he was a vile, despicable wretch, a fit tool for the man who sent him out to Mr. Gratton."

"Stump sent him out, then?" asked Bruce, softly.

"Yes. He came with many recommendations. He knew how to navigate. But he could not get along peaceably with part of the crew. I believe he sounded every man aboard, and quarreled with those whom he saw he would be unable to handle when the time came. And we were sailing for a part of the world which he very well knew—I am sure of that. He needed no pilot on this entire coast, and by his greasy, yellow skin I know him now to be a half-breed Spaniard or Portuguese."

Bolin's voice grew stronger as he continued, and he uncovered his face, speaking with vehemence. "Bomber managed to get rid of all he disliked at Bluefields. Mr. Gratton allowed it for the sake of peace. The villain engaged men after his own mind to take their places. We sailed north—a good many miles north of here. Mr. Gratton had a month to wait for his daughter, and he had a fancy to explore some of the little known coast of Yucatan.

"One day, when they were all ripe for it, they pitched upon us. Bomber had never approached me; he knew better. So neither Mr. Gratton nor I had warning of the plot. After they drove Mr. Gratton into his stateroom, however, and broke in the door and captured him, I heard Bomber say something to one of his cutthroat mates that opened my eyes. Melville Stump was at the root of the thing——"

"It's a lie—a black lie!" gasped Joplin. "The man is mad."

"He speaks the truth—I know it," said a new voice out of the gloom which shrouded the entrance. The sun had set and it was dark outside. "I know Melville Stump has desired my father's death. And he would have done anything to keep me from meeting my father. I would have told father of matters that would have stripped Melville Stump of every dollar he possesses, and retired him from the management of our property."

The girl's voice was hard and cold as steel. The horror which possessed her aided her to trample upon the softer emotions. "What did they do to my father, James Bolin?" she demanded.

Silence fell upon the others as, in broken sentences, the story seemed wrung from the pale lips of the valet. Although he had suspected Captain Bomber of ingratitude and unfaithfulness, not until the crew rose in mutiny and captured Mr. Gratton and himself did Bolin suspect the full significance of the affair. It was not an ordinary mutiny. Bomber himself was not the head of the uprising. There was somebody behind it all—somebody who was ready to spend money like water that Benjamin Gratton might never again be known among the haunts of white men.

Yet the mutineers were all "sea lawyers." Murder is never condoned in courts trying mutinous crews. They would not kill Gratton; nor, perhaps, was the unfaithful captain of the *Quero* anxious to actually have blood upon his hands.

The *Quero,* according to Bolin's rambling tale, had been within a few miles of the spot where Bruce and his companions boarded her when the uprising occurred. Bomber took the yacht into a certain bay, uninhabited and far from every known coast settlement, and

almost landlocked with wicked reefs. There they landed Gratton. Bolin they would not allow to accompany his master; but the valet saw strange looking natives—armed with long spears and bows—with whom Bomber seemed to fraternize, and to them he delivered the millionaire—at least so the valet believed. There are still wild men in the heart of the Yucatan peninsula—Indians who descended from the nations who built the vast cities which lie in ruins through the jungle.

The Indians and the captive disappeared before morning. Then, after a long consultation, the nature of which Bolin did not learn, the fires were built again under the *Quero's* boilers, she was headed for the rocks at the mouth of the bay, her wheel lashed, and she was set in motion. The crew, forcing the valet to accompany them, entered the two largest boats, and left the yacht to her fate. A wreck would nicely explain the loss of Mr. Gratton.

But fate willed it that the direction of the swift current should carry the yacht off the rocks. She slid through the narrow opening of the bay, avoided the reefs where the surf curled like rows of milk-white ostrich plumes, and to the amazement and rage of the mutineers, the yacht sailed proudly out into the free and open gulf!

They set sail after her; but it was useless. Her speed increased. In three hours she was but a speck upon the horizon. Her grates had been heaped with fuel. She had gone far under that head of steam. How far the present company of the yacht knew better than James Bolin.

Then the mutineers and their second captive sailed south, often quarreling among themselves. They had not yet been paid for their work, and they began to doubt and revile Bomber. And they were uncertain, too, what to do with Bolin.

They sailed and rowed, evidently not daring to land, and Bolin must have suffered the tortures of the damned both because of his master's unknown fate and the possibilities that confronted himself. Finally the fugitives reached the reef, and, it being somewhat out of the track of vessels, they decided to maroon Bolin there. To maroon a man, with food and water, is not to kill him outright; so these sea lawyers figured, at least, among themselves.

But to devote a man to the slow and awful death which faced the poor valet on that barren rock was the acme of torture. They expected that if Bolin were by chance rescued he would be in a state of babbling idiocy. And, at any rate, the mutineers would have time to get back to Bluefields—where Bomber assured them their money was waiting for them—and separate so that no pursuit could overtake them.

The tale was one to chill the blood of the listeners. Bruce Hanson looked at Joplin. The man had aged perceptibly in these few minutes. His fat face was gray and flabby looking and his gaze was fixed upon the carpet. There was no doubt in his mind now, as there was none in the minds of the others, that the man who employed him, the man whom he had looked upon almost as a god, was the villain who had planned this horror. Melville Stump, fearing what Blanche Gratton would tell her father of his dishonest acts, and desiring to handle the enormous sums under his care for his own aggrandizement alone, had deliberately compassed his brother-in-law's death.

The idol Joplin had set up had toppled in the dust. The man he believed to be the soul of business integrity was a common thief and capable of greater and more despicable acts. The silence became painful, and yet nobody cared to speak until Joplin, heaving up his huge body slowly, stumbled out of the cabin, with hanging head. Then it was Hanson who first spoke.

"We will go at once to the place where those men landed Mr. Gratton," he said, quietly. "Bolin will be able to guide us——"

"Indeed, sir, I shall never forget the spot," said the valet, his voice broken with sobs. "My poor master!"

"Mr. MacDowell shall follow his own plan to-morrow. The yacht is being prepared for it," Miss Gratton said, ris-

ing likewise. "I thank you all for your —your kindness to me. But a day longer will not matter."

Bruce and MacDowell talked the matter over later, in whispers, on the quarter-deck. Mac, after his experience along this coast, knew much that Bruce had never heard regarding the natives of the interior of Yucatan. "They don't fancy *gringoes,*" the Scot said, "and I'd take my chance with a picked troop of your American Apaches rather than fall afoul of these same black-and-tan devils. They're fire worshipers, like the ancient Aztecs; and a captive—especially a white captive—is likely to take the principal part in one of their devil-inspired ceremonies."

"Sh! For God's sake, don't let that poor girl hear you."

"She's a well plucked one, isn't she? Such nerve I never saw. I could fall in love with that girl."

"I wish you luck!" muttered Bruce, rather sulkily.

Mac began to laugh. But he did not explain the source of his amusement. "We'll run in to see Rivera to-morrow morning, bright and early. There is no big steamer inside the port now, and——"

He looked at Bruce, quizzically. "I'm blessed if I know how ye'll take it, but I've a plan to shut off Sayab from cable communication for a few hours."

"Good heavens, Mac! You'll get us all into trouble."

"I'll not. I tell ye the thing will go through like a greased pig at a fair. In an hour I'm going to take the boat and two trusty men, and play the Sayab & Belize Cable Company a trick. I was aboard their steamer when the line was laid, and there's a shoal off yonder where the cable's always breaking. Then at daylight we'll sail up the bay and bring Rivera to terms."

Bruce refused to listen; but later in the evening he saw Mac put out in the boat with his men, and at midnight, or a little later, they returned, the Scot with a very satisfied expression of countenance. The completion of the painting job was rushed, and before the sun showed his face the *Quero* was under way and steaming swiftly for the principal port of Sayab.

The yacht could easily have been mistaken for a naval craft, especialy in an unimportant port like Sayab, where a British vessel is less frequently seen than either the United States or Mexican small fry of naval boats. And the flag at the masthead looked impressive, as did the flashing barrels of the cannons and the uniformed sailors on deck. The women were advised to keep below, and old Joplin had remained out of sight since the jolt he had received the night before.

Indeed, matters worked better than they had reason to hope, for as the *Quero* slid quickly by the round *morro* at the mouth of the inner harbor, Bruce saw a group of green-uniformed officers upon the facings of the old fort, and the flash of glasses in their hands. A minute later a gun boomed a welcome to the supposed British gunboat, and the Sayabian flag was run up a broken mast upon the top of the brickwork.

Mac was ready for this, apparently, for almost instantly one of the brass guns barked back—like a snappy terrier replying to the challenge of a bloodhound. "Heaven above!" exclaimed Bruce. "We'll be directly under the guns of their bally old fort! And that sounded like a siege gun; one shell from it will knock us into a cocked hat."

Mac chuckled with delight. "Looks so, doesn't it? But lemme tell ye something, Maister Hanson." He began to drawl again. "They've but one gun there; 'tis a great bluff, as ye'd say. It's trained across the harbor. The carriage fell apairt o' rust last year, an' it's cemented in the brickwork with its muzzle pointed directly at the presidency! 'Tis a joke one of me friends, Captain Milo Reiley, played on the last administration, an' 'tis likely they haven't found it out yet. The sound of that gun saluting a steamer, or a lighthouse tender, mayhap, is the pride and joy of all Sayab; but they never—nevair!—

put a ball in ut. 'Twas a great joke of Milo's."

"But this is no joke, Mac. We're going to be in tight quarters. Hasn't Rivera an army?"

"A standing army of three or four hundred uniformed guards. He pays them. The tatterdemalions who put him in office have gone back to their hammocks. They'll not stir out of 'em, if we went about to remove the palace piecemeal, unless some new 'savior of the republic' rises. They'll ne'er fight twice for the same man down here. It's variety they want. I know 'em. Ha! see that car crawling up the hill behind the park yonder? That's on my road. To think how the wastrel fooled me and took my cash. Hanson, me revenge is at hand!"

He said it melodramatically, but with a humorous twist to his lips. Hanson shook his head. "If we're not all lined up against a 'dobe wall for some atrocious target practice on the part of Rivera's standing army, before *this* day is over, it will be a wonder."

"Hush your croakings," said Mac. "I'll show you. I'm going ashore to visit Rivera myself. Come and see how it's done, my friend."

CHAPTER XIV.

"COLLECTING DEBTS MADE EASY."

And Bruce Hanson went with him! The night before he had told himself that nothing under heaven would tempt him to involve himself in this foolhardy business. Yet, coming up the bay, and into the very teeth of the dragon—though rather dulled teeth they were, as explained by Mac when the old gun solemnly sounded from *el morro*—the thing had got into his blood. He couldn't help it. As the *Quero* dropped her anchors, swinging broadside to the town, with the brass cannons and the Maxim staring impudently over the white quay and up the broad, dusty avenue to the glaringly whitewashed "palace" standing at its end, Hanson's eyes sparkled, and involuntarily he stiffened and strutted in the naval uniform, and played his part as MacDowell had hoped he would play it when the time came.

"Hi, Señor MacDowell!" shouted a grinning native from a bumboat alongside. "How you come here, eh? His excellency make you short shift, eh? You not go ashore?"

"That's what I'm going to do, Pedro," declared the Scot, coolly, while the sailors, in very good time, put out the small boat. They might not have done the job as tidily as real gunboat men would; but their style and silence impressed the chattering boatmen. The town lay lazily in the hot forenoon sun; even the health officer did not pay attention enough to the new arrival to come down to the dock.

"His excellency surely shoot you, Señor MacDowell."

"Not under the protection of that," declared Mac, with gravity, and pointing to the limply hanging ensign at the *Quero's* masthead. But he made a horrible grimace for Hanson's benefit. It galled Mac to have to even *play* that he was receiving assistance from the government he had come to hate.

The native still looked doubtful. Mac, however, climbed quietly down and took a seat in the stern of the boat. "Wah!" muttered the yellow man, but loud enough for Bruce Hanson's ear. "This is a brave señor. But he will be a dead señor against the prison wall yonder. *I* know!"

"By thunder, Mac!" the young American whispered, in a sudden agony of fear, "I can't let you go up yonder alone. Suppose he pots you without taking a look at the yacht here? I—I'm going—hang me if I'm not! I can't let you do it alone."

"Sure," said Mac, cheerfully. "I knew you couldn't keep your finger out of the pie. You're a Yankee."

So the boat was pulled ashore in fine style, Bruce in the stern steering, with all the dignity that one of his majesty's naval officers is supposed to exude, and MacDowell quite at his ease, and as though a certain blood-blotched wall behind the city prison was non-existent

in his mind. Lazy as the town was, and hot as the sun, some little crowd gathered to watch and follow the two young men who marched up the street on the shaded side toward President Hernando Rivera's palace. The sentinel on the quay recognized Mac, but turned his back and looked off across the harbor unwinkingly. The Scot had once done him a service, and some yellow men are bitten with the virtue of gratitude—general opinion to the contrary notwithstanding.

But the crowd grew more than a bit noisy before they reached the broad stèp of the palace. Bruce was conscious that the short sword at his side trammeled his movements. There was a big bulge under the breast of his blouse, in which he placed a deal more dependence, if it came to a pinch. Some of the *peons,* recognizing the contractor of the trolley line, reviled him in Spanish and bastard English. Mac continued to smile and walked on; so what could Hanson do but smile likewise, looking straight ahead, and as though careless of impending peril.

Up the step to the wide porch, its roof upheld by pillars, the two young men progressed. On either side of the door a sentinel in dirty white linen and a green sash had been placed. But both sentinels were negroes, the sun shone pleasantly upon the porch, and the usual thing had taken place. Backs to the wall, the darkies had gradually slid down until they rested on their haunches, with their knees level with their chins, and had the crowd accompanying Bruce and Mac not made such a clamor, doubtless the steady snoring of the sentinels would have been all that broke the silence of the plaza. Their guns, however, had fallen across the open doorway and the rusted saber-bayonets had become locked, thus barring the entrance.

The crowd held back a little here. Bruce wondered what further was to be done. He felt sure that a very small thing would start a riot. He and the Scot might be mobbed, for the Dagoes had undoubtedly jumped to the conclusion that the supposed British vessel had come into Sayab on no friendly call.

Suddenly there was a quick step in the echoing hall of the great house, and the clanking of sword chains. The mob fell back from Bruce and Mac still further, and with whisperings. The next moment a figure appeared—that of a tall, thin man, booted and spurred and with riding gauntlets on his hands, dressed in a uniform of green and gold, gaudy enough to be a generalissimo's on dress parade. He was a dark man, but the shade of complexion was the work of the sun apparently, instead of being the result of cross-breed with either negro or Indian. And when he spoke, his nativity was so plain that it made Bruce jump.

"Phat the divil's this?" he roared, seeing the sleeping guards, rather than the company before the entrance. He wore a duck-billed hat, like a lord admiral's, with a sweeping green plume, and this plume fairly trembled with rage. Stooping quickly he seized with either hand a shoulder of each sentinel, jerking both to an upright position in a way that displayed a marvelous muscular development in his long arms.

The affrighted sentinels gave chorus to a wild yell of surprise. They yelled louder in a moment, when, at the end of either powerful arm, they were swung about until their pates crashed together and rattled like dried cocoanuts. Then, with a free and wide fling, the negroes were sent staggering to either side of the door, clutching their rusted guns and chattering excuses to the "Señor Capitan."

Not until then did the man in the wonderful uniform seem to notice the visitors. The moment his eyes rested on Mac, he grinned. "Glory be!" he said, his rich brogue subsiding to a friendly greeting. "Is it you, Misther MacDowell? Sure, have ye come back for target practice?"

"I have not," said Mac. "I'm here to see President Rivera—on business."

The Irishman's eyes turned upon Bruce, and he started perceptibly. "Holy mother!" he gasped. "Cusack took up yer cause, after all! An' I

thought they'd give ye no attention. Phat do y' think o' that; now! An' I heard the old blunderbuss salutin' you. Is she a cruiser or a gunboat?"

"We come on an entirely peaceful visit," Mac said, calmly. "Still, you can look the boat over. Mr. Hanson here is in command of her."

"Happy, I'm sure!" exclaimed the Irishman.

"Captain Milo Reiley, Mr. Hanson," said Mac, gravely.

"I'm thinkin' I'll have ter let ye by, though ordhers is strict," said the captain. "I'd stay to see the ruction, MacDowell, but I've jooties elsewhere. 'Tis reported the cable isn't working this morning, and in a nervous country like this, that may mean much or little. Good luck to ye, Mac!" he whispered, and then let them pass.

The crowd that had trailed the two young men from the quay had fallen back during this dialogue. After laughing at the discomfiture of the barefooted sentinels, and seeing the captain greet the visitors so cordially, curiosity, as well as racial dislike, died down and gradually the dark-skinned fellows slouched off, rolling cigarettes and making for the drinking places. The *gringoes* had been received peaceably at the palace, after all.

"Being a Yankee, ye'd call that getting through *slick,* eh?" whispered MacDowell, as the Irishman turned back to shout for a servant.

"Take the gentleman to his excellency," he commanded, in Spanish.

The *peon* shuffled up the wide stairway, and Mac followed smartly, Bruce in his wake, with misgivings that he would not for the world have acknowledged. It looked to him very much as though he were putting his hand in the mouth of the lion. A glance over his shoulder through the doorway showed him the *Quero* lying peacefully before the quay, the sunlight dancing on her brass work and the barrels of the guns. She looked very small, indeed.

On the second floor was a large room —a reception room, furnished in grass furniture and with lattice blinds at the windows. It was decently cool in here and so darkened that after the white glare of the sun in the plaza below, Bruce could scarcely see whether the room was occupied or not. But there was evidently somebody there, and the *peon* knew it, for he announced "the foreign señors" in a singsong tone, and then seemed to linger at the door.

"Let them enter!" exclaimed a sonorous voice out of the darkened room.

Mac took the servant impressively by the back of the neck, thrust him out into the corridor, and shut the door. "I guess you'll know me, your excellency, if you'll open the blind," he said, cheerfully.

There was an exclamation at the other end of the room, and a section of the blind of one window was thrust back. The light thus entering revealed a man at the desk beside the window—a thin, little man in linen, with a mop of gray hair which made his dark face seem all the more wizened. Sharp, black eyes scrutinized the two visitors through a pair of eyeglasses.

"What! what!" he exclaimed, in perfect English and with a rising inflection of anger. "Señor MacDowell—again?"

"*And* Mr. Hanson, who commands the little boat ye see from yon window, your excellency," drawled the Scot. "You have noticed the boat, I fancy?"

The president's face flushed redly, and his lean hand drummed upon the desk. "What does this mean? What does it mean?" he demanded, shrilly. "Did Captain Reiley let you come up?"

"Captain Reiley thought it best not to stop us, as we happen to be in haste, your excellency." Mac signed Bruce to remain where he was, and went confidently forward to the desk, over which he leaned to speak in an undertone to the disturbed president. All that he said Bruce did not catch; indeed, he did not want to hear it. He saw that his part in the game was to say nothing and look wise.

No, Bruce Hanson did not want to hear. Outwardly cool, inside he was shaking with the fear of the thing. Suppose Mac's plan should fail? Suppose Rivera saw through the hoax?

Suppose he refused to come to time, refused to give up Mac's hard-earned money, refused to be dunned with an imitation gunboat and a dummy British naval officer—though, if all tales are true, this kind of debt collecting is not unknown along the coast, and there is more of it done than Uncle Sam takes cognizance of.

Nevertheless, he could guess what was being said in the far corner of the big room. Rivera's slim hand went out twice to the bell rope hanging beside him. One tug at that would doubtless bring a file of tatterdemalion soldiers, and then——

But how cool and calm Mac was! His voice drawled on. Rivera fell back in his chair and turned an uneasy glance out of the window and away across the square, down the broad avenue, beyond the quay to the little yacht with its threatening brass guns. "An hour. You can do it in an hour," Mac said at last, standing erect. "But if you don't do it —well! Mr. Hanson is just up from Belize. Of course, I don't *know,* but I fancy he's got his orders. And perhaps you wouldn't care to have your cabinet know about this private affair of ours? You're not a man who 'divvies' unless he has to, Rivera. I know that. Somebody around here might feel sore if they knew you'd had it and had not squared with 'em. Now—that'll be about all, your excellency."

He laughed shortly. Rivera writhed in his chair. His black eyes were like two points of fire through his glasses. He could hardly contain himself, and it was some moments before he controlled his voice sufficiently to speak. "You will hear from me, Señor MacDowell, within the hour. But under protest—under protest." He raised his voice with the evident intention of being heard by the young man who, he believed, represented the British Government. "I shall compose a cable to Señor Cusack, at Belize, at once. This is unparalleled—unparalleled!"

"No flunking," said Mack, warningly, and, turning short around, approached the door and the waiting American. There he turned and bowed to the sputtering president. "In one hour, President Rivera," he repeated. Then, squeezing Bruce's arm tightly, he swung him about, opened the door and they passed out.

"It's done—it's done!" he whispered sharply, in Hanson's ear. "Now you've seen it. An' ye wouldn't believe before. It's collecting debts made easy!"

They went down the stairs and out across the plaza. Nobody disturbed them on their return to the quay, yet Bruce muttered, as they dropped into the *Quero's* boat: "You haven't got it yet, Mac—you haven't got it yet!"

CHAPTER XV.

BY THE BREADTH OF A HAIR.

A dirty, weather-beaten scamp of a yawl, which might once have been a tender to as handsome a yacht as the *Quero*—a draggle-tailed-looking craft, with about as much beauty as a wet barnyard fowl—drifted in past the *Quero's* moorings under a rag of storm-torn sail. Bruce saw it idly as he climbed the boarding ladder.

But there were other eyes fixed upon the disreputable-looking boat, and the ragged and villainous half dozen of men lolling in it. The crew of the strange boat had apparently been as badly mauled by fate as she had been by the elements. A black-browed, bristly-bearded fellow guided the sluggishly moving boat into the quay. When Bruce stepped over the rail he saw Bolin, who had been moved on a cot to the deck and reposed under the sheet-iron awning, sitting up and pointing with excitement at the strange boat.

"What is it? what is it?" the young American asked, forgetting for the moment the scene just enacted in the reception room of the presidency, and the uncertainty he secretly felt regarding the consummation of MacDowell's bold attempt to collect his debt. He ran to the side of the invalid.

"That's Bomber! That's the man that marooned me! That's him, I tell you!" gasped Bolin.

Bruce gulped down a cry of amazement. "Not the captain of the *Quero?*"

"Yes, he was, sir! His soul is steeped in guilt—he knows what was done with Mr. Gratton! Aren't there any police here? Can't he be captured? Look at him! He sees the yacht. He'll know her."

As Bolin spoke, his words fairly tumbling after each other, tripping on one another's heels, as it were, Bruce saw the black-browed man rise in the stern sheets of the dirty old yawl and stare with widening eyes at the yacht which was masquerading as a gunboat. "Keep still! lie down!" Bruce whispered, pushing the sick man back upon his couch. He beckoned Mac over and explained the discovery.

"'Y gad!" muttered the Scot. "'Tis a pretty kettle of fish. *That* Bomber? Suppose he tells his story on the quay? Heavens, old man! I wish we'd given Rivera only thirty minutes instead of sixty. Suppose Bomber comes here?"

"Not likely, is it?"

"He's a coast man. Isn't that so, Bolin? Didn't you tell us he seemed to know these waters well?"

"As though he had always sailed them," declared the valet.

"It's likely he's got friends here in Sayab, then," groaned Bruce. "He'll ask questions about the *Quero*. He'll learn she is supposed to be a British boat; he'll know better; then he'll tell about her—something or other—and the news will reach Rivera. It's bound to get to his ear."

"Perhaps not till it's too late," murmured Mac. "Once we get what Rivera's bound to send us, and slip our moorings, I don't give a farthing what happens. We can outsteam anything there is in this harbor to-day."

"But good heavens, man——"

"There's a chance that Rivera will not hear of this Bomber—or what he says about the *Quero*—before we're out of the harbor," said Mac, decisively. "A third of the time's elapsed now."

Bruce got a pair of glasses from the cabin and kept them trained on the weather-beaten boat and her occupants. Somewhere, and for some reason, the mutinous crew of the *Quero* had separated, and Bomber, with a few of them, had come here. If he feared punishment for his evil deed, there would be no better port of hiding along the coast than Sayab. And Bomber knew the coast.

The watcher saw the boat warped lazily into the dock. He saw Bomber climb out, followed by his hangdog crew. Some curious bystanders approached, and all parties entered into an eager discussion. Many were the fingers pointed in the direction of the yacht; the dialogue grew excited.

Meanwhile Mac had talked privately to every member of the crew but Duff and Gabe, who were engaged below. As for Duff, he would attend to his engines and obey orders; but he refused to know anything about this foolhardy play. Gabe, the Lascar, was not counted, anyway. He had been much out of sight since the castaways of the *Mirrow* had boarded the yacht.

From Mack each man received instructions as to his special duty during the next few minutes. The Scot believed he had scared Hernando Rivera into submission; but a cog might have slipped somewhere; he was taking no unnecessary chances. The cannons and the Maxim were already loaded; now the racks of small arms below were cleaned out, each piece loaded, and they were stacked along the deck amidships until the yacht bristled with guns as a porcupine does with spines.

Miss Gratton, her maid, and Joplin remained below, the last two in an agony of apprehension, but the millionaire's daughter apparently as collected and unruffled as ever. Hanson dared not think of what might happen to her if Rivera suspected the truth about the *Quero* and refused at the last moment to deliver Mac's money on board the yacht. Suppose the president brought down his "army," and big guns, instead. Perhaps Captain Milo Reiley, since becoming the commandant of President Rivera's military force, had dug the big siege gun out of the brick and mortar of the *morro,* and its muzzle could be depressed so as to sweep the inner har-

bor, and, incidentally, any craft in that placid pool. Reiley had struck Bruce as being one of those military adventurers who change their political colors and their friendships at the drop of the hat. He might not feel so kindly toward MacDowell as the Scot believed.

Meantime the hour was fast slipping by. Suddenly a noise of cheering arose in the distance. Bruce seized his glasses again and peered through them up the white avenue. A Brewster-made open barouche, striped with green on wheel spokes and running gear, attached to which were four rather scrubby-looking horses, had stopped before the presidency. A file of Sayabian militia, in their green and white uniforms and with bare feet, had assembled to keep away the crowd which quickly gathered in the plaza from neighboring cafés and shops. President Hernando Rivera, in a military coat and tall hat, descended the palace steps and stepped into the barouche. He was followed by another man, who carried some object before him—something that looked like a small coffin at that distance.

Mac looked up at Bruce, who stood beside the pilot house, and waved his hand with a grin. Then they both turned back to view the parade of the Sayabian dignity down the main thoroughfare to the quay.

People began to slouch through the side alleys toward the open quay as the carriage with its escort of barefooted soldiery moved slowly down the avenue. On the surface, at least, Señor Hernando Rivera was a popular magistrate. Bomber and his companions pressed through the throng as the carriage came to a halt and Rivera's companion disembarked, approaching the edge of the pier. There a boat had been made ready, and into this the president's servant stepped, carrying the thing in his arms. It looked to Bruce like an old hair trunk, with a brass handle on the top—a fit companion to the checkered carpetbag MacDowell had brought aboard the *Mirrow* at Campeache.

President Rivera evidently did not propose to come to the *Quero* in person. The boat was pushed off and the rowers made good time to the yacht's side. Meanwhile Bruce kept his glasses fixed upon the president's carriage. The official had his hat off and was bowing right and left to the loyal speeches of those who crowded around him. Suddenly the American saw Bomber, with his gang of cutthroats at his tail, break through the inside ring and speak to Rivera. The latter replaced his hat, turned to look at the ex-commander of the *Quero*, and then, motioning the guards aside, leaned forward to shake Bomber's outstretched paw.

"Heavens above!" gasped Hanson. "They know each other. What's going to happen?"

Meanwhile the boat had come to the foot of the boarding steps, and Mac was at hand, with four of his Jackies, to welcome the president's representative over the side. The view of the warlike preparations on the yacht's deck evidently impressed the yellow man as he came up with the trunk.

"Señor," he said, politely, "his excellency instructed me to say that he herewith returns to you the property you—er—left in his care when you were here before. You will open it, assure yourself of its safety and return me a receipt for same."

"In a minute!" exclaimed Mac, yet with his excitement well in hand. He unstrapped the trunk, the lock of which seemed broken, and raised the lid, turning his back to the visitor. Bruce, glancing down from above, could see the contents of the thing. There were suggestive-looking packages in brown paper wrappers, and bags which seemed heavy and clinked musically as Mac lifted and weighed them. He tore the wrappers of several packages, counted all and nodded his head. "I'll give you a receipt at once," he said.

"Ah! you are perfectly satisfied?"

"Oh! this is a matter between gentlemen, you know," said Mac, carelessly, taking out his fountain pen.

Bruce Hanson's gaze returned to the shore and the group about the carriage. Bomber was talking earnestly, and now and then he pointed toward the *Quero*.

Bruce could see Rivera's face as he listened, and its expression was not pleasant. Something was going to happen—the American knew it.

He whistled down the tube to Duff. "What's wanted?" came the muffled reply.

"How much steam you got, old man?" he asked.

"Enough to carry her to Hades."

"We'll have need of enough to run out of that same place in a few minutes," Bruce said, and then turned to beckon the pilot up to the wheelhouse. There was a sudden movement about the president's carriage. Rivera had leaped out, and, pushing through the crowd, ran toward the edge of the quay, Bomber at his heels.

"All right, señor," Mac said, politely, handing the receipt to the native. "My compliments to his excellency." The native semed inclined to pass further remarks, but Mac shook him cordially by the hand, meanwhile urging him toward the steps. Suddenly the fellow saw the wildly gesticulating president on the edge of the dock. "There—there seems to be something the matter, señor!" exclaimed the astonished servant.

"Guess he wants you," Mac said. "Hurry right along." He fairly forced the man down the steps, landing him in the boat in most undignified haste.

Bruce leaned over the break of the quarter and called down softly to the Scot: "Have we an extra anchor, Mac?"

"Two. One's below."

"Then slip your cables as though the devil were after you with a sharp stick! Bomber's got at Rivera's ear. Something's going to happen."

Mac kicked shut the lid of the hair trunk, the contents of which the crew of the *Quero* were eying with round eyes of wonder and delight. The Scot gave his commands in a suppressed voice, but in a way that brought the men to their senses. The yacht had been anchored bow and stern to keep her guns trained on the presidency. The stamp of the engines began below, and the pilot, but half understanding the matter, seized the wheel spokes.

Meanwhile a riot had broken out ashore. The president's guard raced down to where his excellency stood, and in a moment they lined up, their rifles at the ready, looking off toward the throbbing *Quero*. Her crew might have saved their anchors, but only at the price of sweeping the quay with shots from the cannon and the Maxim, and even the reckless Mac did not wish to do that. To fool the president of the Sayabian Republic was one thing, but to really play the pirate was an entirely different matter.

With a heavy splash at bow and stern the chain cables fell into the sea. Bruce motioned to the helmsman, and that astonished native rang for full speed ahead. The *Quero* leaped like a nervous horse under the lash, and at the moment there was a broad flash of flame from the line of rifles, a sodden report which was echoed dully back from the *morro* and the hills across the bay, and the bullets pattered through the yacht's steel rigging and rang on the sheet-iron awning.

Mac leaped for the Maxim, wheeled it so as to point over the stern of the yacht as she swung around, and crouched behind it, whirling the screw to get the proper depression for sweeping the quay.

"Don't fire, you blamed fool!" yelled Bruce from above.

Mac looked back over his shoulder, grinning at him. The crowd on the shore was melting away with wild and discordant yells. "I guess there won't be any need," the Scot said. "We've turned the trick, old man! We'll get away."

"By the breadth of a hair—that's all," muttered Bruce. He turned his glasses on the castle. Already a group of green uniforms had appeared there, and the American was by no means sure of that gun which had saluted the *Quero* as she entered the port two hours before.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Romances of the Race Course

By Charles Steinfort Pearson

VI.—THE DOPE HORSE

(A Complete Story)

ARTHUR DELABARRE, a tall, light-haired, well-proportioned chap of twenty-five or six, field glasses dangling by his side, stepped briskly out of the paddock gate.

It was directly after the last race of the day had been run at the race course which he had just left, and it was an occurrence which had taken place about an hour previous which accounted for Delabarre's joyous expression and appearance of being pleased with himself and the world in general.

A horse in which he and his partner, the ex-jockey, Samuel Bell, otherwise known as "Snapper Sam," had won the biggest race of the meeting at this particular course. The Eclipse Handicap it was called, and was worth many thousands of dollars to the winner.

This horse, Lord of Burleigh, was not the property of either Delabarre or his partner. Instead, he was owned by Henry P. Frothingham, one of the leading figures in the turf world as well as one of the foremost financiers of the day.

Frothingham believed in giving a young man a chance. Perhaps this might have had something to do with the reason why he took his pet thoroughbred from the hands of John Hernandez, otherwise known as "Bronco" Hernandez, and put him in charge of Delabarre and Bell. The elder Delabarre had been trainer for Frothingham at the time of his death, and it was only natural that he should take an interest in the son.

Only a short while previous the son had entered into a partnership with Bell in a training establishment. Both young men practically were without sufficient funds to own a "string" of thoroughbreds themselves, but as they understood race horses thoroughly, they had entered upon the plan of keeping what is known in racing circles as a "public stable." A "public stable" is in contradistinction to one which is maintained and run by a private individual who allows no horses but his own to be put into condition by his trainer.

Owing to their knowledge of horseflesh and their skill the two young men had done more than well in putting out winners. As alert in turf matters as he was in "the Street," and as quick to see an opportunity to make a "corner," Frothingham had noted that the son of his old trainer was proving his right to follow the footsteps of his father.

If the truth were known, he was not wholly satisfied with the way in which Hernandez had taken care of the horse, Lord of Burleigh. The animal had been confidently expected to win some big events earlier in the season. Hernandez had represented to the owner that the horse could not lose, and the thoroughbred's performances in view of all this had fallen so far short of the pre-

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dictions that Frothingham's suspicions had been aroused. He was quick to act.

"I'm going to let some one else try what he can do with my crack, Hernandez. It strikes me that you haven't gotten all out of him you could," he told the trainer, with a more than usually characteristic grimness of manner.

"I've done all I could with him, Mr. Frothingham," Hernandez had replied, after a blank stare at the owner for a moment.

"I may say that I agree with you perfectly as to your assertion, Mr. Hernandez," returned Frothingham, with a sudden approach to suavity which was misleading.

"You certainly have done all you could for my horse—in the interests of the bookmakers," he continued, his voice taking on a sudden sharpness. "I'm no darned fool, Hernandez, and I know what my horse can do. Now, I tell you this to your face, because I want no suspicion of scandal to taint my establishment, and what I know I keep to myself. Good-day, sir!"

Turning on his heel, he had left the trainer and horseman grinding his teeth and vowing vengeance. Hernandez knew that while Frothingham would reveal no reason for the change of trainers, all sorts of ones would be advanced, and none of them would redound to the credit of himself.

At that time he had no idea with whom Frothingham would place his horse. Hernandez had firmly believed that Frothingham, although he might be able to shear the lambs in Wall Street most artistically and thoroughly, might have the wool pulled over his eyes completely by a man as well versed in the tricks of the turf as himself.

His reckoning had been without his employer. What rankled in Hernandez's bosom more than anything else was that ultimately, through means of his own, he hoped to become Frothingham's partner in the ownership of the racing stable, when he could feather his nest without fear of discovery, or the slightest idea of suspicion.

A big fellow with a dark, saturnine face and a tremendous physique, which stood him in good stead in the frequent game of "bluff," in which he indulged, Hernandez had sprung up on the turf almost like a mushroom. Nobody knew just where he had come from, though it was certain he had been a horse trader in the Southwest, whence he had received his sobriquet of "Bronco." He had first started in the racing game at New Orleans, with a thoroughbred he named Gila, and which was the nucleus of his racers. It was evident that he had Spanish or Mexican blood in him, and was commonly designated as a "Greaser."

There was no doubt that Hernandez was a remarkable handler of horses. From an apparently broken down "selling plater," he could develop a stake winner of the highest class. Horsemen were accustomed to shake their heads, and mutter one word when one of Hernandez's horses would pass the finish post first in easy fashion, at ten or fifteen or twenty to one in the betting, probably after having finished last in the previous race.

The word which the horsemen would use was "dope." By dope is meant any sort of stimulant which is administered to a horse just before a race in order to spur him on to false efforts. Whatever the form may be, it may be administered in the form of a pill, a liquid, or may be injected directly into the body. Unscrupulous trainers have been known, and not so infrequently, to use such means to try to have their horses win.

More than ready was Hernandez always with excuses, and although the stewards had called him before them on more than one occasion, nothing could be proven. Men believed to be far less culpable than himself were ruled off. It was a noticeable fact that few or none of Hernandez's horses won when they were short-priced favorites.

When Hernandez had learned that in future Lord of Burleigh was to be trained by Delabarre and Bell, "one a jockey and the other not even a 'prentice boy," as Hernandez had said contemptuously, he was furious.

"We'll see what you can do with that

horse, Mr. Johnny Fresh," he had told Delabarre, with a sneer, the first occasion on which they had met after the transfer.

"That's just what you'll do, Mr. Hernandez," Delabarre had said, with a smile to match the other's sneer. "My partner and I are going to make you, as well as the rest of the fellows, sit up and take notice when we get the Frothingham crack the way we want him to be."

That was all that was said at the time. Hernandez in the future never condescended to notice the presence of either Delabarre or his partner, but he grasped every little contemptible advantage he could take of them. It was his particular pleasure to bid up in selling races horses which had been trained by the two young men and entered under their suggestions. So frequently did he do this that the other horsemen were accustomed to speak to Delabarre and Bell about their "black man with the halter." Hernandez did seem to be a veritable Nemesis to them.

But now that Delabarre's boast to Hernandez in the beginning had been made good by the horse's winning the Eclipse Handicap, in which Hernandez had a horse, also—one owned by himself, and the best in his stable—the young man felt more than elated. It was just what he had hoped for. He was only human, and such a triumph over a rival like the other was a triumph indeed.

As it happened, when Delabarre hurried out of the paddock gate, he chanced to run almost plump into Hernandez standing on the outside. Of course he had no means of telling that the horseman had been waiting for him.

"Well, Delabarre, you made good, all right. I guess I and the rest of 'em sat up to-day and took notice when your horse galloped in ahead of mine. It was a pretty tight fit, though. I guess you're a little mite haughty and hifalutin' like, that you captured the Eclipse?" questioned Hernandez.

Delabarre was somewhat surprised at the salutation. It was the first time that the other had spoken to him for months.

A glance at the horseman's face showed the younger man that he was smiling or forcing a smile. Evidently he was trying to appear pleasant. Delabarre was willing to meet him halfway. He was easy-going, as ready to forgive as most quick-tempered persons are apt to be. At the time he had forgotten the speaker's petty meannesses to his partner and himself.

"Oh! I don't know, Bronco," was Delabarre's reply. "It was no more than I expected. We don't make any big splash in the turf puddle, but I guess we fill our places in the pool, all right," answered Delabarre, in a jocose manner. And then, as if remembering the wrongs that Hernandez had put upon them: "I guess we don't muddy the pool, either, Hernandez."

"You're a cockey youngster, you are, Delabarre, and your partner is another," began Hernandez. "I wouldn't let the winning of that race go to my head, my boy. You're only twenty-five or so, and I'm nearer fifty, an' I've seen more than one man killed in my time. Maybe you don't know that I've raced 'quarter horses' out West."

It may be explained that this "quarter-horse" racing used to be the toughest phase of horse racing. Men who had good horses, capable of running quarter-mile dashes, would take them about the West and Southwestern country, and make matches with local horses. In these matches not a little knavery and villainy formed a part. Occasionally the visitors had difficulty in getting away with the fruits of their victories, and "gun play" was not infrequent.

Delabarre mentioned something about not caring if Hernandez had raced horses in perdition, insinuating that, perhaps, he had done so, and that he had learned some of his trickery from Satan himself.

Hernandez muttered something in a foreign tongue and then snarled out in plain English:

"Maybe you think I don't know why Frothingham took his horse away from me. I know, all right. It was on account of your sneaking stories that you

went to him with, you snake in the grass. You tried hard to win to-day's race so that you'd have proof of all that you told him, didn't you?"

Hernandez's last words were brought out so loudly that they attracted the attention of a number of the horsemen, who stopped near the scene.

Delabarre entered strenuous denial. Such an insinuation touched him to the quick.

"If you say that, Hernandez, you say what is not true, and I believe you know it's not true," he started, and would have followed it with a more forcible denunciation of the other.

In an instant Hernandez had clinched his right hand and shot out his big fist at Delabarre's face.

Luckily for the young man, he was a little too far out of range, and the fist only struck him a glancing blow on the side of the head, making a slight abrasion of the skin. It had the effect of rousing his anger to the boiling point, and when Delabarre was thoroughly aroused, he was no mean antagonist. He was known to his intimates as "clever with the mitts," which meant that he was a practiced boxer, cool and quick, with a punch which carried the whole strength of his body.

As soon as Hernandez had hit the blow with the right, he followed it with a left. Both were awkwardly delivered, for the horseman was no boxing expert.

Hernandez accompanied the second blow with a string of profanity, and his face was livid and savage.

The first blow was so unexpected that it caught the younger man napping. Not so with the left. Delabarre "sidestepped" to the right, shot out his fist and put an effectual stop to the flood of profanity, for it landed fairly and squarely on the big dark man's mouth.

If the blow had been delivered at probably an inch or more of distance between them it would have knocked Hernandez off his pins. As it was, it dazed him.

Delabarre, though fearful that he would break his hands, still smarting from the cowardly blow, dropped his field glasses, which on first impulse he had been tempted to use on his assailant, and put up his hands.

What followed, as the horsemen who were onlookers declared, was a beautiful exhibition of boxing—while it lasted. Thoroughly angered and aroused and conscious that he was the big man's master, now that it had come to a matter of give and take, which was not of his own making, Delabarre proceeded to administer a thrashing in most approved fashion.

Hernandez, though fully a head taller than his adversary, could not touch him. It was brute strength against science pure and simple. Delabarre's hat had fallen off, his hair was blowing about his face, and he had the advantage of the afternoon sun at his back.

After his first flush of anger he simply played with his enemy as a cat does with a mouse. Hernandez's blows were delivered wildly, with as much precision and calculation as a flail hits the threshing floor. Delabarre had no trouble whatever in dodging them. If any one had touched him it would have floored him.

The young man was cool now, and as he shot out his right to the other's face, he called out to him:

"This thing is not of my own seeking, Hernandez. You brought it on yourself."

A left straight from the shoulder followed, and the large man staggered and almost fell. He hissed something fiercely between his teeth and rushed at Delabarre with the impetuosity of a bull, endeavoring to clinch with him, but the other was too quick and elusive for anything like that.

By this time the two men were fringed around by a circle of spectators. As Delabarre approached near, dodging cleverly to escape Hernandez's rushes, a man said to him, warningly:

"Watch out for the Spaniard, Art. He's liable to pull a knife or a gun on you."

Plainly the larger man was no favorite with them, for such expressions were heard as:

"Serves him right." "He's been spoiling for this a long time."

Hernandez could hardly see now; his eyes were almost closed. Delabarre had determined not to spare him.

It was "biff!" and "smash!" full in the face each time the young trainer let fly his fist. Not a blow failed to land. Besides, Delabarre was of Anglo-Saxon blood, the other of pure Latin race, and what one of the latter could withstand the former in the glorious art of self-defense?

Once more Delabarre feinted with the left. Hernandez struck out wildly with his left, as Delabarre had expected. Instead of the blow landing on Delabarre's head, it went over his shoulder as he dodged, and the young man's left fist delivered a powerful heart blow on his adversary.

"Bronco" staggered backward, almost lost his footing, working his arms wildly in the effort to protect himself. He was badly winded, arm and leg weary, fairly beaten, and he was beginning to realize the fact.

Delabarre might have followed up the last blow with others and put the big man "down and out," as some of the bystanders urged him to do, but he thought that Hernandez had been punished sufficiently.

Then the conflict was brought to a quick conclusion. Smarting with rage and pain, Hernandez's eyes lighted for a second on a walking stick carried by one of the horsemen. Like a flash he had jerked it from the man's grasp with the evident intention of bringing it down on Delabarre's head. A dozen hands seized him and held him tightly as he struggled vainly to free himself.

Bell, who had been told of the affair, hurried up, his eyes shining fiercely, his slight frame tense with rage. So wrought up was he that he would have thrown himself at Hernandez, for Snapper was known to be possessed of a degree of "grit" more than commensurate with his slight figure.

"If my partner hadn't done the trick before me, I'd do it myself," he shouted out, and then called to Delabarre, who was waiting quietly with his hands down though still clinched, and returning the fierce looks which Hernandez was hurling at him:

"Are you hurt, Art?"

"You ought to know better than that without asking," was the reassuring response.

By this time a couple of the track policemen had become alive to the fact that something out of the usual was transpiring, and were seen approaching.

The crowd melted away, the two partners walking quietly away together. Hernandez was seen gesticulating violently for a moment, and talking to the policemen, pointing in their direction.

Evidently the peace guardians did not believe his story, or they were loath to interfere, for the two young men were not molested.

Aside from the scratch which he had received when Hernandez had struck him unawares, Delabarre was unmarked. Into his partner's anxious ears he poured the story of the encounter, ending up with:

"I'm sorry it happened, Snapper; you know I'm the last fellow in the world to seek a quarrel. It was forced on me this time, though. I'm sorry on my own account. Frothingham will hear of it, though I don't believe he'll believe anything to my discredit. What I hate worse than anything else is for Grace to know that I have been mixed up in such an affair. She'll think it's disgraceful and unpardonable."

Grace was Bell's sister to whom Delabarre was engaged. The couple were to be married in the autumn.

"Don't you worry about her, Arthur," said the brother, warmly. "I'll tell her all about it, and she won't think any the less of you for protecting yourself. Why, it had to come sooner or later, everybody knows that. This man's been imposing on us ever since Frothingham took the Lord away from him. He's had it in for you ever since. He's a cowardly 'Greaser.' I only wish you had put him down and out. It's my opinion that if some others weren't afraid of him he wouldn't last a minute."

Delabarre was silent. He was wondering if the racing stewards would take cognizance of the fact that two trainers had been mixed up in a brawl, and act accordingly. It had not occurred inside the race course inclosure, but that might make no difference. Still, he could clear his skirts of any wrongdoing, he felt certain. Whatever he had done had been in self-defense.

To his partner's expressions of jubilation at the manner in which he had "put it all over" Hernandez, he made no reply. Presently they reached the stable where the Lord of Burleigh, Frothingham's crack, was housed. The horse had been brought over from the track immediately after his victory in the afternoon.

In his stall, after his "cooling out" and rubbing down subsequent to the race, they found the thoroughbred restlessly tramping up and down the stall. The horse's "underpinning," as the trainers expressed it, was not any too strong, for, although he had made great speed, it was believed that he might break down at any time; that one hard race might unfit him for another, at least for a great while.

Delabarre and Bell had adopted methods of their own in the animal's training, and they were most hopeful of the best results.

While the racer had pulled up as good, apparently, as ever, after the win, the two young men were anxious to see how he would appear after the "cooling out" process, as any lameness would manifest itself then.

Obedient to orders, the colored "rubber" brought the crack from the stall and first walked, then trotted him up and down the exercise shed.

No sign of lameness showed itself in the handsome animal, which, far from displaying any signs of lameness, pranced up and down on all feet alike, finally ending his exhibition by a terrific plunge and kicking up behind.

"Good old boy! I guess you're strong enough for the Final Event," declared Delabarre, with a delighted grin.

For the time he had forgotten entirely about the difficulty and fracas with Hernandez.

His partner looked at him a moment, his eyes narrowing, his slim face paling and hardening.

"Hernandez has been bragging that he is saving up Gila for that race, and that he has it cinched," he stated, still eying his partner closely.

"That means he will use an extra quantity of dope on the horse for the race," muttered Delabarre, a look of disgust coming over his features, and then he blurted out savagely:

"By Heaven, I beat him in the fighting game, and I can do it in the racing one. I don't care what he uses, fair means or foul, the cowardly rascal."

"Right you are, Artie. We've got him going now, and we'll keep him on the run, and don't you forget it," Snapper declared.

Bell remained at the stable but a short while longer. On leaving he confided to his partner that he would tell Grace of the fight with Hernandez, and assured him that he would "square" him in her eyes. Bell lived with his father and mother and sister in a cottage near the track. Delabarre's quarters were at the stable.

Alone, he leaned over the half door of the stall and was lost in reveries. Much as he regretted having found it necessary to indulge in a game of fisticuffs with Hernandez, he was glad that the thing had come to a head at last. If the stewards wished to fine him or take from him his trainer's license, very well. It would be hard to forego the handling of Lord of Burleigh, he reflected, as he surveyed the horse's sleek sides.

While inspecting the racer, he was interrupted by some one who had slipped up unnoticed and was saying:

"You are so much taken up with the Lord you have no time for the lady any more, I'm afraid."

To the racing people the Frothingham horse was known simply as "the Lord."

Delabarre awoke with a start, and, turning, faced his fiancée.

Grace Bell was as petite as her

brother was small, with the same regular features. Like her brother, too, her hair was dark, her eyes a pronounced blue. Her face, though small, was round and plump, and her cheeks were rosy and dimpled. She was a general favorite with all of the racing people.

Delabarre went straight to the point.

"I suppose you heard—that Snapper told you what happened between Hernandez and myself this afternoon, Grace," he said.

"He told me and I was very sorry to hear it, dear," she said. Then noticing Delabarre's pained look, she added quickly:

"But I don't blame you a bit. Why, I'd be foolish if I did under the circumstances," she declared, her eyes flashing, her cheeks growing redder and making her look all the prettier.

"I despise the sight of that Mexican," she went on, vehemently. "If any action is taken by the stewards against you, I'll go before them and tell them they're a lot of unjust figureheads. Mr. Frothingham is a friend of mine. I'll see him and find out if he won't get the stewards to rule Hernandez off, pull or no pull."

It was stated, with apparent grounds for belief, that the trainer "stood in with" some man who was a powerful factor in turf affairs.

"All he needs is a little more rope and he'll hang himself in time, Grace," declared Delabarre, with conviction.

"All these 'dopesters' come to grief sooner or later. There's not the slightest doubt of that. Dope is worse for a horse than whisky is for a man."

"Why, I thought——" began Dimples, looking at him wonderingly, and then she checked herself, leaving what she was going to say uncompleted. She was silent for a little. What she had learned from her sweetheart was destined to have an effect on what was to follow.

Some little time was spent in chat about their approaching marriage, which was to take place in the autumn, after the running of the Great Final Event.

"If we win that with the Frothingham horse, we can feel sure of getting the Shamrock Stable," declared Delabarre, a note of exultation in his voice. "Frothingham will be certain to do the handsome thing by us, and the winning of the race will be a feather in our cap."

The two partners had in contemplation the purchase, with so much cash down, the balance to be paid in installments, of the McGrath "public stable," fixtures and good will. McGrath had been offered a highly lucrative position to take charge of a stable of thoroughbreds in England, and, therefore, was going to sell out root and branch.

It was not a mere matter of dollars and cents with the good-natured Irishman, who was known as one of the best trainers, as well as one of the most conscientious men on the turf. By skill and honesty he had built up a large business in training racers. Some of the winners of the most valuable turf "classics" had been handled by him. He was most independent, would take only the horses of those who cared more for the pleasure of winning than the money involved, and only a limited number of them. What he did not know about horses, it was generally believed, was not worth knowing.

Many offers had been made him for his stable and "good will"—tempting offers, but McGrath so far had held aloof.

"What I want is some fellow whose feet will fit the shoes I'm takin' off to go across the water, me byes," McGrath had stated, when Delabarre and his partner had broached the matter of a purchase of his establishment.

"I must see that your feet are big enough to fit the shoes, Art," he had declared, good-naturedly. "It wouldn't do for the Shamrock Stable to live down its reputation. We'll see what ye'll do in the Eclipse. If yez win that, that will prove one foot is fitted to the shoe. If yez win the Final Event, we can begin to talk terms. Yez mind that, now."

Delabarre confided all this to Grace as they stood in front of the stall in which was the animal on whom all their

hopes were centered. The Eclipse had been won handily enough by their horse, it seemed, and now the crucial test was to come.

"After that we will be married, and there won't be any more hustling around for horses to train, Grace," he added, jubilantly. "They'll be coming to us, little and big owners."

"The Final hasn't been won yet, dear," the girl said, blushing prettily at the reference to their wedding day.

"No, it hasn't," repeated Delabarre, in a thoughtful tone. His face darkened.

"Hernandez declares he'll win it. I bet he won't leave a stone unturned to do it, either," he said, angrily. "I've heard it stated that he has offered McGrath a big sum for his stable. I don't know whether it's true or not, but I also heard that Mac was thinking seriously of selling out to him. I doubt that, though, for I don't believe he'd leave the reputation he's made in the hands of such a rascal.

"Our future, I believe, will depend on this Final. Frothingham may quit the turf after this season. There are our prospects in a nutshell."

Delabarre escorted Grace to her home.

After the Eclipse race had been run, Lord of Burleigh, in spite of the most careful attention from the two partners, appeared to "stale off."

As a test of fitness for the big event, the horse was entered in a race where there were some other high-class handicap horses. Necessarily he was required to carry a heavy impost, but it was hoped that this would not deter him from winning.

Expectations of the partners were dashed, their faces fell, when in the race they saw their horse, well ridden and actually flogged to the finish, come in only third.

What made it worse to Delabarre's mind was that he caught a glimpse of Hernandez looking at him with a malignant grin, immediately after the race was over. Then he happened to run across McGrath, whose face seemed full of sympathy, Delabarre fancied, but who, nevertheless, could not forego having a little fun at teasing the young trainer.

"That boot is just a little mite too big yet for the right foot, me bye," was the way he accosted Delabarre. "Now, if I were you," he stated soberly and confidentially, "I'd give the horse a good rest till the race is due. You've got three weeks an' more yet. Just easy gallops, and plenty of feed. He's lookin' thin, I'm thinkin'. Yez thry the shtyle of shoe I'm tellin' yez about," he said, with a wink. "Take my tip."

Delabarre consulted with Snapper about it. They came to the conclusion that the only thing to be done was to follow out McGrath's advice, which, without a doubt, had been well intended.

"Sure, we'll do that, and we'll fight that devil, Hernandez, with fire, that's what we'll do."

His tone was so full of meaning that Delabarre looked at him sharply.

"What do you mean by fighting him with fire?" he demanded.

Bell's eyes dropped.

"Oh! simply get our horse in such good condition that he'll walk away from that Gila horse, that's all," he muttered, evasively. From the expression of his eyes, however, which Delabarre did not see, he had not revealed what he had meant.

Delabarre pondered over his partner's words a little, and forgot all about them in a short while.

Snapper was not so conscientious as his partner, if the truth were to be told. In his career as a premier jockey before entering upon that of a trainer, he had been an eyewitness of many tricks of the turf, and had been taught to believe that the end justifies the means. His conscience had become more elastic than that of his partner, though he was by no means dishonest.

It did not add to the peace of mind of the two young trainers, that less than a week after their own horse had made such a poor showing, the Hernandez crack, in a race where he met horses of fully as high class as those against which the Lord had contested, and with

more weight, had simply romped in ahead of his field by a couple of lengths.

Delabarre, watching the animal, noted that he acted rather strangely, and that when he had returned to the paddock he was in a profuse sweat. A few minutes later, instead of appearing like a two-year-old, as he had done, he seemed like an aged horse "all in," as the horsemen would have said.

Still, the horse had won the race, and no disposition was shown on the part of the stewards to pursue an investigation as to how it was done.

In the paddock Delabarre saw Hernandez standing in the midst of a group of horsemen. The young trainer could feel that the other was wearing a triumphant grin on his dark face, but walked past him with averted head. However, he could not help overhearing Hernandez declaring, in a loud tone, for his especial benefit, of course:

"Well, you fellows have got a line on the winner of the Great Final now. The price will be pretty short, I guess, but my horse can't lose, barring accidents. I believe he's the best in training at the present time."

His speech was followed by murmurs of: "It looks so, Hernandez." "Your tip's a good one," etc.

Delabarre paid no attention to what was transpiring, nor did he openly notice the presence of his enemy then or at any time—though he kept his eyes open in case his cowardly foe should take it upon himself to attack him from behind. He had received unofficial notification from the stewards that if another affair should take place between him and Hernandez their licenses would be revoked. At any hazards, he would protect himself, he had determined, license or no license.

In spite of the fact that their chances of winning the Final appeared rather remote, while Delabarre appeared gloomy over the outlook, Bell, on the contrary, seemed most hopeful. Generally, before the cases had been reversed.

While Delabarre would stand at the door of Lord of Burleigh's stall, and look in disconsolately at the occupant without a word, Snapper would come up whistling and confident.

"Never say die, Artie. That's my motto. You mope around as if you hadn't a cent or a friend in the world," he would declare, giving his friend a hearty slap on the back.

"I don't see that we've got very much to be cheerful about," Delabarre would return. "It looks as if Hernandez had the race cinched, with the condition his horse is in, and then I suppose he'll give Gila a double dose of dope for the occasion."

"The race isn't in yet, my boy. We might as well trust to luck, anyway," Bell added, beginning to whistle louder than usual, after delivering himself of a portentous wink. Delabarre could not understand the other's confidence.

His sole comfort was his fiancée, whose merry laugh and efforts to get him out of his melancholy frame of mind over the Great Final had the unfailing effect of cheering him greatly.

"Even if we don't capture this race, there are others next season. One big race don't make a season," she would observe, sapiently. "I wouldn't be downcast over a little thing like the failure to win one event, anyway," she declared.

"That's so, Grace," he would reply.

He did not tell her that one of his chief reasons outside of his desire to see Hernandez beaten was that he might win the Great Final so he could buy her an expensive pearl necklace, which she had admired, for his bridal present to her.

To so many expenses the two young men had been put with their limited capital that their funds were extremely low. Come what might, Delabarre had made up his mind that he would have a bet of three hundred dollars on Lord Burleigh.

Much to his chagrin, even if relief, Frothingham did not appear to be paying much attention to the race, or the prospects of his candidate. Earlier, the magnate had seemed to be greatly interested in the outcome. He had remarked that he hoped his crack would win the Final, so that he could be sure

his pet was possessed of courage, as well as speed.

While the Eclipse had been a big race, it had not proven this fact altogether to his mind, he declared. Then, again, no one horse had won both the Eclipse and the Final, so that Lord of Burleigh, in case he did win the other, would occupy a unique position in the horse world.

Jokingly, he had said to Delabarre that if the latter could have the honor of saddling the winner of both races at the beginning of his career as trainer, that career might be forecasted as a brilliant one.

And now Frothingham was apparently careless of how things went. Delabarre knew enough of the owner's nature and character to be satisfied that Frothingham had not forgotten the matter, or overlooked it in the stress of other business affairs. He was a man whose greatness had been, as he himself often stated, part and parcel of his attention to the smallest details of anything in which he was interested.

Delabarre had hoped that the track would be muddy on the day set for the Final Event, as this would make it easier for Lord of Burleigh's "dickey" legs. The mud cushion of a soft track would enable him to negotiate the going with less speed but more certainty of finishing.

By all precedents, considering the lateness of the season, it should have been rainy, but by a perversity of fate the day of the race was as bright and beautiful as if it had been in midsummer. The track was in excellent condition, and the crowd which thronged through the race-course gates to witness the last "classic" event of the year in that section, was nearly as large as when the season was at its height.

The Frothingham horse, under the careful nursing of the two young trainers, had shown signs of a return to "form." Somewhat lethargic at first in his try outs, he had warmed up so well at the end that his handlers felt cheered. They were confident that their horse could beat everything in the race with the exception of one. That one was *the* one which they were most desirous of beating—of course the Hernandez candidate, Gila. From all the reports they had received they were fearful that the Hernandez horse would be practically unbeatable that day. All that Delabarre could hope for was some lucky chance which would change the scale in their favor.

Frothingham was at the course, but, strange to say, he did not come near the paddock, or seem to wish to confer with his trainers. A small, immaculately attired man with regular features, gray hair and gray Vandyke beard and a pair of the keenest black eyes ever set in man's head, Delabarre caught a glimpse of him talking earnestly with McGrath on the lawn.

After their horse had been brought over to the paddock, a few minutes before the race, to be saddled and undergo the final preparations, Delabarre asked his partner to go into the betting ring and place the three hundred dollars which he had determined to bet on his horse.

To his surprise, he met with a curt refusal.

"You're as able to go as I am," said Bell sulkily.

There was nothing for Delabarre to do but leave Bell in charge and go himself, so he started. He had noticed that his partner appeared to welcome his leaving. Returning for a moment unexpectedly, he had discovered Bell standing at the horse's head. He had seemed greatly confused at Delabarre's sudden appearance, and had acted in an extremely nervous manner.

Delabarre had little time to waste in speculation, but again hurried out toward the betting ring.

Gila was the favorite, as had been expected, at threes. Lord of Burleigh was seven to one, and he placed his money at that price. As he was on his way back to the paddock he caught sight of Grace in the grand stand waving her hand at him.

In the stall, where their horse was waiting for the bugle to call them to the post—No. 7 it was, and a happy augury Delabarre hoped—he found Bell

puffing at a cigar and in a state of mental excitement unusual for him. Snapper was holding himself in—evidently by strong effort. Delabarre spoke to him sharply about smoking so near the horse's head at such a critical period. At the same time he noticed a curious smell which even the scent of the strong cigar could not conceal.

The next instant the bugle had blown, the paddock judge was calling to the jockeys to mount, and he was busy giving the final instructions to Lord of Burleigh's rider. Bell had disappeared somewhere.

As the horses filed out on the track, Gila, which was in the lead, acted most capriciously, Delabarre saw for a moment, and also saw Hernandez and his foreman watching the horse from the rail.

With a sigh of relief he found his way to the lawn where the trainers usually watched the race. In vain he looked for his partner. He was nowhere to be found.

Presently Delabarre sauntered down next to the rail, where a friend, another horseman, was leaning over the fence separating the lawn from the track, peering through his glasses and seeming intensely interested in something which was transpiring at the barrier where the horses were being lined up for the start.

For a second the acquaintance dropped his glasses, turned half around to Delabarre, and said, excitedly:

"Great Scott! why, his eyes are sticking clean out of his head. You could hang your hat on 'em. He'll either kill somebody or drop dead himself. Phew!"

He gave a snort of expectation.

"What are you talking about, Hastings?" asked Delabarre.

"About Gila, of course," ejaculated Hastings, surprisedly. "Why, man, didn't you see him up in the paddock? Everybody was talking about it. Hernandez must have let his hand slip on the dope bottle to-day. Look at him now. Clean crazy! His jockey is afraid of him. Can't do a thing with him. Just—look—at—that!"

Delabarre was gazing through his glasses, as the other danced about. What he saw was the Hernandez horse, eyeballs glaring in its head, plunging, and rearing, and kicking, as ferocious in its appearance as a wild beast.

With mouth wide open, lip lifted, showing the gleaming teeth, the animal was endeavoring to bite and kick the other horses near it. All the jockeys were giving the animal a wide berth. Little Jamison, Gila's own jockey, threw himself from the saddle, and escaped a fierce lunge of the horse by running under the inside rail.

All eyes were centered on the crazy brute; a murmur of excitement escaped from every lip.

Delabarre saw the starter leaning over from his stand, waving his hands and shouting frantically to the attendants. The jockeys had drawn their mounts to either side of the track, as far away from the frenzied animal as possible.

Directly two of the starter's assistants had seized the bridle reins hanging from the head of the infuriated animal, and, seemingly at the risk of their lives, were dragging him up the track, dodging his pawing hoofs and savage snappings of the teeth.

While Delabarre had a feeling of exultation that Gila would not be allowed to start, he had nothing but sympathy for the poor brute which had been made such a victim of its owner's nefarious practice of giving dope.

In a few minutes the horses were lined up to the barrier, without No. 1. Up went the barrier, and the race was begun.

It was without particular incident, except that from not a particularly good position at the start, Lord of Burleigh warmed up to his work so well that he headed the rest and won by an open length.

Scarcely had the horses returned to the paddock when McGrath and Frothingham appeared, and the trainer made a close inspection of the Frothingham horse.

McGrath ran his hand over the horse's sleek coat, inspecting him from

every side, opened his mouth, and even appeared to sniff.

Bell had come up from somewhere and was watching with eyes glittering, though his face wore a sheepish expression.

McGrath whispered something to Frothingham, and then said, smilingly, to Delabarre, who was looking on wonderingly:

"I guess that right fut will fit the shoe, too, Arthur. I wuz after tellin' Mr. Frothingham here that the Shamrock Stable, good will and all, goes to you when I leave. Mr. Frothingham says he wants yez to thrain fer him in the future."

"I don't see how I can do both," began Delabarre, looking from owner to trainer, perplexedly.

"I see no reason why you cannot train for me and assist your partner in looking after the horses in the McGrath Stable, Artie," declared Frothingham, kindly. "I'm willing to pay you——"

The sum mentioned almost took away Delabarre's breath.

"You see, I was on the point of engaging McGrath when he accepted this offer in England," continued Frothingham. "I asked him to recommend some one to me, and he mentioned you. I am particularly set against the practice of doping, a terrible example of which we saw to-day. I told McGrath that if he would make a close examination of the horse after the race and satisfy himself that no false stimulant had been given my horse to enable him to win, I would engage you. I will have no trainer in my employ who is addicted to the use of dope in the slightest degree," declared Frothingham, his jaws firmly set.

This offer of Frothingham was not the only surprising thing to happen to Delabarre that day. No sooner were he and Bell alone than Snapper, taking him by the coat sleeve, made a confession.

"I guess McGrath don't knew everything that goes on," he said. "I'll own up and tell you that I gave the Lord a dose of dope to-day, and the same kind that Hernandez uses. Only it didn't have the same effect on our horse it did on his—luckily," Bell chuckled.

"What the devil do you mean?" began Delabarre. He saw Grace coming up to them. Her brother's back was to her.

"That's what I meant by 'fighting the devil with fire,'" declared Bell, coolly. "I got in with Hernandez's foreman and bribed him to give me a bottle of the same dope he was accustomed to give Gila. I poured it down our horse's throat to-day when you were in the betting ring—remember?"

Grace had stopped a few paces behind her brother and was listening intently to what he was saying. Now she stepped forward.

"He only thought he was giving him that stuff, Art," she interrupted. "Before you told me you were so opposed to the use of it, I thought it was all right, and I knew that Snapper considered it so. He confided in me that it was the only way the Lord could win, and showed me the bottle of the stuff. I found it, poured it out, and what was given the horse to-day was nothing more nor less than pure licorice water, such as we used to make when we were children," she declared, her eyes dancing.

Then and there Delabarre made Bell promise that should be his last attempt in that direction.

Whether Thompson, Hernandez's colored foreman, had given Bell "the double cross" and told his employer, who had fixed up for the Frothingham horse a dose which had been administered to his own by mistake, there was no means of telling. If, however, dope *had* been administered to the Frothingham horse, in place of licorice water, McGrath would have discovered it, and Delabarre and Bell would have been without fat-paying positions.

As for the dope horse, Gila, the poor animal was gotten in a vacant stable, where he soon died. The stewards took quick action, and the entries of the Lone Star Stable, that of Hernandez, were denied entry for all time. Hernandez disappeared, despite the efforts of the S. P. C. A. people to find him.

The Law and the Lawless

A STORY OF STEEL

By Richmond Arundel

This is an age of trusts, and however much we may inveigh against them—and that their business methods are often culpable cannot be gainsaid—they are here, and evidently here to stay. Probably none of these colossal combinations holds a more important position in the American commonwealth than the Steel Trust, a struggle with which forms the basis of Mr. Arundel's dramatic and engrossing narrative. Next month we shall publish a story having to do with American diplomacy.

(*A Complete Story*)

CHAPTER I.

THE MASTER.

ROLLINS K. HILMAN had a mind that worked in devious channels, and an ambition that savored of the melodramatic. Yet, withal, his methods for the furtherance of this ambition were very sane and very practical; which was proven by the fact that he was utterly obscure, so far as the public's knowledge of his name was concerned. Had any curious person looked up Mr. Hilman in one of those books issued for the purpose of giving others knowledge of the financial wealth of the men of the country, they would have found Mr. Hilman's name opposite to an approximate valuation of five millions of dollars.

Had you asked any of those on the "floor" of 'Change, they might have told you what little was known of Hilman's financial career; which was very little. "Hilman; oh, yes! Sure! He was to the good once. Cleaned up a lot on that railroad deal in '95—you know, Western Amalgamated. Sure! But he turned out to be a piker! If he'd wanted to, he could have stood in with Morgan and his crowd after that. But what does he do, hey? I'll tell you—the old piker—he quits, that's what he does. Hell!"

Which shows how little the floor trader of 'Change really knew about the matter.

As we said before, Mr. Hilman had an ambition; it was a mighty ambition, to say the least. Mr. Hilman wanted to be a billionaire. He wished to be able to finance nations and to dictate to ruling powers. The ambition was somewhat melodramatic—as we also said before—but Rollins K. Hilman was much impressed with the same, and believed himself fully able to consummate his ends.

It would not be especially interesting were the events following the railroad deal to be narrated. Suffice to

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Of this series, stories on the following themes have been published: Journalism (January); cotton (February); oil (March); gold-mining (April); finance (May); wheat (June); the navy (July); cattle raising (August); the army (September), and railroading (October). The back numbers can be secured through any newsdealer. Price, ten cents each.

say, Rollins K. Hilman went in for big game; and, like all big-game hunters, he worked under cover. Chance had given Brooke Sillery into his hands, and Sillery had two assistants whose names were Leeson and Minor. The financial books gave Brooke Sillery a much higher place than his master: they approximated his fortune at over one hundred and fifty millions. He was caricatured in the "yellow" journals as the plutocrat *sui generis;* and inveighed against in editorials for his criminal manipulation of the market. Leeson and Minor came in for a smaller share of abuse as his assistants; but no one seemed to notice Rollins K. Hilman at all. Yet his was the brain which directed the movements of Sillery and the others; his was the money for which Bradstreet and Dun gave the others credit. The three men belonged to Rollins K. Hilman, body and soul; and he used them as a surgeon uses his delicate instruments.

According to popular belief, Brooke Sillery was the president of that gigantic merger known as the American Steel Corporation; that many-tentacled ichthyophagus which had nature's bountiful gifts of iron in its tentacles, and which produced and set its own prices on all the steel manufactured in the United States. Sillery was supposed to tell the United States just what it must pay for armor plate for its vessels; to dictate to the Mikado of Japan as to the price of steel rails for the government roads; to inform the Emperor of Germany as to what price he must pay for the foundations for public buildings; and to generally squeeze everyone who, by any mischance, happened to need steel for any purpose whatsoever. Sillery was cursed by thousands of workmen because of his refusal to advance wages with the corresponding increase in the cost of living. Once they went out on strike throughout the United States; and Sillery was credited with having shut every steel manufactory in the United States, folded his hands and waited for the strikers to come back. Sillery, in short, had a reputation that was a stench in the nostrils of every workman; and Leeson and Minor were pictured in the caricatures as his bloodhounds held in leash.

But no one ever spoke ill of Rollins K. Hilman; nor was he caricatured; nor was he cursed—unless his three understrappers cursed him.

Had Hilman lived in mediæval times, he would no doubt have been the head of an Inquisition, or some secret society of assassins. Like a gigantic spider in his web, he would have sat, weaving nets for the destruction of his victims. It is easy to picture him in long, loose, black robes, a peaked hat and a mask, with two red-rimmed eyes gleaming in the eyelets, and a long, skinny hand clutching a stiletto. Those who have faith in the Pythagorean theory find him easy of explanation; according to the transmigration of souls, he was once all that. Reincarnated, he does what his hand finds to do; and what the spider of to-day did was worse by many multiplications than what the spider of old did. For the mediæval assassin killed only men's bodies, while Rollins K. Hilman killed their souls.

Heigh-ho, my masters; we moralize. This is not well. Rollins K. Hilman was what he was: we are not here to give opinions but to tell you straightly the truth about him, his daughter, Doris, and young Thirkell Janison, who had ideas and beliefs. Incidentally, Brooke Sillery enters into the matters—Brooke Sillery who was hated, and mocked, and blamed; but who was really nothing but a tool. Of all the men we know, perhaps we are sorrier for Sillery than any other; but—we must not sympathize, either.

"You've bungled," said Rollins K. Hilman.

In appearance Mr. Hilman resembled a renegade monk. The hair was absent from the top of his head and was sparse on the borders and slightly tinged with gray. His lips were very thin, and the upper one was short, so that when his mouth closed, he sucked it down, giving a peculiarly cruel expression to the mouth. An accident in early boyhood had lost him his left eye, and the glass

one had a fitting match in the cold, calculating stare of the right orb of vision. His lips were pale and his cheeks thin and bloodless, while his ears, rather larger than normally, were set at a lower angle than is believed by phrenologists to indicate the moral sense.

The rather ascetic character of his face was accentuated by the black frock coat with the black shield vest which hid his shirt, and exposed only half an inch of white collar. His trousers were gray, and his large feet were incased in elastic-sided shoes.

"You've bungled," he said again, sucking in his upper lip and turning his one good eye on Brooke Sillery, who, in his uneasiness, shifted the position of his feet, and rubbed them along the soft carpet, finally throwing one leg over the other and attempting to assume a self-confident air.

His eyes met Hilman's, and he lost his assumed jauntiness. "Well, I did the best I could," he returned, without conviction.

Hilman's baleful eye measured him up and down. Sillery was a handsome man, and he wore his clothes with an air of distinction. His face was clean-shaven and his skin was very fair. There was a certain strength about the jaw and the chin, and the high forehead showed much intellectual vigor, as did the deeply-set eyes; but the mouth was weak, a trifle irritable, and sometimes the corners of it trembled and showed nervous terror. It was so now. Sillery was a colorless puppet in the hands of Rollins K. Hilman.

"The best you could!" sneered Hilman. "That isn't it. You should have done what I told you to do."

Sillery had a renewal of courage. "If I'd done that, he would have struck me," he said. "Hang it all, I know when a man's a gentleman. You can't appreciate that, of course."

This was the one solitary point on which Sillery could score; and he noted with satisfaction his master's sudden flush. But it did not last long enough to be much of a triumph. Hilman turned his eye on Sillery again, and Sillery dropped his gaze.

"Listen," said Rollins K. Hilman. "I've told you that we must get that young Janison to accept our terms." His eye blazed in sudden anger and he struck the table. "Now, I want you to state explicitly just what you said to Janison in that interview. Am I to have my life work swept away because a mere boy happens to discover a way of making steel more cheaply than we can make it?"

Sillery fumbled nervously with his watch fob. "Well, it's easily explained, Hilman," he said. "I called on Janison, in Pittsburg, two days ago. I know him personally outside of business matters. I asked him if it were true that he proposed to sell his discovery to that English corporation which intends to try to smash our monopoly. Janison said that it was; that he had signed preliminary papers, and that in two weeks he would sail for England to superintend the setting up of a trial workshop. I asked him if he considered it the act of a good American citizen to make it possible for another nation to outstrip us in manufactures. Janison said that he could see no other way of breaking the 'criminal' power of the Steel Trust. 'No American manufacturers could handle this, for they would not dare to compete with you. In fact, I doubt if there are any manufacturers of steel who amount to anything who are not under your thumb.' That's as near as I can remember his exact words. I asked him what was his objection to selling it to us. He replied that his father had been a steel manufacturer, that we had forced him to the wall and that the old man had died in poverty; and that his mother died soon after. He was very angry, indeed, I can assure you. He said something like this: 'You are criminals operating under the law. There should be laws in this country to convict you. But there aren't. Therefore, I'm going to league myself with some people who will crush you. You can't possibly compete with the English corporation when they get my new carbonizer into operation.' And, after that, I came away. There wasn't anything I could do."

Hilman's eye blazed. "The little whelp!" he cried. "Does he actually think that he can defy the power and the money of our corporation? Does he dream for an instant that he can force us to the wall?"

Sillery lighted a cigar. "I don't know what he dreams," he said, coldly; "but I can tell you this—not that you don't know it—that English corporation has something like fifty million pounds behind it. It isn't really a corporation at all. It's simply a league of British manufacturers who have pooled their interests in order to avoid being crushed out by us. Do you imagine that we can compete with them when they can turn out steel at three-quarters, maybe half, the price that we turn it out? I rather fancy not. The 'little whelp' can force us to the wall. That's rather melodramatic all through, but he can do it."

"Do you mean to say," demanded Hilman, "that you can't manage to discover what he knows without his consent?"

"I do," returned Sillery, coolly. "His carbonizer has been patented; and the chemical combination that is used in connection with it is not given out. We know most of the elements of the composition, for Hake got hold of some of it by raiding Janison's laboratory. The composition contains cyanogen, prussiate of potash and titanium, but the main element defied analysis; and the others were very much in the minority. The carbonizer has been patented. We might infringe on the patent, but without the composition it wouldn't be worth a cent."

Sillery twisted his cigar about between his fingers and eyed his chief from between half-closed eyes while that gentleman's clawlike fingers were tracing intricate designs on the blotter before him. Finally Hilman raised his head.

"You say he intends to leave the United States within two weeks?"

"Yes. He came to New York yesterday, and will stay here until the *Cedric* sails. He's booked on that."

Hilman ceased tracing and his fingers clasped together in front of him, while his vulture-like head was stuck forward across the table.

"He mustn't leave the United States, you understand that, Sillery? He mustn't leave the United States. We couldn't do anything with him in England. Money doesn't count against the law over there. We must keep him from leaving the United States until he has given up the discovery——"

"How?" demanded Sillery.

"Who cares how? He must be stopped, you understand. If you fail in stopping him——" The vulture-like head wagged ominously.

Sillery puffed at the cold cigar, and finally threw it away with a hopeless gesture. "I don't know how——" he began, then stopped and eyed Hilman curiously. He continued to eye him, and met the baleful orb with a smile.

"I don't know," he said, uncertainly.

"You don't know what?" demanded Hilman.

"There may be a way of stopping him without having recourse to violence or anything of that sort. And quite naturally we wish to avoid that, if possible."

The vulture head wagged in affirmative. "Well," said Hilman; "out with it. What's your way? Huh?"

"Your daughter," said Sillery, with sudden temerity. "Your daughter—she——" Then his nerve failed him, and he looked out of the window.

"Mind wandering?" asked Hilman, caustically. "What has my daughter got to do with it? Huh?"

"I think Janison's ready to fall in love with her," affirmed Sillery. Then, having taken a flying leap, he waded into the explanation. "You see, young Linley told me about this quite casually, and I hadn't thought of the matter until just now. It happened in Pittsburg; Janison was out golfing with Linley one day several months ago, and he happened to make one of those gallery plays that men of his sort are likely to do. Your daughter was in a motor car alone, and the thing had gotten out of her control. It wasn't going very rap-

idly, and Janison saw what was the matter. He did a flying leap from a hedge, and landed into the car, where he soon got things to fit. Then he got out, accepted her thanks and went off. He asked Linley who she was, and Linley told him. Then he wanted Linley to take him up to the Garrisons' place, where your daughter was staying, and present him. But it appears that she had gone to New York the very day that they called. Since then Linley says Janison has been quite moony."

"Huh!" meditated the financier. "Well, I don't see why not, Sillery That's well worth thinking of. Doris is a good business woman. She's been quite a help to me. Yes, she will realize the necessity. Yes, yes, no reason why not——"

Sillery had the grace to feel sorry. "It seems a blackguardly way to hit a man—through a woman."

Hilman turned on him swiftly. "Are you my judge?" he asked. "No? Then keep your opinions until they're asked for. There is too much at stake to pause about the means. We've offered this boy terms, and he's refused them. He tells us of the mighty things he will do. He is to crush us, indeed! Sillery, you're chicken-hearted."

"No. But I was a gentleman once," said Sillery, slowly, as he took another cigar from his case and lighted it with fingers that shook just a trifle. "I was a gentleman once, and sometimes I think of that. You see, I can't forget that your daughter is engaged to Minor. Minor's not a bad sort. He's done lots of things he shouldn't do, but he did them at your orders. And he's in love with Doris. He'd go through fire for her—and this!"

"Oh, pshaw!" interrupted Hilman. "We'll explain matters to Minor. Besides, I wasn't aware of the fact that my daughter was in love with him. Matters of policy demanded that he be given a sop. He was very near to breaking with us for a while—so I told Doris to accept him, if he proposed. Doris doesn't love him, and"—he leaned forward, thrusting out his head—"between you and me, Sillery, Doris shan't marry Minor. I'm looking for higher game than Minor; and I'm just waiting until I can twist his financial neck at a sign of rebellion. Then his engagement with Doris is off. The girl's begged me to release her time and time again."

Sillery leaped up and struck the table a resounding blow. "So you're going to sell him out, too, eh?" he cried, with sudden wrath. "By Heaven! I believe you'd twist *my* neck if you felt the need."

"By Heaven! I believe I would, Sillery," returned Hilman.

CHAPTER II.

HIS LADY FAIR.

Thirkell Janison came to New York two days after his conversation with Brooke Sillery, and went to his apartments in Gramercy Park. He had been keeping those rooms for the past six months, although he had occupied them very little during that period. There was a certain love left for the place where he had made his first success, however, and the keeping of the rooms was merely a matter of sentiment.

For Janison was sentimental, it must be confessed. He was a strong, alert young man, with large ideas and great capacity for work. He was neither mentally nor physically lazy; and success had crowned his efforts at the early age of twenty-eight. Sentiment, however, still remained. His ideals had been crushed to earth more than a dozen times, but each time only to be replaced by another set of ideals far loftier. His own personality he kept carefully guarded from the world, and no one suspected him of sentiment. Those who knew him best looked on him as a very capable man with ideas that verged on the socialistic. They said that he was smart at business, and "knew a thing or two" about the ways of the world.

But Janison had never permitted his milk of human kindness to grow sour; and in his secret heart sentiment was enshrined along with other things which

were too sacred to tell to folks who might not understand.

Through fear of telling what others might take in a different way from the one meant, he had become singularly reticent, and confided his daydreams to no one. Earlier in life he had given vent to some of his theories and beliefs with the result that he was classed as a "poser and clever at it." It was difficult to make the worshipers of the golden calf understand that he really cared nothing for money, and that he respected a man not at all because he was in possession of much of it. The question arising from such a statement was, naturally: "Then why are you working for it?"

Janison did not answer that question any more; but he was quite sure that his actions had proved his point. Brooke Sillery had offered him enormous figures for his discovery; an amount that, had he taken it, would have made more labor useless, for the income from the sum would have provided Janison with all he could possibly need. Janison had refused the sum, and was now making ready to go to England, where he would give his discovery to the corporation, accepting only a salary while the work of fighting the trust was going on. After that he would take enough money for his needs and give up his rights. Surely that proved that he was not working for money.

Perhaps revenge entered into the matter, but Janison would not admit that. It was true that his father had been ruined by the trust, and that sorrow and ruin had perhaps sent both his parents to the grave before their time. But as Janison would not admit that there was any revenge in the matter, discussion cannot make the point clear.

"I am working for the cause of humanity," said Thirkell Janison. "And unless the power of the trusts is checked, the people will find themselves slaves a hundred years from now."

Whether this was his own theory or whether he got it from Mr. Wells we do not know. But he believed in it firmly and implicitly, and shaped his course accordingly.

. . . . . .

He was to dine at the Holland House that night with a party of eminent scientists who had gathered together to do him honor. He read the card which had been sent him, and blushed with pleasure. It was something for a youth like himself to have won the belief and appreciation of these wise men of the century. Truly, the helping of mankind had its own peculiar personal advantages, after all.

He was dressing himself with much care, and tied and untied three white mull bows before he managed to get the correct shape. He was not handsome, this young Janison, but there was a fine, earnest look about his eyes, a hint of sternness about the mouth, and a firm set of the chin. His nose was a trifle too small, and his ears were set forward from his head in a way not to accentuate his good looks; but, taking him all in all, his five-feet-ten of masculine erectness, and fresh, clean countenance, attracted favorable comment and attention.

He dressed finally and took a cab to the Holland House, where he dined well, and talked scientifically and skillfully for two hours. The scientists dallied on over their coffee and cigarettes until it was nearly eleven o'clock; and then most of them rose to go, Janison among the number.

The handshaking and good-bys over, he struck across to Broadway, and walked slowly along watching the seekers of amusement pour in and out of cafés, restaurants, penny music rooms and instantaneous photographers. Then the theaters began to disgorge their hordes of spectators, and, as Janison passed Daly's, the shrill hoot of the megaphone was summoning coachmen and carriage drivers. Janison looked at the pretty women in pretty wraps and gowns, and the men in evening clothes, and he was about to pass on, when the appearance of a girl on the top step caused him to suddenly change his mind.

The red surged into his cheeks and his heart beat a nervous rat-a-tat, while the fingers holding the cigarette loosened and the tobacco roll fell to the ground. His eyes were glued on the girl's as though he had been fascinated by some occult spell, and, as she descended, she looked at him.

There was quick recognition in her eyes, and she turned and spoke to the dowager by her side. Janison stared on, unable, apparently, to move; and the dowager looked at him also. The girl inclined her head faintly in a manner which meant that he was to come up.

Janison moved forward mechanically, hardly daring to hope he had seen aright. The chestnut-brown head, golden in the light, inclined again, and the girl smiled sweetly at him, and held out a slim hand in a white glove.

"You are Mr. Janison, aren't you?" she asked. "This is Mrs. Van Arscott. Aunt Molly, let me present Mr. Janison. You remember that thrilling motor car incident of which he was the hero and I the unfortunate heroine—if one may apply such a word to a person so lacking in the elements of heroism as myself."

Mrs. Van Arscott bowed and Janison took off his opera hat. He had not, as yet, recovered his self-control, and was afraid to say anything lest the something be foolish. His heart was beating so loudly that he was afraid that she heard it.

While in this daze, he was presented to a Miss Prescott, and to two nice-looking youths, whose names he did not remember. The theater porter now called the number of the party's theater wagon, and Mrs. Van Arscott spoke to Janison.

"We want you to come along with us, Mr. Janison," she said. "Doris declares that she hasn't before had half a chance to thank you rightly. Do come with us for supper."

"Thanks, awfully," murmured Janison, and meekly followed the two nice-looking youths whom Mrs. Van Arscott called Bobby and Phil. They entered the vehicle, which cut into Fifth Avenue, and drove upward toward Sherry's.

As Miss Doris Hilman had filled the major portion of Janison's thoughts out of working time for the past two months, the sudden proximity in which he found himself was not something to be taken lightly, but rather with that amount of awe which it warranted. Janison had not spent much time in the presence of women, consequently he thought them much better than they were, and was inclined to idealize the sex as a whole, and this girl in particular. To him, Doris Hilman was a new Aphrodite risen from the sea of beauty; and her nearness, the sweet, indefinable scent of her presence was in his nostrils, and filled him to sufficiency.

Everyone talked nothings, and light badinage flew from one to the other in quite the usual way. Janison found that he was not expected to do very much talking. The feminine portion of the party attended to that, and the youths, Bobby and Phil, contented themselves with such interpolations as they had found in use on the other side of the pond. "My word!" "Oh, really, now!" "Jolly fun!" "Oh, I say, don't rag a chap, that's a good girl!" Janison envied the ease with which they delivered these sophisms, but decided that their mental caliber was not of a very high bore.

They came to Sherry's finally, and went into the reception room, where they waited until Bobby had secured their table, after which wraps and coats were surrendered, the party filed into the atmosphere of soft light and music, and took seats at a table near the window.

It was quite evident that they were known from the amount of attention which one of the head waiters paid to them, and, the supper ordered, conversation began again.

Doris Hilman had that charm which is not to be described, because there is no salient feature of it which can be grasped, for it was made up of a thousand little things. It was the charm of intense femininity; the charm of a few

loose curls brushing her forehead, a strawberry-like tint on her cheeks, eyes that were violet, blue and black by turns, and a little coaxing way of reaching forward a slim hand, as though a caress were to follow. Her smile was a thing to wonder at—sometimes it was the dazzling mirth of the higher senses; at others, it was as infantile and altogether charming as a little child's. The girl possessed a nature in accordance with this charm—a chameleon-like putting on and off of mood. She could be, when she chose, as beautiful and unapproachable as a divinity in marble; and yet, in the same moment, soften into the alluring coquetry of an innocent child. Her eyes would grow large with wonder at a thought; and narrow into little slits of light on a calculation; and her wonderful hair seemed to have the power of changing its color at will—now golden, with tiny flecks of a rainbow chasing themselves through its masses; again somber, a fitting setting for her marblelike purity of contour.

Thirkell Janison would have asked for nothing better then to be allowed to sit near her and feast his eyes upon her, with the glorious scent of her presence in his nostrils. She was gay this night; and, as she sat there looking at him, her chin resting on her rounded pink and white arms, the golden-yellow of her dress a fitting foil for the delicate ivory of her skin, the man wondered that a girl could be so beautiful.

Her voice awakened him from his dreams. She was talking to him. "And so, after all, my preserver has turned out to be a famous man?" she was saying.

"Famous?" he said, striving to shake off the delicious lethargy into which her near presence had thrown him, "Famous? Oh, no, Miss Hilman, I am not famous."

She nodded emphatically. "The modest Mr. Janison is trying to escape the tuft hunters, Aunt Molly," she said. "Don't you realize that we are exhibiting you here, Mr. Janison? Tomorrow, our friends who are watching us will say, 'Who was that distinguished looking young man who sat with your party last night?' and we will reply, 'Why, that was the famous scientist, Mr. Thirkell Janison;' won't we, Aunt Molly?"

Aunt Molly did not seem to approve. Phil, sitting next to her, seemed to feel obligated to say something, so he said, "Oh, quite so," very enthusiastically and very vaguely. Whereupon Miss Prescott spoke to him.

Janison had blushed a vivid scarlet. "That's very good of you, Miss Hilman," he said; "but you're exaggerating, I give you my word. Why, I have hardly done anything at all."

The girl looked at him reprovingly. "Now, Mr. Janison, don't carry modesty too far. We read the papers, of course, although we don't like to acknowledge the fact. And we've read so much about your discovery and what it is going to do. The papers said you would ruin Brooke Sillery."

"Know young Sillery, the son, don't you know. Awfully silly ass." Bobby now felt the necessity for saying something, which he did. No one paid the slightest attention to him, however, and Janison began to wish he had never invented or discovered anything.

"I say, Miss Hilman," he said, imploringly, "if you don't mind, we'll drop talking about my discovery. Some time, if you'd really like to know, I'll talk with you about it, and will be very proud to tell you, too. But tonight—with all these gay people, the music, the lights and—everything—the workaday world seems very far away, and—it's a relief to forget it sometimes, don't you think?"

The girl smiled brightly. "But it is something to realize that one of our party is more than a mere drone in the busy hive. I'm not at all proud of being a drone myself. And now——"

"Doris, will you look at that woman in green? Such a fright. It seems to me that the restaurant people ought to understand that they must draw the line somewhere—the creature!"

Mrs. Van Arscott surveyed the person with a look that might have frozen. Doris laughed.

"That is the Countess D' Eporneau, Aunt Molly," she remarked. "Don't you note Count Raoul with her——"

"What! Countess D'Eporneau?" Mrs. Van Arscott raised her torture glasses, and immediately took them down again. "Why, of course," she said. "But I trust you didn't fancy I was speaking of the dear countess, Doris, dear. No, I meant another person entirely——"

"Of—of course," echoed Phil, feeling the need of speech again.

"What a Greek chorus!" murmured Doris Hilman; and she noted Janison's smile. "But they're such nice boys," she said, in a low tone. "And that's something."

"Who was the woman to whom your aunt referred?" asked Janison, smiling.

The girl's eyes seemed to bubble over with mischief. "Oh, you can't see her now. But, of course, you don't imagine that Mrs. Van Arscott could possibly object to a countess, no matter how she was dressed."

Janison looked gravely roguish. "Naturally not," he said, with solemnity, as he speared an oyster. "No American matron can see anything but good in one possessed of a title."

A little later, while they waited in the reception hall until the wagon could be summoned, Doris Hilman drew him apart from the others.

"You must come up and see me soon," she said. And she gave him her address. "I want to talk about you and your work."

He felt a thrill of gratification. "I will," he cried, eagerly; then remembrance of his impending journey came to him. "It must be soon," he added, ruefully, "for I am leaving for England in two weeks."

"In two weeks?" she said, tragically. "Then, indeed, you must come up tomorrow afternoon and have tea with me. You will, won't you?"

"Well—rather," was his eager affirmation.

Soon after that he said good-night to the entire party and saw them into their vehicle, after which he strode down Fifth Avenue with a step that was light as air and a head bursting with beautiful thoughts. A mendicant whined at his elbow, and he tossed him a silver dollar.

"How beautiful she is!" he was saying over and over again. "Doris—Doris—how beautiful you are!"

Meanwhile Doris Hilman had reached her home, and had gone into her father's study. Hilman was occupied with financial reports and European cablegrams.

"Father," she said.

He turned and looked at her abstractedly. "Well—well?"

"You remember that you wanted me to send for Mr. Janison? You remember what you told me to do?"

"Of course I remember," he returned, irritably. "You haven't come to ask me that, I hope?"

The girl pushed back some stray ringlets. "No, father, I haven't." Her face was taking on the marblelike mask and the golden hair seemed somber, while the eyes narrowed to little slits of light. "Mr. Janison took supper at Sherry's with Aunt Molly and the others—including myself." She told him how she had fallen in with the young scientist.

"Excellent," said the financier, rubbing his hands. "Excellent." He looked his daughter over approvingly, and then chuckled.

"You invited him here?" he asked.

"He comes to-morrow to take tea with me," said the girl, in cold, even tones; then, with hardly a jot of expression, she added: "Father, this is a dishonorable thing to do; and I feel absolutely unclean in attempting to do it."

"Huh!" grunted Hilman. "You do—eh? A pity!"

"Yes, I do," continued the girl. "And it is a pity—a pity that you aren't content with soiling your own hands and conscience with money illegally gotten without forcing your only child to do likewise. I tell you, I'm ashamed of this part you want me to play. Mr. Janison saved my life at the risk of his own. He seems to care something for me. You wish me to delude him into believing that I care for him; to trade on the noblest passion that a man has in order

to assist you to gain your very unworthy ends——"

The vulture-like head came forward, and the man rose to his feet slowly and after the manner of a snake. His cold, baleful eye was fixed on the girl, and her courage died within her. His claw-like hand shot forward and seized hers by the wrist.

"You do as you're bidden, Doris," he said, with sibilant distinctness. "You do as you're bidden, and let me hear no more of your prating on noble principles. What am I working for? You. You will be the richest woman in the world when I die, with money enough to found a new dynasty of kings. Am I to be driven out of my path by a mere boy? Don't make a fool of yourself. Get this secret from young Janison, or it will be gotten in another way that will not be so easy for him. Now go to your room, and don't come to me again until you're in a different frame of mind. Go!"

Crushed for the moment, the girl slowly quitted the apartment. Her opalescent eyes were tearful, and her face had taken on its infantile look again.

"I suppose I must," she almost sobbed, as she went up the staircase. "I suppose I must."

CHAPTER III.

THE TRAP.

Young Janison came to tea the next afternoon as might have been expected, and he found the girl moody and discontented when he arrived. But he bubbled over so fully with the wine of good spirits that the clouds were soon lifted from her face, and before he had been in the house ten minutes they were chatting gayly over things of little moment.

After a while the conversation turned on the government, and Thirkell Janison forgot everything except his theories and the fact that this girl was listening to him. He began to talk as he had never talked before save to himself; and for an hour the girl sat breathless watching and listening, her big eyes shining with interest. She interrupted but a few times to ask the meaning of different things; and listened the rest. Somehow Janison's frank, ingenuous manner and way of being terribly in earnest carried conviction, and when he had completed his peroration, and was blushing rosily at what the girl said, she began to like the young scientist very well.

So well, indeed, did she like him, that she broke all precedents, and invited him to ride with her next day in the park; and the same night he was an occupant of Mrs. Van Arscott's box at the opera. Soon after that he played golf with her, another time they went to the theater together; and a coaching party which she made up included Thirkell Janison.

In consequence of this, Janison wired the head of the English corporation that he would be detained in New York two weeks longer. A wild fancy had taken possession of young Janison: he would marry this girl and take her to England with him as his bride!

He was very much in love, indeed, was this young man. The shining eyes were before him always to the exclusion of other things which he should have looked after. He forgot his mission to crush the awful money power back of the Steel Trust; forgot that he had mapped out his life in the lines of that of a public benefactor; forgot everything except that he wanted to see Doris Hilman as much as possible, and look into the depths of those opalescent eyes.

As a consequence, his conduct was very lamentable if one considers good form. If one takes it from the standpoint of the lover, he showed remarkable pluck and determination. For he was at the Hilman house at least once a day, sometimes twice, and when he was not there messengers were carrying Doris flowers and candy, and other things which the masculine admirer is privileged to send the girl of his choice.

As for the girl, she was not sure where she stood. She feared her father too much to disobey him; and had, at the back of her mind somewhere, a half

formed idea that some time she would make Janison talk about his discovery and tell her all he knew. She had been studying up on the chemical formation of steel, and was quite able to discuss the properties of manganese, cyanogen and other elements. But, somehow, when Janison was present she forgot everything she had studied about steel, and never encouraged conversation on the subject. She did not attempt to explain to herself why she did this; but had she tried, she would have probably found herself ashamed.

Janison was beginning to be a part of her life. She had never met anyone just like him before. His scorn for the things she had been taught to care for was a new sensation. He was beginning to make her realize that there were other things far better than the making of money and the possession of things that money can buy. His outlook on life was a very unselfish one, and his beliefs long pent-up now burst forth like an overwhelming flood, and she was carried away from the more petty things by his vehemence.

And yet she thoroughly believed, for the time, that she was encouraging him simply with the idea of getting from him the secret which her father professed to need. She did not realize that Janison's arguments were weakening her belief in her father—her belief in his greatness and power. His object seemed small to her now. What, after all, was the making of much money?

These were not the things she argued out for herself, nor the things that she told herself were true. They had entered into her without her being aware of it: and her mental processes were assimilating, not giving forth.

But still, had Henry Minor not come into the affair at this juncture, she might not have known that she cared.

She was engaged to Minor. She had accepted him because her father had bidden her do so; also because she liked the man rather well. Minor was the youngest of the three assistants, a man of thirty-five and one of Sillery's discoveries. He was college-bred, and had brought his own means into the combine. His was the legal talent of the concern; and in that line—corporation law—he was probably without a superior. He was very much in love with Doris, and, at the time, when he threatened to break with Hilman and carry his secrets over to others, Hilman had clinched him to his side by making his daughter promise to marry him.

The girl did not love Minor, and was quite well aware of the fact. Nor had she made any hesitation in telling Minor so when she accepted him. "I like you," she said; "but I don't love you, and never shall." He had been content with her promise; and solaced himself with the old fallacy that he had it in his power to make her love him. To do the girl justice, however, she meant to be as good as her word if Minor would not release her.

Now that Janison had come up on her mental horizon, all thoughts of Minor vanished from her mind. He had sought to make several appointments with her in the two weeks, but she had been forced to refuse him. "I am going somewhere," she would reply over the telephone. "With Mr. Janison?" Minor would ask in anything but a pleasant tone. "Yes," would come the answer, and the receiver would go down.

Minor had been informed of the plan on hand, and, of course, could make no complaint. The girl was merely carrying out the instructions of her father. But Minor did not like to think that his future wife was playing a game that he himself thought rather rotten. He was not averse to soiling his own hands in questionable financial deals; but he belonged to the old school, so far as the other sex was concerned, and believed that women should be but a little lower than the angels. Besides, he was very much in love with Doris Hilman.

One morning he called and remonstrated with her. "You really shouldn't see so much of the chap, Doris," he said. "You're getting yourself talked about. Of course, you know, I have some right——"

The girl slipped her engagement ring

from her finger. "I'll give you your ring back if you feel that way about it," she said, in very icy tones.

He put his hands behind his back. "Doris," he said, seriously, "I'm awfully sorry you're mixed up in this. I really must speak to your father about it. It isn't proper that he should force his own daughter——"

The girl laughed musically. "Now, my dear Henry," she said, "you know where father's office is. Why don't you speak to him? It doesn't do any good to talk to me about it——"

"I know," continued Minor. "But it's deucedly hard on me to have all the folks saying that I should be keeping my eyes open or I will be left behind with the other 'also rans.' Of course, I know differently, but——"

"Henry, you're very wearisome. Run down to the office now. I have an engagement to go on a little yachting trip to-day, and Merril Parkyn's bus is coming along in a few minutes, and I'm not ready." She rose.

"Is Janison going?" asked Minor.

"He is," returned Miss Hilman. "I'll have to say good-morning now, Henry." And with that she left him, and Minor went down to his office a very much puzzled man.

The only trouble was that his bewilderment soon gave way to a firm belief that the girl cared for young Janison. Which shows that love is not always blind.

CHAPTER IV.

THE AVOWAL.

Minor went through much torture in the next few days, for he was honestly in love with Doris Hilman—honestly or dishonestly, as the nature of the man may warrant, but, at any rate, with all his will. He did not seek her out and speak with her again on the subject, chiefly for the reason that he was afraid she might break the engagement at a moment's notice. He began to entertain a curious personal hatred for Janison, and developed a longing to maltreat him in some way. His emotions were not peculiar to the man, nor were they in any manner original. He simply felt as most lovers feel when the dark shadow of a rival looms up in the path.

And it so happened that Henry Minor came to consult with Rollins K. Hilman on a certain night that Doris had an appointment with young Janison. The girl did not know of Minor's presence in the house, nor did Minor know when he came that Janison was there. Through ignorance, the beginning of things was altered, and the beginning of the end brought about.

For many days Thirkell Janison had been wandering through Elysian fields: living in a dreamland created out of the shadowy mists of imagination and pursuing the will-o'-the-wisp of love. He was content for the time. He believed, as do all true lovers, until their fate is told them, that Doris cared for him. That is to say, he believed it when he was away from her, and held many imaginary conversations with a shadowy Doris, to whom he made fervent speeches, and whom he clasped many times in the embrace of adoration. But when he came into the girl's presence, his confidence fell away from him, and he wondered vaguely how it was that he should have been egotistical enough to imagine that this wondrous creature could possibly care anything for one so devoid of all things as he.

So he lingered on in New York, despite letters and cablegrams that urged him on to the other side. His duty to the world at large was not half so apparent to him as it had been. He was wholly selfish in his love. He forgot that a great financial undertaking was hanging fire because he was not there; he forgot that the crushing of the great octopus was held in abeyance; forgot everything except that there was a girl named Doris, and that he loved her very much indeed.

Doris came down that evening fresh from an interview with her father, and determining desperately that she must cast her nets this time to good effect. She was in one of her cold moods, and considered the affair with entire impersonality. Here was a man who had

something that was most valuable to her father; her father had directed her to obtain the secret, and she was going to do it. Thus the cold mood asserted itself in Doris Hilman, and when she entered the music room where Janison sat smoking a cigarette, she had fully resolved that she would do as she had been bidden.

Janison meanwhile had been holding an argument with himself, and had also made a determination, which was that, on that very evening, he would ask Doris Hilman to marry him.

So two young people with a separate determination faced one another, and, when they had clasped hands, the determination that each had made looked a very different thing from the one each had thought it before the arrival of the other. Shaken from their trend of thought, they eyed one another for some moments in embarrassment. The cold mood left Doris, and she mentally put off the acquiring of the secret until another evening; while Janison, lost in love fear, asked his other self angrily what temerity he had contemplated.

She said something unimportant, and he managed to answer it with another something equally trivial. Their mental balances somewhat restored by the badinage that followed, each began to contemplate their objects again; and Doris remembered that her father was very harsh when crossed, and that it would do well not to give him another opportunity to score her. "Besides," she meditated fearfully, remembering his threats, "it is really better for Mr. Janison that I find out. Father is a terrible man. He may do something——" She did not know exactly what, but she knew her father well enough to be quite sure that he would pause at nothing in order to attain the object he had in view.

She looked across at young Janison suddenly, and her heart gave a quick leap of fear when she realized that something might be done to injure him. A flash of white light came over her and blinded her to real things. She became wonderfully feminine, and the spirit of sex asserted itself. This young fellow who looked at her so earnestly, who trusted her so completely, might be harmed. A longing seized her to place an arm about him for protection against danger.

The last vestige of the cold mood had passed. Her eyes were big with fear, and that wonderfully enchanting infantile smile played about her curved lips. Janison saw her looking at him; and his heart, too, began to leap. He lost his fear for the moment, so great was his desire for her. He resorted to a trick to gain her pity, which he believed, with the poet, to be akin to love.

"I must go to England next week," he said, quickly, and then looked away from her. "I've put it off and put it off, but I can't delay any longer." He looked at her appealingly. "My work lies there," he said. "And my—duty."

It was very theatric, but the man in love always verges dangerously near the art of the histrion. By the time Janison had said this, so great was his pity for himself, that his lip actually quivered. He contemplated himself alone and friendless across the water with the only thing in the world he cared for behind him. He tried to speak again, but could only gulp down something.

The girl's lashes swept her cheek, and she studied the pattern of a Persian rug. "I am sorry you are going," she said; and her tone was ample proof that she meant it. She began to contemplate an existence which had no Janison in it; an existence chiefly made up of a man named Minor. Her body shook and shivered, and the world seemed very gray.

"Must you go?" she asked.

"Do you want me to stay?" It came quickly and impulsively. Fear was gone now. It was only man seeking his mate. His fingers touched her bare forearm, and a quiver of something perilously akin to joy went through the girl. All the artifices and contrivances of good breeding and repression fell away from her. Her face was more infantile than ever, and her big eyes looked into his.

"You know I want you to stay," she said.

Then the man forgot everything. What she said meant much to him; but the way she said it meant everything. He clasped her suddenly in his arms and kissed her many times; and her arms went about his neck and held him tightly.

"Sweetheart," he cried, "you will go with me. You will go with me. You will be my wife——"

Her eyes were suddenly opened to what she had done. Quickly she released herself and faced him, panting; then she sank into a tearful heap on the divan, her golden-brown head buried in a mass of white drapery.

"Sweetheart," cried Janison, imploringly.

So engrossed were both in their thoughts, that the figure of Minor coming into the room was not seen by either of them. Minor had quitted Hilman's presence, and had been informed by a servant that Miss Doris was in the music room. He came through the library and pushed back the portières, only to hear Janison's word, and to note the girl on the divan, and Janison bending over her, one arm about her waist.

Minor went white and stepped forward. Then, his teeth bared almost wolfishly, he attempted a smile, which resulted only in the ghastliest of sneers. But neither of the two noted him, and he stepped back behind the portières again in a white heat of rage, determined to know just how far he had been deceived.

After a moment the girl raised her face; and her eyes, wet with tears, looked into Janison's. He attempted to embrace her again, but she put him away resolutely.

"You mustn't do that," she said. "No, you mustn't——"

But the man, wholly believing in her love now, was not to be put off so easily.

She submitted to his caress, but gave no answering demonstration; finally she said, in a little choked voice:

"I am engaged to Mr. Minor."

"Yes, yes," said Janison, carelessly. "That doesn't matter now. You love me—not Minor."

"I don't know," she said. She looked very woe-begone and not happy. "I don't know, Thirkell; indeed I don't. I care for you—yes, I care for you a great deal, but I don't know about—love."

Janison did not take her seriously. "But you don't care for this Minor chap, I know," he said.

"Not as I do for you," she replied, sitting up and pushing back her hair with her free hand. "But you mustn't kiss me again—or anything—not yet. You see, I don't know just what I care—— You'd better go now, Thirkell; indeed, you'd better go. I want to think—very much."

"But it's so early," said Janison. "Just a little after nine."

"I know, I know," said the girl, impatiently; "but can't you see all this has taken me off my balance? I'm in a whirl almost. It wouldn't be fair to trust both our lives to a sudden emotion. You must come to-morrow, and then—I'll answer you, dear. To-morrow." She put up a protesting hand. "No, don't touch me now—not again."

She rang for a footman, who appeared. Then she shook hands with Janison.

"To-morrow, at ten," she said, softly. "Good-by."

He followed the servant to the hall, was handed his hat, stick and gloves, and helped on with his coat, after which he took his departure, treading on roseate clouds.

* * * * * * * *

The sound of the door closing on the man caused the girl to suddenly wish that she had not sent him away; and she flung herself head downward on the divan and began to sob for no very well-defined reason. Many thoughts passed through her mind. She realized now that she could not possibly get the secret from Janison after what he had said to her. She could not take advantage of the man she cared for, because it was a betrayal of love that would send her through life despising herself.

There were other things she might

have thought had not a voice at her side awakened her from her broodings. She started suddenly to her feet and faced Minor, who was glaring blackly at her.

"Well?" she asked, timorously. "Well?" The apparition of the very man she had most reason to wish not to see at that particular time unnerved her for the moment.

"I wonder that you can look at me," said Minor.

She realized then that he knew something of what had occurred. The necessity for defending herself asserted itself, and the infantile look faded from her face. Her eyes narrowed and she stiffened into absolute erectness.

"I wonder I can, too, sometimes," she said, coldly. "Especially when you wear a hangdog look such as you are gracing yourself with at the present time. Sit down and try to be pleasant."

She seated herself and looked up at him. He did not move. He was trying to assert himself in the best way.

"I was coming down to see you a few moments ago," he said. "I was coming in when I saw you and Janison—he had his arm about you—and he kissed you." He lost his old precision. "What do you mean by it? How dare you look at me in that insulting way? Haven't you any shame?"

The girl crossed the room and was about to press the button for the servant, when Minor seized her hand, pulled it away, and stood with his back to the bell.

"What were you going to do? Have a servant put me out?" he sneered.

"Yes. I don't like your manners to-night," she replied.

"Very well. You think you have a right to be engaged to me, and then allow another man to kiss you? Don't tell me you were playing the game—that you were trying to get Janison to tell you that formula. If you'd wanted that, you wouldn't have sent him away. No, you're infatuated with him, and you've played me for a fool, and played your father for another, all on account of that whey-faced puppy——"

The girl almost sprang at him. "Don't you dare," she breathed.

The man smiled again in a ghastly way. "I suppose you'll try to tell me that you don't care for him——"

"No," interrupted the girl. "I'll do nothing of the sort. I do care for him, if you want to know. I love him, I love him, I love him; and I'll not play the tool for you or my father, or anyone. I love Thirkell Janison—and he loves me. And there's your ring——"

She slipped it off and placed it on the piano. "You'd better take it if you don't want me to give it to one of the maids," she said, coldly. "And if you like the music room, stay here. I am going upstairs."

She started away, but Minor caught her arm. "We'll play a little game together, Miss Hilman," he said. "If you love this fellow Janison as much as I love you, your torture will be as great as mine was. I am going down to see him now, and I shall tell him that you have been playing with him in order to get his secret. I'll tell him who Rollins K. Hilman is, and what his methods are—and what his daughter is. So good-night."

The girl, startled out of her coldness, turned on him. "You wouldn't dare!" she breathed. Then she laughed lightly. "No, of course not. If you were to give away father's secrets you'd ruin yourself, for he would drive you out of finance altogether——"

"What do I care?" cried Minor, fiercely. "I've got as much money as I need salted away where he can't touch it. I tried to break with your father before—and would have broken, if it hadn't been for my engagement with you. I suppose that was the bribe. I suppose I was played with. Well, I can be just as dangerous as your father. It doesn't do to play with a man. So I'll see young Janison to-night, and we'll see if he'll care for you when I prove to him your object."

He shook off the girl's detaining grasp and walked rapidly from the room. She looked after him, frozen into dumbness. She heard the door close after him, and, running to the

drawing-room windows, noted him getting up power with his motor car. With a final puff it darted down the avenue in defiance of the speed regulations.

"He won't—he won't dare!" she whispered, hoarsely. "Oh! he mustn't —he mustn't—Thirkell will——"

This time she did not sob. She rested her head on her hands and wept bitterly. For she knew now that she *did* love Thirkell Janison.

CHAPTER V.

THE BETRAYAL.

The Minor that entered the motor car was a far different Minor from the one who had quitted it several hours before. Now that he had found that the girl cared nothing for him and would never marry him, he gave free rein to his passions, and cared for nothing except the desire to wound her just as deeply as she had wounded him. He fully realized the effect of what he would say to Janison, and took a savage delight in the thought that he, too, would be made miserable.

He had Janison's address, and put his machine to the second speed in order to lose no time in getting there. He disregarded bicycle policeman, and nearly ran down two cabs and several pedestrians. Finally he turned off Fifth Avenue at Twenty-second Street and then into Madison Avenue, making for Gramercy Park.

Janison had taken a cab home, and was now sitting in his apartments, still dressed, staring at vacancy and twisting about in his fingers a rose which he had taken from her hair. He was dreaming very beautiful dreams, and building wondrous air castles, when the bell from his letter box caused him to lift the speaking tube and inquire the visitor's errand.

"Important," said Minor; "very important. A message from Miss Hilman."

The young scientist unfastened the door, and the labored breathing of a man coming upstairs presently ceased, and a knock was heard. Janison bade the man enter.

Minor cut into the little hall, and finally emerged in Janison's study, where that gentleman rose to receive the message. On noting Minor's well-groomed form, he looked surprised.

"I thought you said a messenger," he remarked.

"I said 'a message from Miss Hilman'," replied Minor, glaring at him. "That was a mistake. I have just come from Miss Hilman, but she sent no message. I have something to tell you, though. My name is Minor—Henry Minor."

"Ah!" said Janison, politely. "Won't you sit down, Mr. Minor?"

"No. I prefer to stand," replied the other man.

"Can I offer you a drink—a little Scotch?"

"No," said Minor, "you can't."

"Ah!" said Janison, still politely. "Then, with your permission, I'll have one." He poured out some whisky, used the siphon, and drank half of the decoction. Then he lighted a cigarette and stared blandly at Minor.

"I was engaged to Miss Hilman, you may know," began Minor. "The engagement was broken to-night. I broke it." This was a lie, but Minor did not wish to appear small in his rival's eyes. "I broke it because I could not see my future wife degrading herself by playing with another man's affections. I know, of course, what is between you and Miss Hilman, and I've come here to tell you that you're being made a fool of. You know, of course, that Brooke Sillery tried to buy your discovery——"

"What has that——"

"Wait. Brooke Sillery is nothing but an agent. Miss Hilman's father is the head of the Steel Trust. He owns everything that Sillery is supposed to own. He owns most of what I'm supposed to own, and Leeson is in the same boat. I've cut loose because I can't stand the rotten game any longer, and I want to give you a chance to save yourself. Hilman gave me his daughter as a sop when I tried to break loose——"

"Stop!" cried Janison, his face very white.

"It's true enough," answered Minor, furiously. "I loved Doris Hilman, but she didn't care for me. Well, then, you came along and they couldn't buy you. So the old man put his daughter up to the trick of getting you to tell her your secret, by playing love with you——"

If Minor had not stepped back, Janison would have struck him. "You infernal liar!" cried Janison. "You infernal liar!"

"It's true, I say. Come back to the Hilman house. Ask her whether it's true or not. I'll go with you. If she says it's a lie I'll face her, and then see what she says."

Janison stared at him, his eyes bulging, his nails tearing the palms of his hands.

"She's been playing with you. Tomorrow you'd have gone to her, and have told her everything. You've been played with—made a fool of."

"Minor," said Janison, in a tone intensely quiet, "if you say that again, I'll try to kill you. By Heaven, I will!"

"Of course I know you take it hard," said Minor. "I won't say it again. All I ask of you is to go back to the Hilmans and ask Doris whether or not what I say is true."

Janison leaned forward and faced him. "I'll go back," he said. "But I won't ask her anything. I'll tell her just what the secret formula is. Then I'll tell her what you've said. I want her to know I trust her."

"You fool!" said Minor.

"You cad!" said Janison. He picked up his hat and coat. "Come, now, I'll go back with you. Come."

They descended to the street and got into the motor car.

"Now, see here," said Minor, when the machine started off, "you don't want to do anything foolish——"

"Mr. Minor," said Janison, coldly, "please do not speak to me again. If you do, I shall do my best to break your head."

The girl was still sitting in the drawing room when she heard her father's step, and, looking up, saw him regarding her. It was dark in the room, only the reflected light from the music room making it possible for her to distinguish his face.

"I understood Janison was to be here to-night," he said.

Her old fear of her father came back to her. "He was here," she faltered; "but he's gone—he had another engagement or something. He——"

"Doris," said her father, in that tone she knew so well and feared so much, "the next time he comes—which will be to-morrow, you will find out what I told you to find out. Do you understand that——"

The sound of a motor car stopping in front of the house caused the girl to peer out of the window. She saw Janison getting out, but she did not hear Minor telling him that he would wait in the automobile, and if needed would come into the house and corroborate what he had said.

Janison came up the steps and rang the bell. The girl gasped.

"He's coming back."

"Who is coming back?" asked Rollins K. Hilman.

The answer slipped out before she knew what she was saying. "Mr. Janison," she answered. As she said it she shook with fear, for her father's vulture-like head was thrust forward unpleasantly, and his baleful eye looked into her own.

"Sooner than I expected," he said. "Sooner than I expected." He sucked in his breath sharply and spoke in some haste. "You will get that secret from him to-night, my dear," he said. "There will be no slipping up on this. I have heard rumors that you were infatuated with young Janison and were growing silly over him. There'll be nothing of that sort. I am going back in the music room, and I can hear every word either of you speak. If you disobey me——"

"Is Miss Hilman receiving?" came the tones of Janison, speaking to the footman.

"I'll see, Mr. Janison," said the functionary, extending his platter. "I'll see, sir."

Rollins K. Hilman walked into the music room; and the footman came into Doris' presence with Janison's card.

"Show Mr. Janison in, Uffington," she said. She had risen and was trying to be calm. She knew why Janison had come back by now, for she had recognized Minor's motor car and its owner, who was lighting a cigar outside. The light shone on his face, and it seemed to her that he was grinning sardonically.

"Mr. Janison," said Uffington, the footman, and Janison came in hurriedly. The girl was standing erect, her hands clasped behind her back, and regarded him in the half light.

He offered his hand tentatively, but she did not appear to see it, and he, too, clasped his hands behind his back, and looked at her nervously.

"It is rather late for calling," she said, frigidly, although she was trembling with fear of what was to come. Out in the street, Minor's cigar glowed and his face seemed triumphant now. Vaguely she remembered having seen something like that triumphant look before, and presently it came to her that *Mephistopheles* had so grinned at the downfall of *Faust*.

"Late—yes," said Janison, vaguely. "Yes, it is late—but you see——"

"No, I don't," she replied. "Why have you come?"

The hardness of the tone smote him like a sudden blow. "Doris, Doris," he entreated, then fell silent again.

"Well?" she asked again; then her repression failed her. "Tell me and go. I know what you've come to say. Tell me and go." The frigidity had left her tones, and there was only the torture of mind left.

He tried to smile. "Oh, no, I don't think you know what I came to say. No, I think that that will be a surprise." He was speaking almost joyously, then his tones became sober again. "I know I shouldn't have come," he said. "But the thing was so important." He crossed to her side and took her hand, and she submitted passively. "Sweetheart, I trust you just as much as I love you, and I want you to believe that I do."

Coming as it did instead of the arraignment she expected, the girl was too surprised to prevent his embrace. Then, too, she felt very weak and very little, and the fear of her father was strong upon her. Janison's clasp about her waist was the support that she needed. She forgot what Minor had said, and reveled in the absolute abandonment of self.

"You do believe in me," she murmured. She had no shame in accepting his trust, for she had put behind her for the last time all thoughts of getting the secret from him. The ordeal of fire through which she had passed had convinced her that her duty lay to Janison and not to her father.

She released herself gently and smiled on him. The thought of her father behind the curtains in the music room had no power to frighten her now that she was in the presence of the man she loved. She seated herself, and he stood up, regarding her.

"I do trust you," he said, earnestly. "And now I am going to tell you why I came here to-night. A man named Minor, who was engaged to you, came to my apartments a little while past, and said that you were pretending to love me only because you wanted to get from me the secret of my discovery. He said a great many other things, too, none of which are important. I came only to tell you that I disbelieved every word of it——"

She pressed his hand and looked up at him with grateful eyes.

"But only to trust you is not enough," he continued. "I am going to prove to you how much I do trust you, and tell you the combination which makes my carbonizer effective. That is my way of proving that I believe Minor to be a liar, and you to be worthy of all my trust."

It was as though she had been seared with a torch of fire. "You are going to tell me—now!" she gasped out.

"Yes—now," he answered. "That is my trust in you."

The girl bowed her head as though struck. She knew that her father was listening. She could imagine him now

with his vulture-like head craned forward, his ears distended for the sweet morsel which he had wanted for so long. So great was the shock, that for some time she could say nothing. Her eyes sought the floor; her hands twitched nervously, and it seemed as though her brain was on fire. Her temples throbbed and her teeth chattered.

Janison saw that she was overcome with emotion, but he attributed it to quite another cause than the real one. He imagined that so greatly was she moved by his avowal of his trust in her that she did not dare trust herself to speak for fear of breaking down.

Many thoughts were coursing through the girl's brain. She was, indeed, in a quandary. If she refused to listen to him, he would not understand it—would probably insist because he would imagine that she thought him doing this thing merely for effect. Then, too, if she did not listen, her father—what would he do? The girl shook as though with an ague.

For Janison to speak now would mean that his secret would be given over to the enemy—that her father would be able to crush him. All his plans for the future would go to naught—and he would hate her for having been the means to the end.

Presently he went on: "You have been reading up on the different combinations which make iron from steel, and you, of course, realize that, to begin with trite facts, it is only from the finest quality of iron that steel containing over one per cent. of carbon can be made. You also know that the difference in price between the finest quality of iron and steel is pretty small. Therefore, the problem that I set for myself was to make the finest quality of steel from inferior grades of iron. I experimented with silicon, manganese and phosphorus, also with spiegeleisen and Bauxite bricks. Quite by accident, one day, I struck the right trail, and found that by a judicious combination of cyanogen, titanium and——"

The girl sprang suddenly to her feet. "Stop!" she cried. "You mustn't tell me what else you used. I know that those two elements are common. I don't want to know what the others were—don't tell me. Don't tell me. It isn't fair to yourself. I might let the secret out unwittingly—a thousand things might happen. Don't tell me."

Exhausted, she fell back in her place, and Janison watched her wonderingly.

"I want you to feel that I trust you, sweetheart," he said.

"Don't!" she commanded. "Don't!"

"But I will," he insisted. "I want you to share my knowledge with me. Besides cyanogen and titanium, an entirely new substance forms my combination. It is an ingredient of la——"

The girl flung herself upon him, and placed her hand over his mouth. "You've forced me to it," she cried, bitterly. "Now, if you must know why I didn't want you to tell me, you shall know. What Minor said was true. I did try to get your secret from you—until I found that I cared. I have been unworthy of trust. My plan was to make you love me—and then—— It's true. It's true—but I fell into the trap myself. For I do love you—I do love you."

For a moment the man was stunned; then he repeated slowly: "You—were—that," and fell into silence, which was broken by a sound like the snarl of a wild animal, as Rollins K. Hilman parted the curtains and entered the room. Janison saw the movement and the man.

"My father," said the girl, bitterly. "My father—now you understand why I didn't want you to tell me. For God's sake, go. I know you hate me for the vile creature I am. Go—please go."

Dumfounded at the turn affairs had taken, and hardly realizing what had happened, the man left the room and found his hat and coat. The door closed behind him, just as Rollins K. Hilman's baleful eye was turned on his daughter.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GREAT PLOT.

Now that Janison was gone, everything else seemed very little worth while; and the girl had not enough en-

ergy left to be afraid of her father who was regarding her malevolently with his one eye. She faced him boldly.

"You traitorous little hussy!" cried Hilman, his bony fingers gripping her wrist. "You have dared disobey me—give away my secrets—refuse to learn the thing that I have wanted for months—that I must have; you have dared to do this."

Her anger flamed up as cold and pitiless as his own. "Yes, I have dared," she said. "I have dared not be dishonorable. I have dared be true to myself, and have refused to do the dirty work you have set me to do. For shame, father! You with your millions—more than you can ever use—to wish your daughter to descend to such a low trick as that!"

"You didn't think of that when you were told to do it," he said. "Principle has nothing to do with this. You're in love with that Janison whelp——"

"Don't call him a whelp!" she flamed out.

"You're in love with him—you won't deny that."

"No, I won't deny it," cried the girl. "I do love Thirkell Janison. I love him; yes, I love him."

The vulture-like head bobbed up and down. "Well, I am glad to hear it," he said. "You have lost my affection by your work this night. No person has ever disarranged my plans without suffering for it. You come in that category now, and you shall be punished. You shall not marry Thirkell Janison."

"I shall marry no one else," she retorted, quietly.

"Minor, too, eh?" went on Hilman, disregarding her. "Well, we'll settle with Minor to-morrow. He gave away my identity to this Janison man? We'll settle with Minor to-morrow. And we'll settle with Janison a little later. We will."

He chuckled mirthlessly and went out of the room still chuckling, although his heart was black with anger.

When Janison had slept over the matter, he decided that he had been very foolish in leaving the Hilman house that night without exacting a promise from the girl to marry him on a set date. The fact that she had been actuated by an object in seeking his acquaintance seemed very small when he realized that she had sacrificed herself in order to prevent him from giving away his secret, as he would surely have done had she not confessed.

He was not even sure that she had intended to get the secret from him, believing for the moment that she had said what she did solely to prevent telling him that her father was behind the curtains in the music room. The whole affair was very much of a tangle to Janison; and he was not sure of the best way to unravel it.

Who was Hilman, anyhow? Minor had said he was the head of the Steel Trust, and other things; but that could not be possible, for all the world knew that Brooke Sillery was the president of the corporation, and controlled most of the stock. Minor himself was a large shareholder, and so was Leeson. Where, then, could Hilman come in?

Janison looked up the corporation's report, but found no mention of a man named Hilman holding stock to any considerable amount. He decided that Minor was lying.

And yet, there was surely some connection between Doris' father and the steel corporation; else why should he have tried to discover the combination? Why should he have sacrificed his daughter to this end?

Janison gave the whole thing up as a puzzle, and thought no more about it. His secret was safe, and Doris loved him: that was the best of all. She loved him, and loved him enough to disobey her father, and shield him, Janison.

All the troubles in the way faded out like shadows at break of day, and the whole world was bathed in sunshine. He decided to call for her that morning and ask her to ride with him in the park.

Early the next day Janison mounted the horse he had telephoned for, and set out for the Hilman house.

He turned off into Madison Avenue

and presently he came to Fifth Avenue. It was a very beautiful day, he decided. Everyone seemed to be wearing a holiday smile. Even grim old Fifth Avenue had a certain charm.

She loved him, she really and truly loved him—that was the magic charm which had changed a very ordinary day into a very extraordinary one, as the alchemist transmuted baser metals into gold.

He would see her again that morning, and tell her once more how much he loved her. They would ride together in the park, and there he would make her promise to marry him before the week was out so that they might go to England together, the girl by his side in his great work.

Presently he turned into a street near the avenue, and alighted before the Hilman house. He ascended the steps, whistling blithely under his breath, and rang the bell. Uffington, the footman, took his card without comment, and the young scientist sat down in the reception room.

Presently Uffington returned, still bearing his card on his salver. "Miss Hilman is not at home, sir," said the servant.

The words came chillily to Janison. "Not at home?" he echoed.

"Not at home, sir," repeated Uffington, gravely.

Janison stared at him for a moment. The servant stepped to the door. "When will she be back?" asked Janison, conscious of the fact that he should not ask a servant this.

"I don't know, sir," replied Uffington, opening the door.

Janison went out and descended the steps. Somehow the day did not appear so beautiful as it had a few moments before. He turned his horse back into the avenue, and finally reached the park. Once out of the beaten track, he let the animal take its course, and got a certain savage satisfaction out of fast riding.

Where could she have gone this early in the morning? Or—but this was too horrible—could she have been at home and refused to see him?

He reached home before the lunch hour and changed his riding clothes for a frock coat and all the rest that went with afternoon attire. He strolled up the avenue again, and went into Sherry's for luncheon, hoping that she might be there. She often lunched at Sherry's.

But she did not come. Janison did not enjoy his lunch at all, and ate very little of it. He quitted Sherry's for his club where he sat smoking and reading until four o'clock, when he again called at the Hilmans', only to be informed once more that Miss Hilman was out.

Janison had an engagement to sit in the Van Arscott box to hear Sembrich that night at the Metropolitan; so, after eating dinner, he went back to his rooms to change into evening clothes. He found, on his arrival there, a cablegram from London:

JANISON, New York: You must take *Celtic*, sailing three days from to-day. Presence in London by twenty-fifth absolutely imperative. Answer immediately.
GERVASE LOUDON.

The young scientist swore a trifle, but realized that Loudon had written the truth. He knew just why it was imperative for him to be in London on the twenty-fifth, and he knew that he must be there. He would see Doris that night at the opera, for she was to be one of Mrs. Van Arscott's party, and Janison had been invited at her request, although he was not to take her there. When he saw Doris at the opera he would explain that their marriage was imperative, in order that they might go to London together. If she loved him as she said she did, and Janison believed that she did, she would certainly consent to an informal wedding.

So he sat down and inscribed a reply to the London manufacturers:

Will arrive *Celtic* twenty-third without fail.

And signed his name. He then called up the steamship people and requested that they reserve him a berth.

He arrived at the Metropolitan a little after the performance had begun, and made his way to the Van Arscott box, where he found Alice Prescott,

Maude Rigney and several men that he knew. Mrs. Van Arscott was there, also, but there was no sign of Doris.

"She couldn't come to-night," explained the matron, when Janison asked for information. "I don't know why. She called up on the telephone, and informed me to that effect. It's so tiresome waiting for Sembrich to come on, isn't it?"

But Janison took no interest in the opera after that. It was immaterial to him whether Sembrich came on or whether she remained behind and an understudy played the part. He gloomed through the entire performance, and excused himself from accompanying the party to supper.

He stopped at the Holland House, and there used up fifteen sheets of note paper—ten in unsatisfactory beginnings and five in a letter to Doris telling her that he would call at eleven the next morning, and that she must see him. He informed her, further, that he was sailing in three days, and begged her consent to marrying him.

But when he called at eleven o'clock the next morning, the solemn Uffington informed him that she was not in. Janison exploded—which was a very wrong thing to do, for the servant had his orders.

"That isn't true, Uffington," he said. "I know Miss Hilman is in, and I want you to tell her that I shall wait below until she consents to see me."

"Yes, sir," said Uffington. He went upstairs again, and remained for fully ten minutes. When he came down he was as imperturbable as ever.

"Miss Hilman is not in," he said. "I've tried to find her, but she isn't in, sir."

"I'll wait," said Janison, grimly.

"Very good, sir," said Uffington. "In the music room, sir, or the drawing room?"

"Here," returned Janison, seating himself in the reception room.

"Anything I can fetch you, sir?" asked Uffington. "A paper, a book?"

"Nothing, thank you," Janison informed him.

He sat there for three hours, ringing for Uffington at intervals of half hours. Uffington went upstairs each time, only to return with the same answer. Disgusted, Janison finally took his leave; and when he had gone the irreproachable Uffington allowed his facial muscles to relax in a very wide grin.

Meanwhile Doris was wondering why she had not heard from Janison, and the answer that she got from her inner self was that her lover had ceased to care for her after what she had told him. She knew nothing of his calls, for Uffington had received strict orders from Mr. Hilman that Janison was to be informed that Miss Hilman was not in, no matter how many times he called. Hilman knew that Doris would see Janison at the Metropolitan, so in order to prevent this he had called up Mrs. Van Arscott and informed her that Doris could not come, backing up the assertion by taking his daughter out in his motor car, and pretending to lose himself in the Westchester hills, making return to the city so late that Doris could not go to the opera.

The letter that came from Janison was duly noted, and read by her father. Doris did not see it. And the three hours spent in the reception room were also unknown to the girl.

The head of the Steel Trust had become mightily perturbed over the news contained in Janison's letter to Doris. The fact that there were but two days remaining before Janison took ship for England was a matter for some worriment. Hilman thought the matter over all that day, and when night time came Brooke Sillery was in his study with him.

Meanwhile there had been two telegrams from Janison, both of which Hilman read; and the young scientist had made two more fruitless calls.

Doris had not been out all day. She had been crying more than was compatible with beauty; and she was very miserable. She sat in her sitting room right above her father's study, and tried to read, but with very little success.

In the study below Brooke Sillery

was shaking his head and Hilman was gesticulating.

"I tell you the thing is perfectly feasible," said Hilman.

"It's dangerous," said Sillery. "Very dangerous. You can't rely on people like that. Suppose the thing falls through——"

The desk telephone rang and Hilman answered it. "Oh! yes," he said. "Judge Davenport. Yes, you have something about the Supreme Court decision for to-morrow. Yes, this is a private wire. No trouble. Yes, I'll hold the line——"

Hilman laid the receiver on the desk and the line was open. It so happened that at that moment Doris Hilman took down the receiver in her room to call up a friend. She heard her father's voice in the room below.

He was still talking to Sillery, forgetting that the line was open and that his voice could be heard over the wires. "That's Davenport. He's going to tell us what the Supreme Court will do to-night about that merger business. We can get out first thing in the morning if the thing's not safe. They won't publish the report until noon."

"So Davenport's bought, too, is he?" asked Sillery. Hilman nodded. "But now, about this Janison case?"

The girl above pricked up her ears and held the receiver tightly to her ear. Yes, what about that Janison case?

"I tell you there's no possible risk?" said Hilman. "These two men of yours can go to Janison's apartments and ask to see him. When they do, a chloroform rag under his nose will do the rest. After that they can carry him downstairs, put him in the carriage and take him down to my private dock at the foot of ——th Street. When he comes to he'll find himself on that yacht and headed for the Bahamas. You have a little island of your own, Sillery, where no vessels touch, and no one is allowed to land except your people. We'll keep him there until he decides to give up this marvelous secret of his."

"I don't like it," said Sillery. "I don't like it. Of course, the men are ready, and the yacht's been in commission for some time; and if you say to-night, why, I suppose it'll have to be. But——"

The girl had heard all she wished to know. To-night! She sat back in her chair for a moment trying to realize what she had heard.

They evidently intended to maroon Janison until he would give up the information they sought. She shuddered when she thought of the man she loved condemned to a solitary life, perhaps for years—for she knew her lover well enough to know that he was the sort that sacrifices life for a principle. Sooner than give the Steel Trust the chance to squeeze the world even harder, he would remain on that lonely islet for the remainder of his days.

She awoke to a sudden realization that something must be done. She pulled a sheet of note paper toward her and rang for a servant.

She wrote hurriedly and feverishly, explaining to Janison just what was intended, and begging him to go elsewhere for the night; and to arm himself. By the time her maid appeared, she was inscribing the address on the envelope.

"Bertha," she said, feverishly, "I want you to put on your hat and coat and take this note to Mr. Janison—the address is there. I know that isn't your work, but I want you to do it as a favor to me. It is very important. I don't dare trust it to a messenger boy. Here, take it." She thrust the note and a bank bill into the girl's hand. "Take a cab, and be quick. If Mr. Janison isn't there, wait until he comes."

"Yes, Miss Hilman," said the maid, "I'll be as quick as I can."

"Yes, yes," said the girl. "If you manage to get it to him safely, I'll give you a hundred dollars when you come back. So be quick, Bertha."

"Now, I wonder," said the maid, meditatively, as she pinned on her hat a few moments later and slipped on a short, tan coat—"now, I wonder what it is that's so important to Miss Doris—I wonder."

She went down the servant's staircase and was passing through the servant's hall when Uffington emerged from

the butler's sitting room and stopped her with a good-natured grin.

"Where are you going?" he wished to know.

"Oh! don't stop me with your foolishness," she cried impatiently, putting up her hand to ward him off. It was the hand that held the letter; and Uffington's grin faded. With a quick glance of suspicion he snatched it from her.

The girl promptly slapped his face. "Give me that letter!" she cried. "Give me that letter!"

Uffington, holding the missive tightly, read the superscription. "Oh, no, you don't!" he said. "Oh, no, you don't. Master 'as forbid any letters goin' from this 'ere 'ouse to that Janison feller. You come along with me."

He seized her roughly by the wrist.

"You devil!" cried the maid. "Let me go, and give me my letter." She saw the hundred dollars and the new clothes vanishing on her horizon.

"You come along quiet, then," said Uffington. "Master 'as directed that all letters comin' from or goin' to this Mr. Janison be brought to 'im. Directed pertickler, 'e 'as. So if you go quiet, I won't 'arm you. But if you don't, maybe I will."

The girl, finding resistance futile, preceded Uffington up the staircase, and across the house. Uffington knocked at Mr. Hilman's study. He was answered by a sharp injunction to go away.

"This is somethin' pertickler, sir, Mr. Hilman," said Uffington, unctuously. "Habout Mr. Janison, it is, sir."

"Come in," said Hilman, gruffly.

The footman pushed the girl into the study, followed her and shut the door after her.

"Accordin' to your instructions, sir," said Uffington, with a conscious air of rectitude, "I apprehended this young 'ooman 'ere goin' out with this here letter for Mr. Janison."

Uffington handed Hilman the letter. The latter tore it open and read it, then, with a peculiarly nasty smile, tossed it to Brooke Sillery. Then he turned and surveyed the girl.

"So you took that letter?" he thundered.

Bertha began to sob. "Miss Doris told me she would give me a hundred dollars if I delivered it to Mr. Janison. I didn't know there was anything wrong, sir."

"Oh! there, now, dry up," said Hilman. "Go to your own quarters and stay there. Your mistress won't need you any more to-night." There was an ugly glitter in his eye as he said it. The maid went out, still sobbing, and Uffington was about to follow her.

"Here's something for your watchfulness," said Hilman, tossing him a gold piece. "Get out, now."

Uffington left the room, bowing and breathing thanks, and when the door had closed, Hilman turned to Sillery.

"What do you think?" he inquired. Then his anger broke loose. "By Heaven! I'll fix her for this. Wait here, Sillery."

He quitted the room, and made his way to his daughter's apartments, and came in upon her black as a thundercloud.

"So you haven't played the traitor enough?" he said, insultingly, as he tossed the note she had written on the table before her.

The girl went deathly pale; not for herself, for her father's anger had little menace for her now. She was thinking of Janison, who, without the warning, would fall into the trap which her father had prepared for him.

"My own child plays the traitor, eh? How in the devil did you find that out?" he asked.

"You had the receiver of your telephone off the hook and I opened mine at that time. I heard you talking."

"And you were going to betray me?"

She rose and faced him. "I was going to prevent you from carrying out a cowardly plan to coerce an honest man into giving you the fruits of his brains. Haven't you any pity, father, that you would do this—kidnap him, set him down on an uninhabited island until he tells you what you want to know?"

"That is my affair," replied Rollins

K. Hilman, coldly. "Since you know so much, I will tell you that at twelve o'clock to-night two men will visit Mr. Janison and do just that. By this time to-morrow he will be on his way to the Bahamas. And now——"

He went through the sitting room into the bedroom at its back, locked the door from the inside and pocketed the key. Then he locked the door of the bathroom, which opened on the hall, and pocketed the key of that also, finally coming back to the sitting room.

A steel paper cutter was lying on the table. He picked it up and slashed the telephone wire through, picked up the telephone and pitched it into the hall. With the paper cutter still in his hand, he cut the wires connecting with the servants' quarters, and then tossed the knife after the telephone.

His daughter had been eying him, ashen pale. Now he smiled at her.

"I think your claws are clipped," said Rollins K. Hilman. "So go to bed and remember that at twelve o'clock your friend, Thirkell Janison, will be having some pleasant little adventures."

He closed the door behind him, and the girl heard the key grate in the lock.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RESCUE.

The girl sat down again and tried to assume an air of calm. She bit her lips and gritted her teeth together to save herself from becoming a victim of utter collapse. She was impelled by a wild desire to weep, to shriek and to tear at the fastenings of the door with her nails. But her common sense told her that none of these things could possibly help her to save the man she loved from impending disaster.

It was now nearly eleven, she found by glancing at the little ormolu clock on the mantel. In an hour it would be too late to warn Janison of his peril, and if he were not warned, it meant that his life as well as her own would be wrecked for all time.

She tried each one of the solid panel oak doors, but to no avail. They had been locked and the locks were firm.

What then? The windows! She opened each one and looked down on a sheer fall of some forty feet. Plainly there was no escape that way. She sat down and buried her face in her hands. Presently she arose and walked about aimlessly. At the door of her bedroom she noted the dumb-waiter shaft.

With a little cry of joy she crossed the room and flung open the door to the shaft. This was her own particular dumb-waiter, and was used only by her. It was a box about five feet high and four square, and was separated in two parts by a shelf in the middle. She must get that shelf out. She set to work to do so, and found to her great gratification that it was adjustable, and could be taken out and replaced at will. She took it out and laid it on the floor; then she hesitated for a moment.

She had never been out of the house by night alone; and she suddenly realized that to pay a visit to a bachelor's chambers at this hour was something that was not considered exactly in good taste. Perhaps, too, there might be people who knew her. They might see her walking alone, and follow her. Then to see her enter an apartment house known to be for the other sex only! The girl had been bred up in the conventions, and at the thought of anyone knowing of such a nocturnal visit, she blushed pink with shame.

Then, too, Thirkell Janison had not called nor had he written to give any explanation. He had left her after pretending to care—left her because she had been honest enough to keep him from sacrificing his future. As this thought came to her, she was filled with a great anger toward Janison, and, in consequence, plumped herself down suddenly and set her lips firmly.

"It will serve him right," she said, colloquially, as we are all apt to do when we are angry.

"He deserves it," she said, again, with much confidence. But the tone was only assumed. Down in her heart she was almost sure that there had been some reason for Janison's silence.

"But I can't let him be kidnaped," she said.

In the next moment she tried to reconcile the thought of a girl, hatless—for the confines of the dumb-waiter precluded the wearing of a hat—making her way into Janison's apartments and telling him of a plot which savored much of melodrama. Of course he would be grateful and——

"But I don't want him to be grateful," she cried. "If he doesn't love me, I don't want him to be grateful. If I could only go disguised——"

Disguised! The idea brought an immediate suggestion. She crossed the room, opened a closet and took out a long box. It was a set of boy's habiliments that she had worn in college theatricals two years ago. Everything was there to turn her into a very good-looking youth. There was a black wig, a black mustache, a pair of dark tan shoes, several collars and cravats, the suit of dark gray material, with felt hat and gloves to match.

The clock struck eleven; and the girl wasted no more time in thinking. She began hastily to disrobe, throwing her clothes about the room without care. Then she plumped down on the floor and hastily tore off her patent-leather pumps, pulling on the dark tan shoes immediately after.

The negligée shirt went on in a twinkling, and was buttoned up; after which she pulled on the trousers and belted them tightly about the waist. She found some little trouble in getting the collar and tie on; but that was only for a moment. She slipped on the waistcoat and coat and pulled the felt hat down over her eyes; after which she drew on the gloves.

Sudden remembrance of what she was going to do caused her to pull open the door of her dressing table and slip a small, pearl-handled, thirty-two-caliber revolver into her coat pocket. She approached the dumb-waiter with some timidity, and eyed it for a few moments, then crawled into it hastily. As her weight was an unaccustomed one for the little elevator, it creaked and groaned and began to descend rapidly, the girl aiding the descent by pulling on the rope.

The fall came to an end in the butler's pantry, where the dumb-waiter bumped to its resting place. The girl pulled the hat lower on her forehead and crawled out of the affair. Regaining her feet, she was about to slip from the room when she collided with a portly person.

"'Ere," demanded the portly person, "wot are you——"

The girl recognized Timmins, the butler, and her hand shook. "Burglars!" gasped Timmins. "Oh, Gawd!" The last exclamation was engendered by the production of a revolver from the girl's pocket, and the pointing of it at Timmins.

"If you make any noise," said the supposed burglar, in what she considered a harsh, masculine voice, "I'll shoot you through the head—mind."

She quitted the pantry in some haste, leaving the astonished and frightened Timmins to wonder at his narrow escape. The girl determined to take no risks by going through the front of the house. She crept down the servant's hall and finally reached the area door, which she unlocked in some trepidation. She went out and closed it, and found herself on the street just under her father's house.

She spent no time thinking about her escape, but walked rapidly to Fifth Avenue, and down it. She felt a very shameless person as she walked along, and kept her eyes on the ground, for fear that she should look into grinning faces proclaiming that her disguise was very easy to read.

Half a block had been covered when she realized that she should take a cab. She stepped to the curb and was about to hail one, when a blank feeling came over her and she felt in her pocket hurriedly. She remembered that she had neglected to bring any money with her.

From somewhere the bells of a church boomed out the half hour. It was half after eleven. At twelve o'clock the thing was to be done; and here she was at Fifty-fourth Street, and Janison was in Gramercy Park. A sickening sensation came over her, and she began to

walk as she had never walked before, striding down Fifth Avenue at a pace which was very far from being akin to the graceful glide that characterized her usual pedestrianism.

She will never forget that walk. By the time she reached Twenty-fifth Street it was ten minutes of twelve; and she was breathing laboriously. Her limbs seemed to refuse to go any further at the rapid rate she had forced herself. She disregarded the evidence of her aching body and continued, more rapidly, if anything; and before the clock had boomed twelve, she was on the steps of the apartment house where Janison resided.

It was an old-fashioned place and had no hall porter. A single gas jet burned dimly in the front hall. She noted, to her dismay, that a closed carriage stood in front of the house, and that it had no driver, for the reins were hitched to a ring in a tree.

The girl made no doubt that this was the carriage which was to carry Thirkell Janison to the yacht. She bounded up the steps and pushed against the front door. It was unlatched and she entered.

She had noted from the mail boxes that Janison's apartment was on the third floor—which was to say that he had the entire third floor. She went up the steps noiselessly, for she was afraid that the men had already done the work they had been sent to do, and were now preparing to bring the senseless body of the young scientist down to the carriage. The desperation of a great love was on her; her heart beat rapidly and her breath came in short, quick gasps. As she gained the third floor, she held her revolver in her hand.

The light burned dimly in the hall, and the girl saw that the door of Janison's flat was likewise ajar. She pushed it gently and entered the little hall. As gently as she had opened the door, she pushed it back, and advanced through the dark hall.

She could hear the sound of men's voices in the back room, which was dark; and she sank down in the protection of a Moorish corner, built into the wall of the hallway. The draped curtains would hide her from view even though the lights were to be turned on. The girl listened intently.

"Wonder when he's coming," her ears finally made out.

"I don't know," returned the second man, sulkily. "Don't talk about it. We're here; that's the main thing, and a devil of a time we had to get here. I must have used ten keys on that door before I opened it."

"Yes," said the other, suddenly, with a lurid oath, "and you forgot to close it, too."

"I didn't want to wake up the house. Some one here might hear me, think it was Janison and come down to call on him."

The other swore again. "If he comes and finds the door open, he'll smell a rat. Get up and close it, and don't talk any more about it."

Evidently the speaker had some authority, for the other man came out of the back room and passed so near to the girl that his clothes brushed hers. She heard the door close and the man return.

So Thirkell Janison had not yet come in; and these men were waiting for him. The girl sat very quiet, drawn up into a quivering little heap. The proximity of these men who were to do this; the darkness; the fact that she was alone; the peril of her lover—all contributed to set each separate nerve on end. She felt that she must scream; that she could not remain quiet for another instant. Blood trickled from her lip, where she had bitten it in her ecstasy of fear. The revolver was grasped limply in her hand.

Probably, had she dared, she would have arisen and made her way out of the place as quickly as possible. But something kept her chained to her place; and her ears continued to take in the conversation of her father's hired desperadoes.

"Chloroform, he said. Lot he knows about chloroform! Don't catch me mixing up in anything that might result in murder. Not to any extent! No, sir."

The other man spat approvingly. "Right, too," he said. "You give a man just a little too much of that stuff and off he goes for good. I ain't hankering after another term in Sing Sing, I can tell you that. No, sir. And life imprisonment, at that. I had all I wanted in three years."

So one of the men was an ex-convict. A disgust predominated other feelings now. The fact that her father should use a criminal to compass his ends!

"Say, wonder what they want this josser for?" continued the second man. "He ain't up to much, to judge from the things he's got around here. Why, this place ain't worth burglarizing. What do they want him for, hey?"

"Ask me! I dunno. I done some jobs for that man, Tasker, before, and he always paid prompt. Maybe it's only some fool joke they're playing. We got to take him down and put him on a private yacht, and, as I told you before, we ain't to hurt him under no circumstances. But this fellow Tasker said to use chloroform—as if that wasn't hurtin' him."

"Gagging and blindfolding will do the trick, all right. Now, I re——"

" 'Ssh!" warned the other.

The girl heard a key rattle in the lock. She was chained to her seat, frozen with fear. The key adjusted itself and the lock turned. The door was opened and a match struck.

"Jove, it's dark!" she heard Thirkell Janison say.

He lighted the hall gas, and she heard him hanging his hat and coat on the rack. His stick rattled into its place, and Janison strolled down toward the sitting room.

The girl saw him pass, and had she time for any emotion but fear she would have felt a swelling pride in his erect manliness set off so well by evening dress. She tried to cry out and warn him, but only a choking gurgle resulted. Janison passed into the sitting room.

The next moment she heard the sounds of a scuffle, then a choking sound and a heavy fall. She hardly dared move.

Silence followed, and the first man spoke. "I don't see how we could have done the job neater," he said. "Now, Mr. Janison, we ain't going to hurt you, and we ain't going to rob you. We're simply going to take you down the street and put you aboard a very fine yacht belonging to some friends of yours. If there's anything you want to take along with you, just write them down on this paper. Here's a pencil. Keep tight hold of his other hand, Jake." Then followed the striking of a light and the ignition of the sitting-room gas.

The thing had been done. The girl's fear was greater than ever, but so great was it now that it overtopped all regard for personal safety. The revolver was clutched tightly in her hand. With trembling limbs she stood erect and moved in the shadows until she reached the door of the sitting room.

"Nothing you want, hey? All right. Now, Jake, we'll tie up his hand. We'll have to hit you on the head if you misbehave, Mr. Janison——"

"Put up your hands!" quavered a weak voice from the doorway. "Put up your hands, or I'll shoot!"

They turned to face a slim youth in gray clothes who held a glittering something in his right hand, the same being pointed steadily at the man called Jake. Without a moment's hesitation, both hands went up in the air.

"Keep them there," said the youth; the voice gaining confidence as the girl noted the effect the weapon had on the two men. She moved into the room and stood away from the door. "Go out of the room," she said. "Keep your hands in the air. Go out, quick——"

"Now, look here, pal," said the man named Jake. "We ain't going to stand——"

"Go out of this room before I count three, or I'll shoot," cried the girl. "One! two! three!" The revolver spurted fire, and Jake's hand flew to his shoulder, where a pellet of lead had entered.

"Next time it will be nearer," said the girl. "Now, march—quick—out of the room."

Their hands still in air and Jake

swearing horribly, the two men made their exit. "Keep on going down the hall," said the girl. "Open the door and go out. Use only one hand to open the door, and don't put it near your pocket or I'll shoot again."

The door opened, the two men passed out into the hallway of the house.

"Now, go downstairs, get into your carriage and drive back to Mr. Brooke Sillery," said the girl, venomously. "And tell him that Mr. Janison wasn't quite ready to go when you called."

She entered the flat again and shut the hall door. Feeling very weak about the knees, she re-entered the room where Janison lay, untied his bonds and unloosened the gag.

She was forced to desist by the faintness that was overcoming her. She began to be very weak and very sick. The room seemed to be full of objects revolving about her. She gave a sudden gasp and collapsed in a heap on the floor just as Thirkell Janison finished untying the gag.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE END.

Janison pulled the bandage from his eyes and blinked at the sudden light. "Well, I'll be damned!" he ejaculated. "Well, I'll be damned!"

For several moments he stood quite still, trying to realize what had happened, how and why. Apparently two men had attempted to kidnap him, and another man—a boy—had prevented them. Why had the two men attempted this, and why had the boy endeavored to stop them? What were these three people doing in his apartments?

He shook his head wearily. The thing was too much for him. He had not recognized Doris Hilman's voice, for she had spoken in a disguised tone. Janison turned, and his eye caught the spectacle of a body lying face downward on the rug.

"That's the boy," he said, as he noted that one small hand thrust out in front of the body clutched a revolver. "I owe a lot to that boy. I wonder what in the——" He checked himself and smiled. "Now, what is the use of trying to figure it out?" he said. "The first thing to do is to find out what's wrong with the boy."

He stepped forward and raised the body in his strong arms and laid it on a divan. As the light fell on the pale face, Janison started back and put his hand before his eyes.

"I'm dreaming," he said.

Presently he took his hand down and knelt by the side of the divan looking earnestly at the face. He noted that the wig of curly hair showed hair of a different color beneath it, and with eyes staring he clutched the wig and pulled it gently. It came off, and the golden-brown hair rippled over the girl's shoulders.

For a moment he was incapable of speech; his lips formed the word, but his organs of articulation refused to make a sound. He wetted his lips and cleared his throat.

"Doris!" he gasped. "Doris!"

For a moment he stood undecided; then he fetched the brandy and, opening her mouth, he forced some of it down her throat. He wetted his hands with the liquor and began to massage her temples. She stirred, sighed contentedly, and her eyelids trembled. Janison forced more brandy into her mouth.

She came out of her fainting spell with a sudden start, and her eyes looked into his, terrified. "Thirkell!" she murmured. "Thirkell!"

"Dearest," he said, "the trouble's all over. Don't think about it. Just lie still for a while. You're very weak. It's good to see you again. Lord! if you'd known how miserable you have made me in the last few days."

"Made you miserable?" she cried, wonderingly. "What do you mean?"

"Dear girl," he said, "I am not blaming you. You did something for me tonight that proves beyond all doubt that you care. But I didn't understand. You see, I called six times, wrote you one letter, and sent ever so many telegrams. I tried to get you by telephone, but they said at the house you were not there."

The girl said nothing for several min-

utes. She was thinking intently. Her father had said that she should not marry Janison. Perhaps this was the way he had gone about it. She wept a little from pure happiness.

"And I thought you had forgotten me," she said. "You see, I wasn't told that you called—and I thought——" She looked into his face with that charming infantile smile.

After a while she remembered that he was puzzled as to the events of the night. Very briefly she told him what she had heard over the telephone, and how she had come to warn him. At the conclusion of her story, the man eyed her wonderingly.

"It takes a woman to be really brave," he said, reverently. "Sweetheart, you've done more for me than I thought anyone would do for another. And now——" He glanced at the clock. "It's impossible for you to go back to your father's house. Come, we'll go around the corner to the parsonage—I know Dr. Martin well. He and his wife will take care of you for the night; and to-morrow—dear one——"

They looked into one another's eyes, and each saw a great happiness reflected in the eyes of the other.

Next morning, something after eleven o'clock, a brougham drove up to the Hilman house, and Doris descended from it, followed by Thirkell Janison. Uffington, who answered the bell, showed no astonishment beyond a slight start, and Doris ascended the staircase followed close by Janison.

She went directly to her rooms, which she found thrown open and Bertha in possession. At the sight of her mistress, the maid began to stammer apologies for the non-delivery of the note the night before.

"Never mind, Bertha," said the girl. She stripped off her hat, coat and gloves. "I want you to help me pack up my things."

"I don't like this very much, my dear," said Janison. "Coming into this house and——"

"Well, dearie," she said, patiently, "the *Celtic* sails at two o'clock, and I haven't time to buy a complete wardrobe by that time. Come, Bertha, put all my white ducks and canvas shoes and sailors and straws into that little steamer trunk. I haven't much time. You might put two light dinner dresses into the steamer trunk, too; and one or two light jackets. The rest of the wardrobe will go into the three big trunks, and my trinkets and things I'll put into this portmanteau."

Janison sat and smoked a cigarette and marveled while the two women packed away unending fripperies. Finally it was completed, and the luggage van which was telephoned for was announced by the appearance of two stalwart men.

The directions were given, and the men, after four trips, stowed away the luggage in their van, with strict instructions to have it at the dock before one o'clock, and an extra gratuity to insure orders being carried out. Janison pocketed the checks and turned to the girl.

"Shall we go now, Doris?" asked Janison.

The girl was in the act of bestowing discarded raiment on her maid. "My father will settle your wages for the past month, and one month more in lieu of notice. Good-by, Bertha."

The maid wept a little over Doris' hand, but finally relinquished it; and Janison followed Doris down the stairway. She stopped on the second floor, and led him along the lofty paneled hallway into a smaller hall, where she knocked on a door.

"Who is it?" came in the tones of Rollins K. Hilman.

The girl opened the door and stepped in. Janison remained on the threshold.

"Father," said the girl, "I've come back to say good-by to you. I sail for the other side to-day."

The vulture-like head was craned forward, but the light had gone out of the baleful eye. It looked at the girl without expression.

"This is my husband, Mr. Janison," she said. "I wanted you to know from me, father. I couldn't help what happened. You see, I loved him very

much. You must remember how much you loved my mother—your wife——"

The eyelid flickered and the eye seemed watery and almost childlike. But there was no answer.

The girl stepped a little nearer and held out her hand. "Won't you say good-by to me, father? Won't you say that at least?"

The eyelid closed over the eye wearily and the head craned itself forward until the chin seemed resting on the desk. Thirkell Janison took out his watch.

"We must go, dearest one," he said, in a low tone.

The girl turned to the figure at the desk again. "Good-by, father," she said. "Good-by," and then went out of the room with her husband.

For some time the head craned itself forward; then the muscles of the neck grew weary, and it shot back, seemingly, into the man's frame like the folding of a bird's wing. The figure that sat thus hunched up, its one eye wandering pitifully, the other stony and glassy, was like something out of a fairy book—a dwarfed and terrible ogre. But the terror had gone out of the ogre's make-up, and the grotesque alone was left. The eye wandered apparently sightless.

"Stop that singing!" croaked the man, suddenly. He put up his hand in the fashion of a very aged man. "Stop that singing! They're always singing about me. I can't bear that. Never could. Always sing. Anne used to sing. I told her I wouldn't have it. Anne's singing now. Anne, Anne, I tell you not to sing. Dammit, do you think I can figure when you sing?"

His voice was querulous, and there was no note of command in it.

"And there's the baby howling again. The baby's howling again. Can't you stop her, woman? What are you good for? Here, give her to me." He stretched forth his hands as though to receive a burden, and when, in his fancy, it had been given to him, his tone changed to a very tender one. "There, there, don't cry, don't cry. Daddy's here, daddy's here. Rock-a-by, baby," he crooned, and sang through the entire ballad time and time again, caressingly, rocking his hands to and fro as though a living entity were there.

"Never mind. When it grows up it shall have a golden house to live in if it wants one, and diamonds as big as pieces of coal to play with. It shall. My little Doris. My little Doris."

For a long time he sat very still and his arms fell lifelessly to his sides. Then suddenly, a blazing fire in his eyes, he sprang to his feet.

"Damn you, I say it is a lie. My wife dead. My Anne. Doctor, you lie. It ain't so. My wife. She and the kid's all I got. She can't be dead. You lie. You lie." His voice rose to a scream, and he struck impotently at the empty air. Again and again he shouted curses and maledictions, his arms thrashing about, until Timmins, the butler, followed by Uffington, rushed into the room, just in time to see him collapse a limp heap on the rug.

When they had gotten him to bed and a specialist was summoned, he came to again, and called for some one named "Anne"—begged her in querulous tones to come to him; and asked for his little baby girl, Doris.

The next day Sillery, Minor and Leeson learned that the mind that had controlled them would never again be able to manipulate the market. Rollins K. Hilman's cataclysm had come, and left him but a small fragment of that brilliant mentality which had been the terror of the world of finance.

While standing together and leaning over the rail of the *Celtic,* a well-built young fellow told a very beautiful girl how much he loved her; and nearby passengers of the fellow's sex envied him the right to say anything confidentially to so charming a girl.

The pair had every reason to be happy; for in front or them lay the fulfillment of achievement and the living of love.

The First Lord of the Laundry

By Caroline Lockhart

The painful account of the experiences of a scion of British nobility in a far Western town. How a man who believed in neither toiling nor spinning finally went to work for a living, only to find the reward he looked for withheld

VERDIGRIS, Wyoming, was glowing in the gorgeous Western sunset like a highly colored painting on a drop curtain when the Honorable Charles Calvert Hazelhurst, of London, England, stepped down from the single passenger coach in the combination train and handed his leather hatbox to the mayor. Dazed by the Englishman's action, the mayor carried a roll of plaid steamer rugs, another silk-hat box, a Gladstone bag and a few patent portable devices for traveling in cleanliness and comfort and placed them in the four horse stage before he recovered sufficiently to remember his dignity and his official position. He then put out his official hand to greet the newcomer, but the Englishman, misinterpreting the gesture, said, carelessly: "I'll see you around the hotel, my boy."

"Fifty cents," said Bill Johnson, the stage driver, as he unloaded the last of the bandboxes at the front door of the Verdigris House.

"Chalk it up, old man," replied the stranger, with a smile of such radiant sweetness that Bill stood dumb and unprotesting while Hazelhurst walked into the hotel accompanied by the landlord bearing his luggage.

Hazelhurst was soon settled in the bridal suite where vivid pink cupids flew over the wall and a cherub with ultramarine wings looked up at him from the bottom of the bath tub.

The ripple of excitement caused by the arrival of a newcomer became a tidal wave. Peek, the local editor, addressed him as "Dook," and in a conspicuous paragraph referred to the appearance of royalty "in our midst."

Hazelhurst was about thirty, over six feet in height and with a stately British dignity and realization of his own importance which, to the democratic Westerners, marked him as a man of distinction.

He dressed for his first ride in a pair of white corduroy riding breeches, puttees, tan shoes and small cap. He carried a riding crop, and rode an English pad saddle which he produced from his numerous boxes. A crowd gathered to watch him mount, and all felt repaid for their lost time when the top of the Honorable Charles Calvert Hazelhurst's head hit the small of his back.

"He gallops bloody high, doesn't he?" panted the Englishman, between jolts; a second later there was a fine outline of his form in the soft, white dust of the main street.

It was not long before a change took place in Hazelhurst's appearance. The small cap was replaced by a broad sombrero with a rattlesnake skin for a hat band. The shoemaker expended his mightiest efforts on a pair of high-heeled cowboy boots. The tailor made him clothes from his best corduroy, and considered it a privilege. Finally he owned the woolliest chaps and the biggest spurs in the Basin; a real cowboy looked like a mere horse wrangler beside him.

At the end of six months he had purchased, without money, one hundred and sixty acres of sagebrush and two

cayuses, which bucked him alternately. In fact, all that remained of the British subject was his accent, his dignity and his indifference to his debts. He kept the swinging door between the hotel office and the bar fanning the air; the barkeeper serving drinks with one hand and chalking them up with the other. His bill at the general merchandise store was a matter of intense envy to Canby, the town beat.

For a time his continued residence, though flattering, was a source of wonderment to the inhabitants; but gradually it dawned upon the community that a slight financial cloud had, perhaps, dimmed the Honorable Charles Hazelhurst's parliamentary career. In consequence, his society came to be much sought after by his creditors, and a stroll down the main street was punctuated by low-toned conversations with the proprietors in front of every shop —including the Iowa Notion Store.

At this crisis in his career, Eleanor Payne returned from a finishing school in Washington and became a storm center in her father's ranch house at the mouth of Sage Creek. The dust deepened in the trails which led to the T. U. Ranch, and old man Payne cursed bitterly as six saddle horses at a time helped themselves to his eighteen-dollar timothy. The number of saddle horses diminished, however, as it became evident that Hazelhurst was the man for whom she made fudge and nut cake.

Hazelhurst's political career appealed strongly to her imagination, as did his name, his accent, his high-bred manners and his kodak pictures of the ancestral home. In Washington she had heard much of international marriages and their possibilities.

There was something equally attractive to Hazelhurst in Eleanor Payne's piquant face, the Payne acres and herds and the alluring prospect of a continuation of his condition of ease and freedom.

"A land where every man is as good as his neighbor, no matter what his occupation, has a great fascination for me after a life of conventionalities and class distinction," Hazelhurst frequently observed.

The trail between Verdigris and the T. U. Ranch was daily ornamented by the stalwart figure of the Englishman bounding some six inches from his saddle; and he used his time to such purpose that affairs reached a point where it was proper to speak somewhat of his intentions to old man Payne. Old man Payne was repairing a corral gate at the time Hazelhurst approached him. At best, Eleanor's father was rather a difficult person; with a week's growth of red beard and a scowl on his face, he became something formidable to the urbane Englishman. He found himself growing short-breathed and experiencing an uncontrollable desire to fumble with something. Nevertheless, from habit he described his hopes and feelings in careful and elegant English; while his prospective father-in-law's cold blue eyes bored him like a couple of gimlets. An audible gasp marked his peroration. The old man's embarrassing gaze continued for a moment.

"What the devil you got to live on?"

The bluntness of the startling question threw Hazelhurst into a mental panic. Certainly, old man Payne was even more difficult than he had anticipated. Hazelhurst had taken it as a matter of course that Eleanor's father would consider that by the marriage he had not lost a daughter but gained a son; and as such Hazelhurst would reside under the paternal rooftree and share in the emoluments of the ranch. He stammered an answer, which, even in his embarrassment, sounded strange in his ears.

"I—I can work," he said.

"Git to work, then," old man Payne replied, shortly, and fell to hammering.

Hazelhurst rode back to town with his chin upon his breast. Work! What could he do? He pulled off his gauntlet and looked at his white, shapely hands. They had pulled a stroke at Oxford, and they could handle a cricket bat as well as the next one; but that was the nearest approach to work his hands had ever known.

The landlord met him at the door,

and a distinct coldness of manner added to Hazelhurst's depression.

"Gennelman waitin' for you," said the landlord, icily.

The gentleman was suspiciously close at hand. It was the laundryman.

"I've been chalkin' up Herford-front b'iled shirts and them rag-time collars of yourn for about six months now," began the laundryman, ominously.

"Is that all?" inquired Hazelhurst, as though surprised, but pleased that the time should have been so brief.

"That's enough. And if you don't settle I'm goin' to take it out of your hide!"

Hazelhurst gazed at him ruminatingly, filled with a vague wonder that a man of so savage and brutal a nature should voluntarily adopt so peaceful an occupation as that of a laundryman.

"What you goin' to do about it?" demanded the belligerent laundryman.

"What had I better do? I haven't a sou." Hazelhurst appealed to him as one gentleman to another. The laundryman felt the subtle flattery of it, and weakened, in spite of himself. He suddenly seemed to feel responsible for Hazelhurst's difficulties. Shouldering his troubles on others was a faculty Hazelhurst had; it was as valuable to him as ready money—indeed, its equivalent.

"How would you like to go into business?" inquired the tamed laundryman, after a moment's thoughtful silence.

The set smile disappeared from Hazelhurst's countenance, and a real one took its place.

"Like it!" His face was radiant. It was the solution of his problem.

"I'll sell out my laundry business to you."

The light faded from Hazelhurst's eyes. A vision of himself with bared arms bending over a tub arose before him.

"But I never did any mangling; not even my own. I don't know how." His tone was apologetic.

"It's easy learned." The laundryman's voice vibrated with encouragement. "Put 'em all in the washing machine and grind 'em up. When you iron, lay the polish on good and plenty, and there you are!"

The description of the process explained much in the appearance of Hazelhurst's laundry. As he looked at his collars he had often observed to the pink-winged cupids that the collars returned from their weekly absence with only a higher luster on the spots.

"There's a hundred per cent. a month in it," continued the laundryman, enthusiastically. Seeing the interrogation in Hazelhurst's eyes, he hastened to add: "I wouldn't quit it, only I've a hankerin' to go back to my old profeesh, which same is six-day walkin' matches. Summers I used to be a bouncer in a Coney Island music hall. The fascination of the life is callin' me, and I gotter go." The laundryman closed his eyes dreamily. Coming back with a start to harsh realities, he asked: "How much can you raise?"

"Two cayuses and thirty pounds."

"Thirty pounds of what?" inquired the laundryman, whose business was purely local.

"Money—English money—one hundred and fifty dollars."

"That would just about let me out even. The business is yours. Come down and I'll introduce you to the ladies. Good girls, good workers; treat 'em respectful and perlite, and they'll help you out in any little ranicaboo that may come up. Folks in this town is awful perticular about losin' buttons and gittin' their own clothes back."

Dazed by the suddenness of his transition from an English gentleman of leisure to a laundryman, Hazelhurst followed without a word.

The ladies of the washroom greeted him hilariously as "boss," and ordered him to turn a wringer. The odor of soapsuds affected him disagreeably: the steaming walls and slippery floor offended his eye; the only pleasant feature of this first introduction to his establishment was the sight of the former proprietor handing a small package over the counter and receiving three dollars and a quarter in return. There was a satisfaction, too, in the fact that he was

going to carry out his threat to work. Of course the laundry business was not one he would have selected had the choice been left to himself; he would have preferred the presidency of the local bank or the management of the new electric light plant. But one must not criticise the ways of Providence. It was lucky, he thought, that he was in a country where taking in washing would in nowise interfere with his social standing. Eleanor—and he glowed—Eleanor would be proud and pleased to learn of his business venture, that he was working for her, working like a real American.

Imbued with American enterprise, and filled with a growing enthusiasm, he inserted a card in the Verdigris *Gazoot,* the composition of which he left to his friend, Peek. Said the card:

WASHIE! WASHIE! WASHIE!
Send your Dirty Duds
TO
The Royal Windsor Laundry
under the management
of
Our Esteemed Fellow Townsman
Charlie Hazelhurst
(Formerly the Hon. Charles Calvert Hazelhurst.)
First Lord of the Laundry to His Royal Highness,
Eddie the Seven Times.
Terms Right
and
No Favorites Played.

Almost simultaneously with the appearance of the advertisement, bundles of laundry piled in on him to such an extent that he found it impossible to make his daily trip to the T. U. Ranch; in lieu of which visit he sent a note by messenger painting the glowing future.

By Monday morning it was fully demonstrated that the Royal Windsor Laundry was about to enter upon an era of unprecedented prosperity. Women who for years had done the laundry work of their large families brought heaping clothes baskets and laid them at Hazelhurst's feet. All of those whom he had patronized so liberally reciprocated in kind. The shoemaker's name was on his book, as well as those of the harnessmaker, the tailor, the proprietor of the Iowa Notion Store; all their bundles came as a mute tribute to the popularity of the new proprietor. Hazelhurst and the proud, high-spirited ladies of the laundry toiled far into the night. Hazelhurst's loathing for steam and the odor of suds was innate. But he stuck manfully to the wringer, and the aroma of his Turkish cigarette mingled with that of the tub as he ground the washing machine with unabated enthusiasm.

"I wish Eleanor could see me now," he soliloquized, as he inspected the water blisters on his soft palms with honest pride. "And I wish Eleanor's father could see me now," he added, as an afterthought. Ever before him was the vision of the man who paid three dollars and a quarter for a six-by-ten bundle. He was not good at figures, but even he could see that his retirement need be but a matter of a few months.

Eleanor preserved a strange silence; he had anticipated congratulations.

When Saturday, the day of reckoning, came, much of the color had left Hazelhurst's ruddy cheeks. He was drawn and hollow-eyed from spending the hours of the previous night in making out bills and counting profits.

The Royal Windsor Laundry did not deliver its work. The first customer to arrive was the harnessmaker, accompanied by his two sons and little daughter.

"Seven eighty-three," said Hazelhurst, smiling happily, experiencing for the first time in his life the sensation of presenting a bill instead of receiving one.

"Chalk it up, old man," replied the harnessmaker, as he glanced carelessly over the extended list. And before Hazelhurst could find words in which to express himself the harnessmaker and his family had departed, carrying between them two large clothes baskets. Disappointed as he was, Hazelhurst's sense of justice obliged him to admit that the harnessmaker had a perfect right to ask him to chalk it up, as the harnessmaker had chalked it up for Hazelhurst to the extent of eighty-five dollars and a fraction.

Next came the wife of the proprietor of the General Merchandise Store, with two strong men from the delivery department. This lady's laundry consisted of numerous flannel blankets, tablecloths and heavy bedspreads, apparently the accumulation of many months.

"Thirteen forty-two," said Hazelhurst, bowing.

"My husband said he would give you credit for the amount on your account at the store;" and, smiling sweetly, she motioned for the men to stagger homeward with the basket.

Hazelhurst gulped and gripped the counter. Of course it was all right; he could not but acknowledge that. Still, the justice of it did not obviate the fact that there was not enough money in the drawer to make change.

The dark, handsome, stylish gentleman from the Iowa Notion Store appeared in the doorway. He rattled the silver in his pocket as he came to the counter, and Hazelhurst brightened visibly.

"Two twenty-five!" He pulled the bill from a hook and laid it on the package.

"Let it run a while, my good man," replied the dark, handsome, stylish gentleman as he tucked the package under his arm and walked out.

An awful fear laid its icy clutch on Hazelhurst's heart. What if he were the victim of a creditors' conspiracy? Supposing every person to whom he owed money intended to take this method of canceling the debt! In other words, did they mean that he should "wash it out"? He opened his ledger with trembling hands. Yes, nearly every name on its pages represented a creditor, and every creditor was represented by a basket of laundry the mere recollection of which made his back ache. The scuffling of feet drowned the groan which broke from him. It was the blacksmith to whom he owed eight dollars for shoeing his broncos.

"Certainly, yes, I'll chalk it up, old man," said Hazelhurst, savagely, as he threw the package over the counter to its grimy owner. The blacksmith grinned and walked out.

There came the jangle of spurs on the sidewalk. Buck Bemis had called for his bi-yearly wash.

"Them forty-nine-fifty shirts of mine done?"

Hazelhurst produced a pile of double-breasted blue flannel shirts which had been ornamented with large pearl buttons before they went through the washing machine.

"Three dollars flat," said Hazelhurst. "Let it go on that little poker debt of mine, eh?" He had taken the words out of the cowpuncher's mouth.

By the time the last accursed package had left the shelves, the harnessmaker was back with a certain steely glitter in his eye which made Hazelhurst reach instinctively for the stove poker.

"My wife wants to know where them three red flannel petticoats trimmed with crocheted lace is?"

"Flannel, you say?" repeated Hazelhurst, sparring for time while he tried to drag from the recesses of his brain a recollection of three such garments.

"Flannel, I say," reiterated the harnessmaker.

"We were particular to mark everything."

"Perticular!" sneered the harnessmaker again. "You put my brand in red ink in the middle of every b'iled shirt I own."

"I'll look up the articles and let you know." Hazelhurst's tone was conciliatory.

"I'll hold you responsible," declared the harnessmaker, as he slammed the door behind him. It was burst open immediately by the wife of the proprietor of the General Merchandise Store.

"My combination didn't come back!" Her eyes were gleaming. "You've lost it!"

"Pardon me, madam?" His tone was an interrogation.

"That looks like it!" She pointed suspiciously to a mouse-colored half-inch which had slipped below the Honorable Charles Calvert Hazelhurst's coat sleeve.

Hazelhurst reddened.

"This is my own, madam."

The woman sniffed.

"I'll be back Monday morning to get it." She emphasized her words by tapping the counter with the long nail of her forefinger.

Speechless with resentment, Hazelhurst bowed.

The echo of her ponderous footsteps had scarcely died away when the quick clank of Bemis' spurs was heard again. His coat was buttoned tightly to his chin, and he had grown round-shouldered.

"What for a deal do you call this?" he demanded as he tore open his coat and exposed to Hazelhurst's startled gaze a considerable expanse of *décolleté*. "I put in man's size, and I gits back boy's size. I can't straighten up for splittin' somewheres."

"They must have shrunk a little," Hazelhurst admitted, feebly.

"Shrunk a little! Oh, mister! Why, I ain't wore a shirt this size sence I was nine years old. What did you cut the buttons off for?"

Hazelhurst remembered guiltily the handful of buttons he had scooped from the bottom of the washing machine.

"If the twin brothers of these here shirts of mine ain't waitin' for me Monday mornin', you and me'll have to settle this little dispute in the good old way." Bemis threw down a bundle and touched, with sickening significance, a bulge at the back of his coat where his holster grew.

Hazelhurst turned the key in the lock and, behind the counter, rested his tired head upon his palms.

The vital, Amazonic ladies of the laundry, after addressing him in language incompatible with their positions, had demanded their wages and struck. There was no more soap. The till was empty. If it were not for Eleanor he would chuck it all. His thoughts of Eleanor were interrupted by the bulging of the front door as a great weight was hurled against it. A voice bellowed for admittance. It was the voice of O'Herne, the barkeeper, whose temper was hung on a hair trigger. Hazelhurst laid the poker on the counter and opened the door. O'Herne stood for a moment, glaring like an angry bull.

"My shirt!" he gasped. "My pink-striped shirt that set me back two seventy-eight in Billings! Do you know whose onery carcass is decorated with my pink shirt, you royal Chink? Ed Burr," he went on, breathlessly, "jest out of the pesthouse, is wearin' of my pink shirt. At the present moment he's playin' the wheel in Ross' saloon, and he sent word if I wanted it to come and take it off'n him. Collectin' of my own laundry from the decayin' forms of skunks ain't my business; but if my pink shirt ain't back in the hotel, in good condition, by Monday morning, there'll be one 'washie-washie' less in this metrolopis."

The human cyclone departed as suddenly as he had come.

A savage rage took possession of Hazelhurst. All the day's soreness and pent-up resentment centered upon Ed Burr. At last he had found a person with whom he could legitimately quarrel. He did not owe Ed Burr a cent, and Burr had paid cash for some one else's clothes. He locked the laundry and went to his room for a gun. At the wheel in Ross' saloon he found Burr, inflated with success, putting his winnings on the red.

"You will pardon me, Mr. Burr, but I must request you to remove that shirt." The cold politeness of Hazelhurst's tone would have warned a more sensitive man.

"Git out'n here. Don't butt in when a gent's busy."

The light from the kerosene lamp flashed for a second on the short barrel of a thirty-two-caliber, and, simultaneous with the report, Ed Burr squealed and gripped the fleshy part of his arm. Hazelhurst fell upon him and bore him to the floor; then he ripped the shirt from his back and rushed into the night.

"Good heavens!" he panted, as he ran to the laundry. "I'm a dead man! I've ruined it! It's full of bullet holes and blood!" He lighted the lamp to view

the wreck. Undoubtedly it would have to be re-laundered, and the holes were conspicuous. Possibly they could be drawn together with sufficient neatness to save his life at least.

He threaded a darning needle with 60 thread, and soon the sputtering light of the kerosene lamp fell upon his noble head as he bent over his task. The result was better than he had hoped; well starched and ironed flat, the two darns would not so strongly resemble boils, he thought, and, perhaps, O'Herne would be appeased by his well-meant efforts. Elated by his success, he took the lamp and dug among the rubbish in the back yard for some of the saucer-like buttons from Bemis' shirt. They were not hard to find, and he smiled happily as he gathered up a panful and returned to his mending. He sewed a button wherever he thought it would do the most good, and Bemis' shirt was beginning to look like a charm string when the freighter from Payne's ranch rolled in the door boiling drunk.

"S'letter for you," said the freighter, as he fumbled in his pockets.

Hazelhurst's heart leaped when he recognized Eleanor's handwriting on the envelope, which, through much inspection, had become bordered with a row of thumb marks. The letter read:

MY DEAR MR. HAZELHURST: Having identified yourself so closely with the laundry business, I fear that as a result our hitherto pleasant relations must cease. Even in a democratic country one must think somewhat of one's social position. Wishing you the best of success in your enterprise, I remain, sincerely, ELEANOR PAYNE.

P. S.—What do you charge for tablecloths? E. P.

With a yowl of fury, the penetrating hideousness of which sobered the freighter, Hazelhurst hurled Bemis' shirt to the floor. Leaping into the air, he jumped upon it again and again till he ground the pearl buttons to powder; then he plucked the bosom from O'Herne's pink shirt, and, rushing to the door, cast it to the four winds of Wyoming.

STUDIES IN THE VERNACULAR

A REPORTER on a Chicago newspaper shamelessly acknowledges that while riding on a street car not long ago he amused himself by listening to a conversation between two young women whom he describes as "the girl with the fifty-cent earrings" and "the girl with the gold-plated bracelet on her arm." It was so interesting that he decided to reproduce it. This is it:

"Sayliz! Hajjer vacation yet?"

"Nope. Gettit week afnex. Hajjoors?"

"Bet! Haddagoodun, too."

"Where jugo?"

"Allaroun. Crosslake. Downtindinnapolis. Gonnaweek. Mettalotavold friends naddasplendtime. Sumpindoin' everyday. Sayliz, did jevvergo tindinnapolis?"

"Nope."

"Sallright few gottaloota friends there. Punk few hain't. Gotcher place picked out chet?"

"Y'bet! Imagoin' twaukshaw. Guessile gofum there t' the country."

"Wawfor?"

"Ojuscause. Gottabuncha Kidslong—Libbenjin nentom. Mawzez theyvall gottago."

"Stoobad! Sayliz, howja like Guspeter's noomus tash?"

"Punk. Fize him I'd shave."

"Sodi. Aingot no use frim anyway."

"Neithervi. Well, slong."

"Slong."

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 XIV.

BUSINESS.

UT the Prussian's surprise did not approximate consternation. He recognized us at once and lost nothing of his self-possession. To the contrary, he brought his teeth together with a satisfied snap and quietly moved a hand toward the revolver upon the table.

Sevrance dropped into a chair and crossed his knees nonchalantly. Without ostentation, but so suddenly that it seemed as if the work of magic, he caused a revolver to appear in his hand.

"Don't do that, Von Holzborn," he said, evenly.

The Prussian smiled insolently. Very deliberately he moved his fingers on to the match safe and selected a match, which he struck without much trouble and used to relight his huge, china-bowled pipe. Puffing soberly, he looked at us with an amused lifting of the brows, his black and opaque eyes shifting from Sevrance's face to mine, and back again. In time a little drift of smoke blurred his features; but his eyes shone through it like coals, steadfastly regarding us.

I followed my friend's example and selected a chair. Words did not immediately come to me. To be frank, I hardly knew what to say first. There were a number of matters clamoring for settlement and discussion, one as important as another. So I sat quiet, trying to readjust my conception of things to this new and astounding development.

Von Holzborn remained imperturbable, with the attitude of a man who finds silence as much to his taste as conversation with fellows beneath his social position. He concluded his scrutiny with a sigh, and thereafter took to staring with interest at the design of the canopy above the bed.

Presently Sevrance rose with a short laugh, stalked with dignity over to the table and pocketed the revolver, immediately putting his own weapon out of sight.

The Prussian turned his head slightly, saw what Sevrance had done, and nodded complacently.

"Thank you," he said, placidly. "That is something in the nature of a relief. I am a sick man, with nerves—for the first time in my life, I believe. It annoyed me to have that gun pointed at my head. I feel better now."

"Glad of it," returned Sevrance, coolly. "Anything else I can do for you?"

"Kindly see to the fire," suggested Von Holzborn. "It needs stirring up a bit. I am shivering. You'll find coals in the hod in the corner there."

Already the room was suffocatingly close, to my mind; but the fire had, beyond doubt, died down; a thin film of ash was forming over the embers. Sevrance obligingly poked it to a blaze,

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This story began in the June issue. The back numbers can be obtained through any newsdealer. Price, ten cents each.

and then smothered it with a dose of anthracite.

"Anything else?" he inquired, mildly.

"I should like a drink. You'll find a glass of whisky and water on the table there. Thanks!" He took a huge swallow of the mixture and smacked his lips with appreciation. "That fool Fritz," he complained, "has been gone a good three hours. What the devil do you think has happened to him? Here I've been alone, freezing, perishing of thirst, and Fritz nowhere in sight! I shall have to get rid of the idiot."

Sevrance glanced at me, smiling. "Jocular dog," he commented—"your friend, there—the German. Will have his little joke."

"That's unkind, gentlemen," protested the scoundrel. "Here am I, wounded nigh unto death——"

Sevrance abruptly sat down, heavily, upon the edge of the bed. Von Holzborn groaned, his eyes contracting. "Ah-h!" He grimaced. "My friend, you would oblige me by not jouncing about so unexpectedly. I've a hole in my shoulder you can stick your fist into, and it is painful."

"I apologize," said Sevrance. "I had forgotten the serious nature of your wound. Can I make amends in any way?"

Satisfied that the Prussian was not shamming—a suspicion to which I also was a party—he arose.

Von Holzborn, with closed eyes, shook his head. "Nothing," he said, faintly—or, rather, moaned. "One moment," he continued, "and I can talk with you. Ah!"

He opened his eyes again. Sevrance took a turn up and down the room, his hands clasped behind his back, frowning thoughtfully.

"Where are the ladies?" he asked, abruptly, stopping to look down into the Prussian's face.

"Gone," said Von Holzborn, calmly. "Gone where you will not follow and —interfere."

"In the *Myosotis?*" I asked.

He turned his heavily-lidded eyes upon me. "In the *Myosotis,*" he agreed.

"Where bound?" Sevrance demanded.

"I don't mind telling you," returned Von Holzborn, agreeably. "If you'll oblige me with that glass again." He took another long draught. "If either of you cares to join me, you'll find a bottle on the dressing table, I believe. No? Very well. Ah, yes"—noticing my movement of impatience—"you wish to know whither the yacht is bound?"

"I do," said I, sullenly, furious to have the fellow helpless, at my mercy, and yet be forced to endure his insolence because of his disability.

"St. Petersburg."

"Where?" I cried, jumping to my feet.

Von Holzborn repeated it, deliberately. "If you hurry, you'll be able to join Lady Herbert at the docks, I've no doubt."

"That, of course, is a lie," said I, resuming my seat.

"You should be able to judge," he insinuated.

"You mean by that——"

"That the man who asserted that he had not heard from Lady Herbert, and then proved that he lied by coming direct to Saltacres, is a judge of the handy art of fabrication—to put it mildly, *mon ami.*"

"And what," I asked, steadily, though mentally staggered by the directness—and the truth—of his indictment, "if I should declare to you that I got no word from Lady Herbert?"

He removed the pipe from his lips, and laughed briefly. "And yet—you are here."

"You, I believe," I continued, determined to beat him down, "took the trouble to perjure yourself, first of all. You informed me that you were bound for Portsmouth—all of you."

"And so we were."

"Permit me to suggest," Sevrance put in, "that there is room for doubt in your statement."

"How so?"

"We are willing to admit, to begin with, that Lady Herbert and Mrs. Morchester joined the *Myosotis* at Ports-

mouth, when the yacht was put into commission. But you, Captain von Holzborn, and Monsieur de Netze?"

The Prussian did not reply, but kept a steady gaze upon Sevrance. My friend had hit at random; it seemed that his chance shot was nonplussing to Von Holzborn.

"Where shall we say that you two joined the yacht?" Sevrance continued. "At Folkstone—eh?"

The wounded man frowned. "Tell me frankly," he said, abruptly, "how much you know."

"That's enough," Sevrance said, decidedly. "The point is that you lied. Under the circumstances we are not to be blamed for doubting your word, for coming here instead of attempting to find you at Portsmouth. Your very statement that you were going there was enough to make us suspicious. Be advised by me and——"

"What?" asked Von Holzborn, with interest, as Sevrance paused.

"Tell the truth—then none will believe you."

"*Hein!*" he laughed. "Well touched. Then"—turning upon me again—"you deny absolutely that you heard from Lady Herbert?"

I saw that he was not to be diverted. The issue was plain, and not to be evaded. Remembering Julia's warning, I was deaf to the voice of honesty. I looked him squarely in the eye and lied, I hope, like a gentleman:

"I deny it absolutely."

"Good. I believe you. Yet you were very sagacious—permit me to compliment you—so to track us down here."

I held silence. Sevrance took up the examination.

"Will you tell me what has taken her ladyship to St. Petersburg?"

"A due regard for the safety of Monsieur de Netze. Surely the events of the last week or so must have made it plain, even to you, that the man's life hangs on a thread here in England. He was confronted with the alternatives of leaving or assassination—and he chose wisely."

"Why did he abandon you, then?"

"At my desire."

"And her ladyship—your fiancée?"

"Ah, you weary me!" He smiled inscrutably into the cloud of pipe smoke. "Indeed, I am not anxious to tell all I know."

"And we," I pursued, "were locked up in order that you might be rid of us?"

"You have fathomed the mystery," he admitted, with irony.

"I wish," said Sevrance, softly, "that I could make you tell the truth, Von Holzborn!"

"You will find it difficult," he returned, candidly. "I don't repose confidence in my enemies. Now, if you will be kind enough to leave, at your convenience, I will try to get some rest. I am weary."

He put the pipe aside and turned his face to the wall. "At your convenience," he repeated. "And, by the way, if that fool, Fritz, turns up, tell him I want him—will you?"

Sevrance looked at me helplessly. "What can I do?" I read in his expression. I replied, similarly, dolefully: "Nothing." Neither of us made a move to go. For some moments there was a degree of silence in the room. Von Holzborn breathed heavily and regularly, apparently oblivious and indifferent to our presence.

In the end Sevrance spoke.

"Curse you!" he cried, his tone trembling with the passion of the exasperated. "Can I do nothing? God, I've a mind to throttle you!"

"You cannot threaten a dying man with death," the Prussian remarked, without moving.

"When will her ladyship return?" I asked.

He made no answer.

"Will you not answer?"

He did not, at all events.

I clinched my fists, in the extremity of my wrath. It was unendurable, thus to be defied by him, who lay at my mercy. But what could I do?

Sevrance abruptly caught my eye and nodded brightly. I saw that he had evolved a scheme.

"Von Holzborn," he began, gently.

"Well?"

"What do you want of us?"

"Eh? What? I want of *you?*" He laughed scornfully.

"Precisely," continued Sevrance, apparently sure of himself. "I can inform you that you have not deceived me. This business has been arranged for the express purpose of hoodwinking us. You were expecting us when you heard us enter—and pretended not to notice. You expected us when you left the outer door unlocked. In a word, you are playing a part—and for a purpose concerning us. You arranged this talk to further your ends. Come, now, let us have it."

The Prussian rolled his head over upon the pillow and stared at Sevrance for a full minute, unwinking. In the end he made a slight affirmative motion—scarcely could it be called a nod.

"You are an intelligent man," he conceded, amiably. "I had not looked for so much penetration. Very well, I confess; you are correct in your surmise."

"Very well, let us have no more beating about the bush."

"You will regard this as confidential?"

"Absolutely," said Sevrance; and I parroted the word.

"I am forced to put you upon your honor. Grave issues are involved."

"That is understood—and we are waiting."

"So, then!" He took a deep breath, appearing to collect his thoughts. "You see me here, gentlemen, incapacitated for action. De Netze, as you understand, is a marked man; he can do nothing in England. There remains a work to be put through, and that quickly. In a word, we need help. I am asking yours."

"On what grounds?" I asked.

"It shall be a community of interests. We will not haggle over the issues, but be straightforward. Frankly, Mr. Traill, you wish to marry Lady Herbert?"

Somewhat abashed, I murmured an affirmative.

"And I," continued Von Holzborn—"I will make no bones about it. The matter, so far as affects me, is that of a brilliant and successful marriage. Her ladyship is rich—very. I am a poor Prussian captain. I need money; her ladyship has it. We agree to marry. Well!"

"You scoundrel!" I broke out, furiously.

"Indeed, Mr. Traill! Then you reject my overtures?" I was doggedly silent. "Or do you wish to debate the ethics of the case? *Hein?* Have I not put it plainly before you?"

"Get on with your proposition," I growled.

"Then don't interrupt," he retorted, sharply. "To proceed: A certain work is to be accomplished in the interests of the Russian Government. I will inform you that I am associated with De Netze by order of his imperial majesty, the kaiser; I am ordered to render all discreet assistance. You comprehend? In short, I have pledged myself to carry the business through. It must be done. It means much money, honors, ultimate advancement, to me. Deeply as I am now involved, I cannot withdraw my hand; the scheme must be accomplished—successfully, of course.

"So! I make the proposition. In my inability to get about, you will take my place. You are, comparatively, free from suspicion. You can do that which I could not. You push the matter to a successful end—I reap the reward and resign my claim to her ladyship's hand. Do you comprehend?"

"Plainly," I muttered. "We play the rôle of the cat's-paw."

"Not to put too fine a point upon it, you do." He waited a moment, searching our faces with his unreadable gaze. "You gain your end—I gain one and relinquish one of mine. Are we agreed?"

"Not so fast," Sevrance demurred. "Let us consider all sides of the case, Traill."

"By all means," consented the Prussian.

"In the first place, what is the nature of this 'business'?"

He smiled. "That I cannot reveal until we have come to a complete understanding. Give me your word that you will do all things in your power, and under my direction, to carry it to a successful issue—and to-night, at eight o'clock, I will take you completely in my confidence."

"Why the delay?" I asked, curiously.

"That I may signal the *Myosotis,* now standing off the coast, waiting for information. If I signal 'All's well,' the yacht proceeds upon its course, keeping away from danger. If otherwise—if you refuse, I am forced to threaten you—Lady Herbert will return at an agreed time and again become involved in dangers and perils far more desperate than those with which you have already been made acquainted."

"And you permit that—you, who would marry her!" I cried.

"I have no choice. I must use whatever tools come to my hand, without regard to sentiment."

"Tell me one thing, then," I pleaded. "What is the nature of your power over her? What makes her bend to your will—now? God knows the woman hates you."

"And I know it, too," he returned, without a flicker of his eyelash. "But I would be a great fool to show you my trump card, gentlemen."

The truth of that observation was so plain that I could not argue against it. I bowed my head, struggling to suppress the flame of my smoldering resentment.

"For your own comfort, however," he continued, in honeyed tones, "I will confess one thing to you. Lady Herbert to-day gives not one fond thought to your humble servant. I might make a shrewd guess as to the man so fortunate as to bask in the light of her favor—but I refrain. On the other hand, I would not be cruel."

Something beneath the sound of his words puzzled me. I did not quite understand, and watched him keenly while he fumbled beneath his pillow. Presently, in his own good time, he brought forth an envelope.

"Here is a note addressed to Mr. Gordon Traill," he drawled, irritatingly. "It is sealed—and yet I might suggest the identity of its fair author, if I would."

He gave it a twist of his fingers, sneering contemptuously, and the note skimmed across the floor, falling at my feet. I had it in my fingers in an instant, trembling with an uncontrollable agitation; for at the first glance I had recognized the handwriting of my Heart's Desire.

It was sealed, as he had said. I broke the wax impatiently and drew forth the single sheet of faintly fragrant paper it contained.

Undated, it read, four square pages hurriedly penned:

Gordon, if you would aid me—and I believe you desire to do so; I could not write this did I not hold firm to that belief—please, ah, please do not misconstrue my actions. Through no will of my own I am forced to leave you and return to the *Myosotis.* I cannot help it. *It must be.* What will happen next I cannot foresee, but oh, Gordon, may God have us in His keeping!

Captain von Holzborn tells me that he will make you a certain proposition. I cannot advise you to trust the man, for none can appreciate his faithlessness better than I; yet in this instance I believe he will keep faith.

If, then, you can see your way to an acceptance, bearing in mind the reward he offers, the penalty he exacts, I would say to you, "Accept!"—were I but sure that it was fair and right to you.

I am—I cannot find words to say with what burden of sorrow and anxiety,

JULIA.

I pondered long over this, sensible to the unmistakable genuineness of its appeal, as honest and straightforward as her own dear heart.

So far as I was concerned, the matter stood already settled. I must consent to undertake whatever task Von Holzborn might set to my hand. The man had laid siege to me cunningly enough, withholding his heaviest ammunition until the final assault. Despite her expressed doubts, Julia had left me no course to pursue save to accept, and dare whatever dangers such acceptance might entail.

At length I looked up, to find Sev-

rance waiting with a show of impatience. Silently I handed him the note. He read it through without a sign, and then, returning it, asked, openly:

"It is her own hand? You are sure?"

"Certain," I affirmed.

"Inspired, do you think?" he pursued, with a sideways nod toward the Prussian.

"I think not," I said.

It appeared that he had come to the same conclusion as myself, then; he faced Von Holzborn.

"I, for one, accept," he announced, stiffly.

The Prussian looked to me.

"And I," I chimed in.

"Ah-h!" he sighed, tremendously, sinking back weakly upon his pillow. In the strain of the argument, in the excitement of pitting our wits against his, we had forgotten his enfeebled condition, had disregarded entirely the fact that the man was actually not strong enough to converse at such length.

But now, with the triumphant consummation of his desires, he practically keeled over, played out, lying as limp as a rag, as motionless as a stone.

Sevrance solicitously hurried to his side. The Prussian, half conscious, whispered for the whisky and water, which Sevrance handed him and helped him to drink, supporting his huge torso with a gentle arm about the shoulders.

Von Holzborn lay back, sighing again profoundly.

"Now go," he said, in a tone so thin and strained that it sounded, by contrast, like a child's piping treble. "Go," he whispered, "and let me rest. You'll find Fritz at the foot of the stairs. Send him. Come back around eight——"

Sevrance and I hurried from the room. As the door closed, Sevrance paused to light his candle. The flame, gaining strength, brought out his strong, clear features in high relief against the background of darkness, velvety and impenetrable.

His eyes, meeting mine, were filled with a profound wonder.

"I am damned!" he confessed, blankly.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SCHEME.

At the bottom of the stairs a dark shadow rose suddenly out of the obscurity, saluting and standing mutely at attention. Sevrance paused.

"Fritz?" he asked.

"Yes, *mein Herr.*"

"Your master wants you."

"Yes, *mein Herr.*"

His hand swung stiffly to his forehead again, his face showing set and expressionless as the candlelight fell upon it in passing. He began a methodical ascent of the staircase, heavy feet thumping on each step, and so, silently, passed on and up. The banging of the door left us in silence.

" 'Like master, like man,' " I quoted.

"A surly beast!" Sevrance delivered his forcible opinion. "I like him no better than his employer. Queer business! One wonders what the outcome will be."

"I won't tell," I snapped, irritably.

We stepped out into the night—for it was quite night by then—six in the evening. Only an angry crimson rift between the cloud banks in the west showed above the ragged horizon; and that was swiftly fading to a dull and dirty red. We made our way mainly by instinct to the lodge, through a darkness quite impenetrable.

Grady was still sleeping. Thompson served us with an ample supper, to which we did impartial justice, afterward adjourning to the outer air to top the meal with a couple of cigars.

The air was cold and still. A heavy frost was settling upon the countryside. No wind stirred, and the quiet was intense; in it distant sounds attained a delusive magnitude. The barking of a dog miles away came to us with wonderful distinctness; while a slender, steady, purring noise led us to believe that it was caused by the evening train from Lincoln, drawing near Saltsea Regis.

We walked in silence, up and down on the driveway near the lodge, within the gates, each deep in meditation, the gravel crunching briskly beneath our

feet. After a long interval, Sevrance drew my attention to a light moving within the Hall.

"He spoke of a signal," said my friend. "Perhaps——"

There was no need to add anything to that. Upon the word we set off toward the house. The light—evidently that of a hand lantern—was visible through the windows of the lower floor. It moved hither and thither, and in the end abruptly approached the door, which closed gently. Then there was the sound of feet upon the piazza, ending in a thud as a man leaped lightly to the ground.

We followed the light, which made off at a swinging pace toward the avenue of trees that led to the sea. Down this it turned, the two of us dogging it closely, satisfied that the man who carried it was none other than Fritz, the valet.

If he heard us following, he did not pause to investigate. Very likely Von Holzborn had warned him that we would be on the lookout; we made no attempt to walk silently, but Fritz kept on swiftly until he had reached the landing.

Here, however, he stopped, and began to busy himself mysteriously, placing the lantern on the ground at some distance inland. Sevrance and I walked boldly to his side, but he paid us no attention.

I failed to understand precisely what he was about, but it was soon made clear. After he had arranged everything to his satisfaction, the man produced a box of fusees, struck one, shielding it with his hollowed palms against the slight airs that breathed in from the sea, and touched the light to something which he had placed on the rail of the stairway, at the same time stepping quickly back.

A broad, red flame leaped high in the air, accompanied by a roaring sound, brightly illuminating the little space about us, making the radiance from the lighthouse seem pale and puny in comparison. Sevrance and I started back, a little surprised, and half blinded. Fritz stolidly turned aside and ignited two other flares, placed at distances of twenty feet, one from another, along the top of the cliff. When all were blazing full they formed a rough triangle.

Fritz shaded his eyes against the glare and stood gazing steadily out to sea. The lights flamed high, sizzling loudly, vacillated, and finally died. For some minutes there were both silence and darkness about us, quite unrelieved—a darkness rendered the more impressive by the sudden subsidence of the flares; and a silence heightened by the tension of waiting.

The answer presently came—three brilliant rockets, soaring in flaming arcs, far out to sea. Fritz grunted satisfaction and lit another flare, this time of blue light. When it had disappeared, two more rockets darted toward the zenith.

Without noticing us, the man turned sharply about and made for Saltacres Hall. From this concluding that the pyrotechnics were over for the evening, we followed in his footsteps, gradually permitting the lantern to gain upon us. When he was out of earshot Sevrance spoke.

"Our future ally, Von Holzborn," he mused aloud, "has a decided genius for organization. He sees far ahead, and makes his plans accordingly—with a most infernal ingenuity. I confess I'd like to know just what those signals spelled out to De Netze and the others on the yacht."

"We'll have to take them on their face value," I said, "for what the Prussian says they mean."

"Of course. But I mistrust him, Gordon, I mistrust him!"

"And I no less than you," I told him, stoutly. "Notwithstanding that fact, I have put my hand to the plow, and I'm not going to turn back."

"We're agreed there," he pledged himself, with a hearty handclap on my shoulder. "Whither thou goest," he laughed, "there go I. We'll see this thing through to the finish."

Von Holzborn was ready for us when we knocked. Fritz opened instantly, waved us respectfully into the further

apartment, and unostentatiously sidled out.

His master was reclining, as before, in the bed, propped up by a number of pillows. He had grown much more pale during the interval, and seeming to be suffering severely from his wound. But he made no complaint, and with a frank brutality rejected our—I admit—somewhat forced and stilted expressions of sympathy.

"We'll waive all that and consider it said," he suggested, pleasantly. "This is a business matter, pure and simple. We will transact it without frills. I am aware that you would gladly see the last of me—just as gladly as I will of you, when we've come to the end of the passage. Frankly, I despise you both heartily, even as you despise me, and the sooner we are agreed and parted, the happier for all concerned."

"We'll subscribe to those sentiments unreservedly," I told him, without resentment. "And now?"

"And now into the breach, dear friends. You'll find cigars on the dresser. Settle yourselves. This is likely to be a long conference—longer than I might wish. Still, needs must when the devil drives. You concur?" He grinned maliciously.

"We concur," stated Sevrance, solemnly.

He took a chair in the shadow, and I followed his example. Von Holzborn puffed at his china pipe and appeared to cogitate deeply.

"You've no intention of backing out?" he asked, bluntly.

"Not in the least. You state the case," I said, "and we will do our part."

"Word of honor, you understand?"

"You are dealing with gentlemen," asserted Sevrance. "Let it pass at that."

"Well and good. We understand one another thoroughly." He laughed as though immensely pleased with himself. "Well, honor among thieves," he murmured, philosophically. "You're ready for anything, I suppose?"

"Highway robbery and arson, by preference," said Sevrance, falling in with his humor. "But we shan't balk at homicide, kidnaping or barratry—upon one condition."

"You pledged yourselves unconditionally," said Von Holzborn, quickly.

"Then we retract and pledge ourselves anew, conditionally."

"Well, what is it, then?" growled the scoundrel.

"It is understood that nothing which you may ask us to do will react upon England—that the project will involve her in no foreign difficulties."

"Make your minds easy on that score. You will be obliged to violate the laws of neutrality and shatter a few clauses of the Decalogue, perhaps, but no more."

"Fire away, then."

Von Holzborn settled himself comfortably, pulled once or twice at the pipe, and scowled into the smoke.

"The Russian Government," he said, "has purchased through our friend, De Netze, a yacht—a small vessel built for speed; and convertible."

"A torpedo boat?" Sevrance inferred, sharply.

"It might be used as a torpedo boat, should occasion arise," Von Holzborn conceded. "In fact, I am able to inform you that a number of torpedoes form part of the cargo of the vessel; and it is provided with the regulation number of tubes—masked. In short, should the vessel get out of English waters, she could be transformed into a lively little torpedo boat at a moment's notice."

"I see."

"Naturally, you undoubtedly appreciate that it would be a violation of the law of nations for England to permit such a craft to be transferred to the Russian agents. For that reason, the negotiations have been conducted with the utmost regard for secrecy. Nevertheless, the agents of the Russian Revolutionary Party have got wind of the affair. What the vessel is, where concealed—they suspect. But they know nothing positively; they have not enough to go upon to warrant their lodging information with the authorities. You follow me?"

"Perfectly."

"They have even managed to discov-

er—by what means we cannot tell—that De Netze was the ostensible purchaser. For that reason they have dogged his steps persistently, attempted to assassinate him, or to capture him alive—in order that they might secure the papers and other necessary information in the case. It would have been madness for him to have attempted to get the vessel out of England. For that purpose my services were demanded. Unfortunately, as you understand, I have become too closely identified with the affair—and you see the result."

He smiled grimly, continuing:

"It will, therefore, be your part to secure the services of a competent crew—particularly of an engineer and a navigator—men upon whom you can rely to take their pay and keep their lips tight—and to steal the vessel and run it to Libau, where you will deliver it to the Russian authorities."

He made the statement quietly, with no emphasis, with nothing to indicate that he considered the proposition anything out of the ordinary. As for me, it fairly took my breath away—the audacity of the conception, the magnitude of the task. For Sevrance, however, it plainly offered alluring possibilities. I saw him flush with excitement, and his eyes shone with the light of his enthusiasm.

Yet, "Is that all?" he questioned, as though disappointed.

"That is all. You will have plenty of difficulties to encounter and to overcome, with a multitude of dangers which cannot be overestimated. If caught in the act, you'll spend some valuable time in an English prison; if you permit yourselves to be overhauled by a British war-ship, a cruiser or a destroyer of the Channel Squadron, you will probably be blown out of the water. You will, in short, run the gantlet from Barmouth to Libau on the Baltic—and if you get through unscathed, I shall be surprised."

"Or disappointed?" I put in.

"Both," he said, shortly. "There, in a nutshell, is the situation you have to face, gentlemen. Were you other than you are—were you Prussians, French or Spanish—anything but Anglo-Saxon—I would not fear for your success. As it is, you are degenerate specimens of a race whose daring has paled with the years. The blood of Drake and Wellington runs thin and lukewarm in the veins of you English these days."

"Upon my word," said Sevrance, "you discourage me at the start. What you say is, I fear, alas! too true. We are a mean people, we Anglo-Saxons, money grubbers, and affrighted by our own shadows in the moonlight. Beside the haughty and arrogant courage of the German race, our spirit fades into total insignificance. A sad and lamentable state of affairs, and one that I blush to think on! But the truth will out, mine captain—even from your lips."

"Aha!" cried Von Holzborn, as if abruptly interested.

Sevrance had been standing very straight. He glowered down upon the wounded man, the fire of resentment burning in his eyes, his countenance more than ordinarily pale, his lips a firm and wrathful line. I saw him clinch his fists tightly, under the taunts of the Prussian, and I knew that every fiber of his being was a-quiver with indignation. But, very quickly, his anger cooled, he resumed his accustomed ease of pose.

"It is unfortunate," he said, "that you are forced to trust to such weaklings, Von Holzborn. But needs must when the devil drives, I know. Be assured that your plans will be carried *almost* as well as they would were you in a condition to superintend them."

"I am counting on that," said the man. "And now for details."

He lay quiet for a space, smiling faintly. I have no doubt he complimented himself inwardly upon the diplomacy which he had used in handling us, the adroitness with which he had managed to set stirring every emotion in our two natures which would be calculated to make us throw discretion to the winds and plunge headlong and heedlessly into the conspiracy.

And, indeed, credit is due the man for that same quickness of wit and arti-

fice. He had succeeded splendidly, according to his desires. Neither Sevrance nor myself would have withdrawn at that stage of the affair for any consideration imaginable.

"And now for details," he resumed. "The yacht lies at anchor at Barmouth, already thoroughly equipped, ready in every respect to undertake a long sea voyage—coal in her bunkers, ballast and cargo in her hold. Every detail of her fitting out has been looked to with a careful eye. You will want for nothing of your complement—save men. Those you must engage at your discretion—that alone is your affair.

"The shipyard wherein she rests is that of Rogers & Greer—you will note the name. Greer is the man with whom you must deal. You will go to his office, give him the countersign with which I shall acquaint you presently, show him the bill of sale and other papers I shall hand you, and inform him of the day and hour when you will be ready to steal the *Clymene*—that is the present name of the yacht. Greer will have all ready for you when the time comes. You——"

"Why do you say 'steal'?" I asked. "If it is sold and ready for delivery——"

"You forget that the law prohibits the sale of war vessels to foreign nations which happen to be at war at the time of sale. To protect the owners, the builders, Rogers & Greer, it will be essential that the yacht be taken from them with a show of force. The matter must be reported and commented upon as a robbery. It will take place at midnight, by preference. You, with your crew, will break into the yards, overpower the watchmen—who will be paid for permitting themselves to be overpowered without serious resistance—and make way with the vessel before the authorities get wind of the affair. Do you comprehend fully?

"Now as to funds. You will need money. In the inside pocket of the coat hanging on the back of that chair, you will find notes—Bank of England—to the amount of two thousand pounds. This will serve for all preliminary expenses, such as the engaging of the crew. Everything else is already paid and provided for. You will also find a wallet, containing the papers I have mentioned."

Sevrance rose and investigated the indicated coat pocket, offering the contents to Von Holzborn, who waved them gently back.

"Keep them," he said; "they are now yours. The countersign which I have mentioned is one word, 'Cronstadt'—you will find it an all-sufficient introduction. If, during your stay in Barmouth, or at any other time before the date of sail, you are approached by a man with that word, you will understand that he is one of our agents. To make quite sure, ask him the time of day. If he replies 'Midnight', you will be able to repose every confidence in him, to rely upon him for every aid within his power to give you. That, I think, is about all—the rest is in your hands. When shall you be able to make the passage, do you calculate?"

Von Holzborn seemed to address me; I looked to Sevrance. The latter knitted his brows thoughtfully. After a moment or two——

"Within one week from to-day," he announced, with decision.

"That will be fast work," the Prussian commented.

"It will be done by then—or not at all," Sevrance promised, with more confidence, I confess, than I found warrant for.

Sevrance handed me the wallet, himself retaining the bank notes. "It is as well to keep these separate," he said. "To provide against accidents."

"One question," I interposed, seeing that Von Holzborn considered the matter settled. "As to the final outcome—if we succeed——"

"Well?" asked the Prussian, impatiently.

"As to Lady Herbert and the *Myosotis?* It is our agreement that you surrender all rights to her ladyship's hand, release her from her engagement. What assurance have you——"

"You will find all information on

such points in the paper in the wallet," he said. "For your personal satisfaction, I may inform you that it is arranged that the *Myosotis,* with Monsieur de Netze and Lady Herbert on board, will stand off the mouth of the bar from midnight to dawn of every day during the coming fortnight.

"You will announce the success of the attempt by means of a single rocket, to be sent up at a point two miles off shore. The *Myosotis* will respond with two rockets, whereupon you will show a red flare on the port bow. The *Myosostis* will then join the *Clymene* and convoy her to Libau. With your glasses and the signal code you will have no difficulty in assuring yourselves that Lady Herbert is aboard. If such is not the case—you are masters of the situation. You have but to turn around and give up the project—in which case I am a ruined and disgraced man."

"That seems satisfactory," Sevrance advanced tentatively, looking to me.

"It will have to be," said Von Holzborn, without visible emotion.

I nodded briefly. "Very well," I said. "And you?" I added, questioning the Prussian.

"I? Oh, I shall be safe enough in hiding here. I shall get well at my convenience. This cursed wound is like to keep me abed for weeks, but Fritz is a good and faithful nurse; and you will find us here on your return—if I live. You will comprehend that I would not be seen abroad in deference to my health—with consideration also to the activity of the Secret Chapter. As for a return to London, that is out of the question," he added, frankly, "until I get money."

"That is all, then," said Sevrance. "We start to-night. Good-night."

"Good-night and—good luck to you—as far as Libau, gentlemen."

But, when we were about to leave the room, he called us back.

"One final word," he said, weakly. "If you must go to London, keep away from your lodgings and your clubs. Be seen by day as little as possible. That is good advice, my friends. Good-night. Oh, by the way, send Fritz. God, I'm afraid I've overdone it——"

Abruptly his voice died, and as we looked the man fainted.

Ten minutes later we had roused Grady and were en route for the Rainbow at Saltsea Regis.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MERCENARIES.

Toward evening of a gray and chilly, blustery day—if I remember rightly, it was the fifth following the sealing of our compact with Von Holzborn: the twenty-sixth of January—a fly drew up before the Pig and Whistle tavern, which stands on the Flodden Road, perhaps a mile out of Barmouth; and I was set down, shivering with the cold and permeated to the very marrow of my bones with anxiety.

For five days I had received no word from either Sevrance or Grady, nor had I the inkling of any notion as to the condition of our affairs.

For five days, in fact, I had been as busy as you please, dodging hither and thither across the map of England, killing time and endeavoring to shake off a possible pursuit.

Twice I had passed through London, whither Sevrance had journeyed direct from Saltsea Regis with the avowed intention of burying his identity under a *nom de guerre* at a third-rate hotel in the meaner districts of the East End—a habitation from which he would be enabled easily to get into touch with the class of men whom he desired to engage as the crew of the *Clymene.*

On neither occasion, however, had I been guilty of the imprudence of attempting to communicate with Sevrance. Detection in such an attempt would be like to prove fatal to one or the other, or both of us, as we were well aware. As a matter of fact, I had chosen to dash through London by night on one occasion, for the sole purpose of losing my trail in the crowd—to perpetrate a bad pun. I fancied that I had reason to believe myself, in the cant of the detective novel, "shad-

owed"; whether or not with cause I shall probably never know; and it suited me to change cabs several times in the course of a progress from one railway terminal to another. The ruse, I may add, was seemingly successful; I saw no more of the suspicious-looking personage whom I had mentally catalogued as my "shadow."

Otherwise my itinerary, as schemed out by Sevrance and myself, in our rooms at the Rainbow before our parting, had been of a sort calculated to throw off pursuit, if such a thing existed other than in our apprehensions—a contingency which we regarded as remote, and still one which we thought best to provide against to the best of our abilities.

It all depended upon the activities of the famous "Secret Chapter." Whether or not its head intelligence looked upon the two of us as allies of De Netze and Von Holzborn was a question which we were naturally unable to answer.

If such was really the case, and if—as we were disposed to doubt—spies had noted our departure from Saltacres and, on the following day, from the Rainbow inn, we were acting wisely in keeping our eyes open and our revolvers loaded. We had seen enough of the methods of the Russian Revolutionary Junta to realize that the taint of such suspicion upon our fair names was as good as a seal upon our death warrants.

In the meantime, Grady had left us at Lincoln, instructed to return to Saltsea Regis, rendering his presence there as unostentatious as feasible. From the Rainbow he was to keep in touch with developments at Saltacres. He was to maintain a sharp lookout for the *Myosotis,* primarily; secondarily he was to take a keen interest in the doings of Fritz—in which duty his vigilance was to be supplemented by that of Thompson, who had been suborned to our interests.

Provided with an abstract of my route, as well as with Sevrance's London address, he was to telegraph us of any important news: if the yacht turned up and communications, either by word of mouth or by signal lights, passed between it and Von Holzborn; if Fritz strayed far from the Hall, or held converse with strangers; if Von Holzborn himself mended of his wound with too great alacrity.

It would be idle to insist that either Sevrance or myself was inclined to trust the German out of our sight; and that, notwithstanding our firm belief that, for the nonce at least, he was dealing honestly with us, being driven by fear of the "Secret Chapter" to advantage himself of our assistance.

We were, in point of fact, quite assured that he would play fair, but only so long as it served his purpose. And during our absence fresh developments might transpire, tending to create unlooked-for phases of the situation, which might induce him to turn against us—which he would undoubtedly do, and without compunction—at the first available opportunity.

You are not to gather from all this, however, that Von Holzborn had been kept in ignorance of Grady's surveillance. On the contrary, Sevrance gave him to understand, per note transmitted by Grady's own hand, that the man was left at Saltsea to be a medium of further communication, should occasion for that arise; to inform Von Holzborn, for instance, of the precise date set for the night of our attempt.

But now I was arrived at the final stop: the Pig and Whistle had been designated by Sevrance, who, by good chance, knew the Barmouth neighborhood thoroughly, as the fittest place for a rendezvous. I was to await word from him there. And you may well believe that I was avid for news.

The tavern stood in a desolate spot, removed some considerable distance from the main-traveled road; a house little frequented in the winter months. Low hills crowded about it, and a little stream crossed the highway some distance from the house. From the carriage block no other dwelling could be discovered; this I found much to my satisfaction.

My inspection of the surroundings, however, was not unnecessarily prolonged. A keen wind was blowing in-

land from the sea, seeking out the tender spots in my carcass without mercy, even through the protecting folds of a heavy overcoat. Overhead a sullen sky, of a leaden color, arched; and out of it came, at regularly lessening intervals, little flurries of hard and icy snow, with which the frozen earth was liberally powdered.

So I paid the driver of the fly, finding my money with numbed fingers, surrendered my suit case to an attentive hostler, and skipped indoors without undue delay, bending my head to pass beneath a low door lintel.

Within, to the contrary, there was warmth and a respectable air of cheerful cleanliness. The tap room, which I first entered, was low-ceiled and gloomy, getting but little light from its mullioned windows, with their tiny panes of clouded glass, heavily leaded. But it was scrupulously tidy, and bright with a roaring wood fire that blazed in a huge, old-fashioned chimney corner. You may believe that I backed up to that beaming warmth without any hesitation at all. A barmaid bobbed a welcome from behind her counter and disappeared in search of the landlord, who presently appeared, seemingly more than delighted at the prospect of a paying guest.

"I shall want a room," I told him, feeling as though I had stepped back into the eighteenth century and rather regretful that I had no riding cloak with heavy cape, no top boots and spurs, no sugarloaf hat with a cockade, to fit in the picture.

"You'll be stayihg, sir?" the landlord piped, rubbing his hands.

"A day or so—perhaps longer," I admitted, loftily. "I am expecting a friend. It is possible that he is here now? A Mr. Anthony?"

"Not yet arrived, sir. Tom, carry the gentleman's luggage to the front parlor suite. You are cold, Mr.—now, what would the name be?"

"Gordon," said I, giving the pseudonym agreed upon with Sevrance. "There might be a letter waiting? No? Very well; I'll wait here till you warm my rooms."

"Very good, sir; yes, sir. Mary, take Mr. Gordon's order." The landlord bowed himself away.

I ordered a warm drink from the barmaid and stuck to my position by the fireplace. She served me, drew a mug of ale for a solitary guest who sat at another table, and vanished.

I sipped my drink slowly, gradually warming up, and furtively eyed the other guest. At first glance, however, I absolved him of all suspicion of being a Nihilist agent. No Irishman could be accused of that, thought I; and no man ever looked the Irishman bred in the bone more than this.

He was a tall, burly fellow, with the broadest pair of shoulders I have ever seen on human being; thin-flanked, with long and supple legs; his chest rounded out, full and deep as a barrel. For the rest he had a red-tanned face, set with two smallish blue and twinkling eyes; a head covered with close-cropped hair of a brilliant brick color; and he was royally full. Lolling over his table, he returned my scrutiny, glance for glance, with cheerful impudence.

" 'Tis the divvle an' all av a bitther da-ay," he advanced, seeming unprejudiced by what he saw of me.

I was surprised at the clearness of his diction; barring the burr of his brogue, he spoke steadily and distinctly, with intelligence. For all that, he was full as any tick.

"It is cold," I admitted, briefly.

He lurched in his chair and smiled benignly.

"Gordon, did I catch your name correct, sir?" he pursued, looking me in the eye.

"You did."

"Faith, an' what d'ye think av thot? Shure, now, d'ye know ye look the very spit an' image av a fri'nd av mine?"

"Yes?"

He drank deep, and put down his mug with a clatter. "Th' laast th' daay," he said; " 'tis business we'll be thransactin' from now on. Ye do"—with conviction. "His name w'u'd be Grady? W'u'd ye be knowin' him, sor?"

I pricked up my ears and buried my

nose in my glass. This sounded promising. Putting down the glass—"What Grady?" I asked. "There are two or three in the world."

"Thrue for ye," he acquiesced, with a chuckle. "But this felly I mane is a Grady from Cronstadt!"

"Cronstadt?" I repeated, thoughtfully.

"Where else? D'ye find annythin' strange in thot, now?" he put it to me with owlish gravity.

"Nothing," I said, smiling in spite of myself. I appeared to search for my watch without success. "Do you happen to know the time?" I inquired.

He produced a huge silver turnip of a timepiece and read the dial with a look of surpassing wisdom.

"'Tis midnight!" said he.

Footsteps sounded in the hallway beyond the tap room, and the landlord appearing, announcing that my rooms were ready, I arose and turned to follow him.

"If you have the time to spare, sir," I said, clearly, "I should like to have a talk with you upstairs, at your convenience. It's a long time since I heard from Grady."

The fellow winked tipsily, and I left him. But not five minutes later his knock resounded on the panels of my door. I opened, and he entered with a lurch.

"Misther Gordon," he said, severely.

"You're drunk," I stated. "How's that?"

"My natural state, beggin' yer honor's pardon," he replied. "Shure, 'tis only me legs that arre intoxicated, sor. Me head is as clear as ever it was."

"You're from Sevrance?"

"Th' same. Me name is Callahan, sor. I'm engaged to be th' ingineer. There's no betther in the business, if 'tis meself thot says it. 'Tis a letther I have for your honor, sor."

He fumbled in the lining of his hat and produced a soiled and crumpled envelope.

It was, indeed, from Sevrance.

DEAR GORDON (I read): The bearer, who will be drunk, is one Callahan, a highly efficient engineer. He will tell you, and with truth, that his legs are the only portions of himself that lose their bearings. Drunk or sober, we could get no man better suited to our uses. Grady recommended him.

I have a brief note from Grady, stating that all is quiet. Fritz signaled once, night of the 23d instant, but got no answer. I think we can go ahead. For my own part, I am getting together a crew of choice and selected scoundrels. Upon my word, I verily believe that we could steal the vessel altogether and lead a life of piratical pleasure on the Spanish Main, with them at our back.

You will see Greer to-morrow and inform him that the business is scheduled for midnight of the 28th. Have all things prepared, and don't look for me until the last instant. A.

P. S.—I will wire Grady, morning of the 27th, to inform V. H. some evening and watch for signals; then to join you at earliest possible moment.

I dropped the note and envelope into the fire, and turned again to Callahan.

"And what are your instructions?"

"I am to kape shober," he recited, as by rote, "an' take yer honor's ordhers."

"Well, you better start right in, then. How long will it take you to sleep this off?"

"Two hours," he announced, after considerable mental computation. "Not a minute more."

"Very well. Go to the landlord and tell him to give you a room, at my expense. Come back when you've slept it out."

"Ver' good, sor."

He saluted with intense solemnity, wheeled abruptly, almost dashed out his brains in attempting to open the door, and left. I heard him take the stairs to the lower floor in two leaps and a crash, and a moment later his voice rose in pacific remonstrance with the landlord, whom he earnestly assured that he always came downstairs that way.

Later he stumbled up past my door again, guided by our host, and was left to himself in a room on the top floor. I dismissed him from my mind, nor counted upon seeing his face again before morning; to the contrary, he kept his word about waking to a minute; in two hours precisely he was back, quiet, reserved, a little damp as to his hair, but dignified; a capable and in-

telligent man, whom one would never suspect of his weakness.

I was up early the following morning, and by ten had driven into Barmouth, going directly, neither courting nor evading observation, to the shipyards of Rogers & Greer, which were situate on the outskirts of the old town, occupying a large plot of land which ran down to the river.

A high board fence shut off the yards from the eyes of the curious, but from the other side came sounds of busy hammers and saws, creaking cranes and clanking steel. The locust-like whirr of the steam-driven rivet hammer was prominent in the uproar. One judged that Messrs. Rogers & Greer did a thriving business.

On the threshold of a dingy and dusty office building a clerk took my name and retired to inform Greer. I stated my ostensible errand as a desire to inspect, perhaps to purchase, a small sloop yacht. This gained my prompt attention. Within a very few minutes I was admitted to the inner office of the owners.

Greer, a withered little man with shifty eyes and a generally shabby appearance, glanced me up and down without great cordiality. He consented, however, to giving me a seat by his private desk, and at once launched upon a general description of a certain vessel corresponding to my specifications.

To be frank, his language, a compound of shipbuilding terminology and sea phrases, was so much Greek to my understanding. I listened patiently, interjecting now and again an intelligent "yes," with my eye's corner on Rogers, who conversed with another client at a desk too near at hand for my comfort.

Eventually, however, his customer rose to go, and Rogers accompanied him to the door. I improved that instant, which happened to coincide with a momentary cessation in Greer's flow of loquacity, to inform the gentleman that I was from Cronstadt, Russia.

He bowed his head between his hands, eying me closely through his fingers. His lips moved, uttering words barely audible.

"Repeat that?" he whispered.

"Cronstadt."

"At what hour did you sail?"

"Midnight, precisely."

The door closed, and Rogers turned in to his desk. Greer swung about in his chair and said, in a voice palpably tremulous with fear:

"Er—Mr. Rogers—I am in consultation with a customer from abroad."

The senior partner glanced at me as though my very appearance was a terrifying thing to him; and, without a word, turned and scurried out, snatching his hat from a convenient hook. Greer grinned amiably, somewhat reassured.

"Mr. Rogers is a very nervous man—nervous and conservative," he intimated. "I am obliged to undertake the transaction of all business out of the common run. You will have something to show me?"

I produced Von Holzborn's wallet, and handed him the specified papers. He glanced them over with a keen eye, satisfying himself, evidently, of their authenticity. Then, returning them with a little bow——

"When is it to be?" he asked.

"To-morrow night, at midnight. You will have everything arranged?"

"Quite. You may rest assured of that."

"The *Clymene* is ready to sail?"

"At a moment's notice. Nothing has been neglected, down to the least detail. Come; I will show you."

He led me out through a rear door into the shipyards, conducting me along what seemed to me a perilous path hedged about with innumerable dangers in the shape of swinging cranes, flying aërial tramways, falling timber and madly scurrying men; and through a clamorous din, quite indescribable.

After some minutes of this we halted in the lee of an enormous vessel in process of construction on the ways. Here the din was so tremendous that I had some difficulty in catching Greer's words; and was proportionately satisfied that we could not be overheard.

Standing there, on a gentle slope of bare ground, at the end of which the

river flowed, he pointed quietly to a little vessel that swung at anchor some distance out.

"The *Clymene*," he said, briefly.

I will premise here that I am a landsman. What nautical terminology I possess is the result of my association with that ardent yachtsman, Anthony Sevrance. Personally I have no taste for the sea, and have gone down to it in ships just as infrequently as was convenient. My conception of happiness does not now, and never did, demand the ownership of a private yacht; nor have I ever seized, with any degree of avidity, upon an invitation to a cruise.

You are, therefore, to credit my present determination to form a part of the crew of the *Clymene* to the desire to serve, to the best of my poor ability, my Heart's Desire. There was no other reason. Lacking the incentive of my passion, I assure you, nothing in the wide and wonderful world would have induced me to have undertaken that trip.

And you are also to make allowances for whatever blunders I may make in my description. But I purpose to steer, for the main part, in the safe waters of quotation marks, repeating, as nearly as I can call them to mind, the words of others, when it becomes necessary to plunge into the technicalities of nautical matters.

In this instance, I observed merely a very long, slate-colored craft, with what I am impressed is termed a narrow beam. To all outward appearance it resembled almost any one of the dozens of private yachts which I had seen, time and again, in the anchorage off the foot of East Twenty-sixth Street—at home.

I remarked, my interest naturally spurring me to a close examination of the ship, that she carried two tall and slender spars, scantily stayed; that is to say, there seemed to be less rigging about her than might have been expected.

Amidships—mark well the salty word!—rose two low, gray funnels, slanted smartly toward the stern. I thought them somewhat large and heavy looking, for the size of the craft. Between them a brace of ventilators showed their red throats.

Forward, about a quarter of the yacht's length from the bows, there rose a flimsy and unsubstantial-looking bridge. From there on to the stem the deck seemed to be hooded—bowed—resembling a section of a whaleback boat.

Lifeboats swung from the davits on either side. On the land side—starboard, I should say—a passenger gangway was rigged out, its lower grating some few inches above the surface of the water.

The boat seemed to set low in the water; that appearance, together with her extreme length, brought to my mind the breath-taking phraseology of the books of my boyhood days: "a long, low, black, rakish-looking craft!" I fancied that I discerned in her an exquisite delicacy of line, which I imagined betokened considerable speed.

Altogether, I considered her as pretty a boat to look upon as one could wish. Almost she removed my prejudice against the sea.

But perhaps you will gain more from Greer's description than from mine.

"Two hundred and twenty feet from stem to stern," he told me, in answer to a query. "Beam, twenty-one, six inches. Mean draft, six feet. Displacement, two hundred and ninety tons. Speed——"

"Yes?" I encouraged him, as he paused.

"Something a bit over thirty knots on her trial trip," he said. "She should do better than that. Sir, I can tell you that her engines are unexcelled. She's driven by twin-screw, vertical, triple-expansion engines of six thousand horse power——"

"Don't!" I pleaded, helplessly, thereby, I fear, shocking the man grievously. "I don't understand in the least. My interest will be satiated if you will give me some idea of how we are to get off to her. Must we swim?"

"To the contrary," he said, "you'll find a number of boats moored some distance upstream."

We turned away, retracing our steps.

"As to the manner of our taking forcible possession," I said, with a smile.

He failed to respond; it was evident that he considered the affair one of desperate moment, and purposed to consider it with all due seriousness.

"You'll bring hammers along and break the locks on the main gates," said he; adding: "I'll see that old and worn-out locks are used. The watchmen will be mostly intoxicated, I imagine. Those who retain their sobriety, sir, you will bind and gag without unnecessary violence. I trust that you will make as little noise as possible. Mr. Rogers and myself will be absent from the city for a few days, beginning tomorrow morning; and no one will know just what to do. I fancy that, if no alarm is raised by your raid"—the man never even winked—"no complaint will reach the authorities until the evening of the twenty-ninth."

He halted by a little side gate.

"That," he said, "is all, I believe. I trust sincerely that you will meet with no mishap, that your voyage may be a pleasant and successful one. Good-day to you, sir—and if ever I put my hand into such a mess as this again," he said, solemnly, "I pray it may drop off!"

I left him standing there at the gate, watching me off with serious, troubled eyes; a shabby, little, old, methodical, gray-headed sinner of a shipbuilder, breaking the laws of his country and risking his personal freedom in order to turn a dishonest penny—and quaking to the very soul of him when he contemplated the gross enormity of his sin.

My drive back to the Pig and Whistle—for that matter, the entire day and night—passed totally without incident.

Callahan I found sober, upon my return. I permitted him a couple of mugs of ale in the seclusion of my rooms, and he produced a coal-black dudeen, which he puffed contentedly the while he regaled me with a series of astonishing lies concerning his adventures. I drew him out as well as I could on the matter in hand, and found that he knew practically nothing of it.

Whither bound and to what purpose he did not know. It seemed sufficient unto his curiosity that he was to be paid extravagantly well for a short cruise. The identity of his employers and the quality of his shipmates were matters of relative insignificance; only he desired most profanely that his assistant might prove a man who knew engines.

Night passed, the dawn came, and the forenoon slipped away, without a word from Sevrance, or a sign. The middle of the afternoon found me in a fever of worry and impatience.

TO BE CONTINUED.

A PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE

A CERTAIN country minister was the owner of a swift and spirited horse. On one occasion, while he was driving through the village, he overtook the local physician on foot.

"Jump in, doctor," he said, pulling up. "I've got a horse here that goes pretty well."

The doctor jumped in and the parson drove off. The horse did go well, in the sense of speed, but in a little while it began to behave badly, and ended by tipping over the carriage and spilling out both the occupants. The doctor jumped to his feet and felt himself all over to see if he was injured. The parson also got to his feet.

"Look here," exclaimed the doctor, "what do you mean by inviting me to ride behind a horse like that?"

"Well, you see," gasped the parson, "luckily this time there are no bones broken, but I always like to have a doctor with me when I drive that animal."

BELOW THE DEAD LINE

By Scott Campbell

[NOTE.—When Inspector Byrnes commanded the New York Police Force he found it necessary to issue an order calling for the instant arrest of every crook found day or night in that part of the metropolis lying south of Fulton Street. This stringent order quickly gained for the district the title "Below the Dead Line," at least in police circles. As the lower part of the city contains Wall and Broad Streets and Maiden Lane, where the great diamond houses are located, various efforts were made by the "under world" to evade the order. For several years a number of crooks, headed by an unknown but extremely clever criminal, succeeded in operating in the district despite the police, and it is to chronicle their doings and their ultimate capture that Mr. Scott Campbell has written this interesting series of stories.—THE EDITOR.]

XXII.—THE CASE OF THE CASHMERE TRACERY

(*A Complete Story*)

ROBBERY — that's the trouble, sir! We've been done—buncoed—served as scurvy a trick as ever honest men got up against. We've been robbed of twelve thousand dollars' worth of assorted gems—diamonds, rubies and sapphires. That's the trouble, Mr. Felix Boyd, and it's trouble enough, Heaven knows!"

Boyd did not quite fancy the air and attitude of the speaker. Though flushed with resentful dismay over the extraordinary theft, this man, Cashmere, seemed to be talking as much for effect as for any profit to be derived from his indignant utterances. Before Felix Boyd could make any reply, however, he was quietly drawn aside by the Central Office man, who growled, under his breath:

"Cashmere's right, Felix! This business floors me, old man, I'm blessed if it doesn't. I hate to think that yonder girl is guilty. She neither looks nor acts like a crook, yet the circumstances —deuce take them!—are all against her. It appears dead open and shut that she must have turned the trick. See what you can make of the case, will you? Akerman's as groggy over it as I am. I hope you'll not resent my calling you up here."

"Not at all, Jimmie," murmured Boyd. "Quite the contrary. I'll do what I can for you."

It was no unusual move on the part of Coleman, thus appealing to Felix Boyd at a time when baffled by conflicting circumstances; and a telephone had brought Boyd upon the scene before any decisive steps had been taken. It was out of his customary field below the dead line, and in one of the vast department stores on upper Broadway, that of Stanwood & Bragg.

A high partition divided the main office from the body of the store, and it was at the door of this office, immediately after entering, that Boyd was addressed as above. While he listened his keen gray eyes noted the general features of the place, as well as the external characteristics of the several persons present.

One was the junior partner, Mr. Bragg, a nervous little man with a disposition just the opposite of his name,

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and who habitually sank into semi-obscurity in the presence of his partner, or even that of the head buyer for the house, Mr. John Cashmere, whose imposing figure was conspicuous in the group, and whose blatant declarations had impressed Boyd quite unfavorably.

Talking in excited undertones with Bragg was an elderly man, whom Boyd recognized as Cashier Randall, of the Glendon Bank and Deposit Company, and both men appeared seriously agitated.

Seated somewhat aside was the girl to whom Coleman had referred, and whose pale, attractive face and tearful eyes, now and then turned affrightedly upon the burly figures of Detective Akerman and a brother officer from police headquarters, impressed Boyd in no uncertain way. She also was trembling visibly, obviously more with fear than with any consciousness of guilt; and a subtle and sullen fire began to glow deep down in Boyd's grave eyes the moment he observed her.

Yet with scarce a glance at the girl he turned deliberately to Cashmere, the man who had addressed him, and who awaited only this opportunity to add to his forcible remarks. He was a large, dark-featured man of fifty, by the way, and a bachelor and well-known man about town. Yet only those closest to him knew that his habits were none of the best. For years he had been identified with the business affairs of Stanwood & Bragg, holding various positions of importance and authority, in which he had won, with his habitual arrogance and austerity, the general dislike of a small army of subordinates.

"Trouble enough—yes, Mr. Boyd," he reiterated, frowning doubtfully over the latter's whispered talk with Coleman. "The sooner you get at it, too, the better, since your friend of the Central Office waits for your opinion of the case. It strikes me it's plain enough, however, and, luckily, we have the thief in custody. It rests with you to force her to tell the truth and restore the stolen goods."

Boyd heard him without a change of countenance, despite that the remarks were more or less offensive. Apparently with no interest in the girl indicated, whose tearful attempt to protest against the blunt accusation was quietly checked by a gesture from Coleman, Boyd blandly rejoined, with a rather quizzical stare at Cashmere:

"I make it a point never to leap in the dark, sir. It's a bad move always. Perhaps, if Mr. Bragg will inform me of the facts bearing upon this robbery, I shall fall into your way of thinking, Mr. Cashmere."

The covert rebuke sent a resentful flush to Cashmere's dark face, but before he could reply, Mr. Bragg came hurriedly forward, crying nervously:

"You inform him, John. You're better able than I am. In fact, Mr. Boyd, I'm so dreadfully upset by this loss during my partner's absence, that I hardly know whether I'm on my head or my heels."

"Mr. Stanwood is away?" queried Boyd, with brows uplifting.

"Yes, yes, exactly. He left for Chicago yesterday afternoon."

"And this robbery—when was it committed?"

"You tell him, John. Give Mr. Boyd all of the facts. I'm really too agitated to do so intelligently."

Boyd suppressed a smile and reverted to Cashmere, who had locked his thumbs into the armholes of his vest and assumed an air of injured importance.

"The facts may be briefly stated, Boyd," he curtly growled. "We are in the habit of keeping our reserve stock of precious stones in the vault of the Glendon Bank, our own safes being less reliable. The stock in our jewelry department having run low, we decided to replenish it, and yesterday afternoon Stanwood signed an order on the bank to deliver the package of gems to the bearer of the order."

"How long before he left for Chicago, Mr. Cashmere?" inquired Boyd, with his inscrutable eyes steadily meeting those of the head buyer.

"It was about the last thing he did," replied Cashmere, wondering why he should have been interrupted for so in-

significant a question. "Mr. Bragg was out at the time, so Stanwood gave the order to me, asking me to call at the bank to-day to get the gems. I went there less than an hour ago, while on my way back from lunch, and was fairly knocked off my pins when told that an order already had been presented by a young woman, and the package of stones delivered to her."

"Humph!" ejaculated Boyd. "The order was a forgery?"

"Certainly. What else could it be?"

"Was it a duplicate of the genuine?"

"Exactly."

"Who saw the young woman at the bank and delivered the gems?"

"Mr. Randall, the assistant cashier——"

"Ah! this gentleman?"

"Precisely. And he identifies yonder girl——"

"Stop a bit!" Boyd curtly interrupted. "I don't care whom he identifies."

"But——"

"You let me get at this in my own way," said Boyd, with brows knitting. "Is the forged order here?"

"Yes, certainly," said Cashmere, impatiently. "I had Randall come here at once, and bring the forgery with him."

"Quite right, too," nodded Boyd. "I understand that you had the genuine order, however."

"Yes, of course."

"Who had charge of it during the night?"

"I placed it in our office safe yesterday afternoon, and this morning Mr. Bragg called my attention to it. I told him I would take it and get the gems when I went to lunch. It was half-past one when I called for them, and learned of the robbery."

"At what time were they delivered to the woman who presented the forged order?"

"About one o'clock, Mr. Randall states."

Somewhat to the surprise of his observers, and the eyes of all were upon him, Mr. Felix Boyd drew even closer to Cashmere and dropped his voice to a confidential whisper.

"Quietly," said he, with an odd glance at his hearer. "Who is the girl and what is her position here? Does Randall identify her as the one who presented the forgery and received the parcel of gems?"

"Exactly," whispered Cashmere, readily taking the cue given him. "Her name is Mary Hart and she is Stanwood's private secretary. There is no reasonable doubt of her guilt. Randall is dead sure of her identity. After hearing the instructions Stanwood gave me yesterday afternoon, the girl must have printed a duplicate order and forged the firm's signature. Randall is positive that she is the girl who presented it and received the goods."

"Did she typewrite the genuine order?"

"Yes, and Stanwood signed it."

"What does she say for herself?"

"She denies that she went to the bank, yet she cannot prove it. She explains that by saying she did not feel well this morning, so did not go to lunch as usual, but passed her noon hour in a walk uptown. Hence she cannot establish an alibi."

"Humph! that certainly looks suspicious," muttered Boyd, frowning ominously.

"Decidedly so," declared Cashmere, obviously appeased by Boyd's confidential attitude. "Her story is flimsy on the face of it. The case seems absurdly plain."

"So it does, Mr. Cashmere, yet it will bear looking into. With your permission I will have a word with Randall. Do I understand, sir"—and Boyd wheeled with startling abruptness toward the man mentioned—"that you charge this girl with the crime committed?"

Randall hastened to come forward, trembling nervously and crying:

"No, no; not exactly. You misunderstand. I only gave Mr. Cashmere a description of the girl who presented the forgery, and he at once applied it to Miss Hart."

"Oh, that was the way of it!"

"I believed he was right, however, for she frequently has called at our

bank on like business, and I thought I recognized her to-day."

"Thought you did!" exclaimed Boyd. "Why do you say that, sir? Didn't you see her plainly—as plainly as now?"

"Well, no; hardly," faltered Randall. "She did not lift her veil, and I did not see any occasion to require it. I recalled the hat and plaid raincoat she wore, in which I formerly had seen her, and the forgery was so absolutely perfect that I did not dream of anything wrong. So I delivered the package of gems without question."

"Though you did not see Miss Hart's face?"

"Only through her brown veil."

"Not plainly?"

"Not plainly, I will admit."

"Yet the figure and garments of the thief were like those of yonder girl, were they?"

"Precisely. Otherwise I should have felt some misgivings."

Boyd now swung round to look at the weeping girl. She was clad in street attire, having been arrested immediately after her return to the store. She wore an oddly checked raincoat, reaching to the edge of the skirts, and a neatly trimmed felt hat, over which was tied the brown veil mentioned.

"I understand, Miss Hart, that you deny having been to the bank to-day," said Boyd, shortly.

"Yes, sir," the girl protested, through her sobs. "I am entirely innocent of this dreadful crime. I could not have committed it——"

"Well, well, that's all you need say at present," interrupted Boyd. "Cease your weeping, for that will do no good. Where is the forged order, Mr. Bragg?"

"I have it," said Coleman. "We want it for evidence."

"Let's have a look at it, Jimmie," cried Boyd. "Also the original—who has that?"

"I still have it, Mr. Boyd," said Cashmere, hastening to produce it.

Boyd accepted it with a nod, and for several moments silently studied the typewritten orders and the penned signatures subjoined, which comprised the entire firm name written in the fine flowing hand of the senior partner.

"You printed one of these orders for Mr. Stanwood?" he presently asked, again reverting to the girl.

"Yes, sir; and he signed it."

"What of the other?"

"I know nothing about that one, sir."

"Where is the typewriter on which you printed the genuine order?"

"In Mr. Stanwood's private office, where I do most of my work."

"Show me the way, my girl. I want to look at it."

As Miss Hart arose to comply, hastening to one of three adjoining rooms, Boyd turned and said, dryly, to his observers, all of whom appeared about to accompany him:

"You remain here, gentlemen, if you please. I want a few words alone with this girl and—well, let that suffice. I'll return presently."

The remarks were made with an air not to be disregarded, and as the door of the private office closed upon the two, Cashmere observed, impatiently:

"All this is tomfoolery, Mr. Bragg. We waste our time. The case is as plain as a pauper's grave. What do you say, Coleman?"

The Central Office man smiled a bit oddly and shrugged his broad shoulders.

"I'm too wise a gazabo, Cashmere, to say much about a case on which Mr. Felix Boyd is at work," he dryly answered. "He has a way of making one's opinion look so deucedly yellow that only a fool would be in a rush to express it. If there's anything about here worth seeing, you may let Boyd alone to see it."

The private office which Boyd had entered was that of the senior partner. Adjoining it were those of Mr. Bragg and Mr. Cashmere, the three being accessible from one to the other without passing through the main office. The windows of all three opened upon a rear court, but Boyd first glanced sharply at an open typewriter in one corner, which Miss Hart had hastened to approach.

"So that's the machine, is it?" he said, brusquely. "Sit down, my girl, and go to printing. Look lively, too!"

"But—but what shall I print?" faltered the girl, staring amazedly at him through her tears.

"Anything you like—the alphabet will do!" cried Boyd, impatiently. "Keep printing till I tell you to stop. Look sharp, I say, and don't stop till I command it."

With his last forcibly whispered words was mingled the rapid click-clack of the typewriter, easily heard by the men in the main office, and upon which they naturally would infer that Boyd's interest then was directed—precisely as Boyd shrewdly designed.

The moment the girl's back was turned, however, he darted to the nearest window. His face had grown hard as flint, his eyes intensely bitter. His every move was made with the quietude and rapidity of one anxious to secretly accomplish something in the least possible time.

At the window he again compared the two orders, placing one over the other, and so holding them that the light struck through both signatures, enabling him to detect their absolute likeness. Not by so much as a hair was there any dissimilarity.

Next he glanced again at Miss Hart, still hammering as if for dear life on the typewriter, and then he darted quickly into the adjoining office. It was that of Mr. Bragg, with Cashmere's directly beyond, the doors between the three standing open.

Both rooms were handsomely furnished, and both were then deserted. The afternoon sun fell obliquely across the broad windows, the panes of which evidently had been very recently washed. Yet upon one in the further office were faint, oily indications that a man's hands, possibly those of the store janitor, had since rested upon the glass. Boyd quickly observed this, then went even so far as to whip out his handkerchief and wipe the defaced pane.

"On the inside!" he grimly muttered, with a glance at the buildings across the court. "No windows opposite, no eyes to have seen—humph! the way is open!"

The clicking of the typewriter had not ceased for a moment, and Boyd now darted quickly back and rejoined Miss Hart.

"That will do, my girl," he said, curtly. "Give me the printed sheet. At what hour did you leave here yesterday?"

"Five o'clock, sir," she replied, with awed eyes, vainly seeking in his some encouraging sign.

Yet Felix Boyd appeared oblivious to her distress, demanding, hurriedly:

"Had Mr. Bragg gone home?"

"Yes, sir."

"And Mr. Cashmere?"

"I think he still was in his private office."

"Stanwood had left for Chicago?"

"Two hours before."

"That's all—stay! where did you get this plaid raincoat?"

"Here in the store, sir. I bought it only a week ago."

"Do you wear it daily?"

"I have done so since——"

"That's enough," interrupted Boyd.

He turned toward the door, only to suddenly swing back and grasp the distressed girl by either arm, muttering forcibly, with his intense eyes searching the depths of hers:

"Can you hide your relief, my girl, if I say a word to comfort you?"

She grasped at his offer as a drowning man grasps at a straw.

"Indeed I can—and will!" she hurriedly cried. "Oh, sir, if——"

"Hush! I shall send you away with the officers. Go with them in tears—make sure of that! Yet, whatever I say and do, have no fear. You shall sleep in your own bed to-night—not at the Tombs."

"Oh, Mr. Boyd——"

"Not a word. Be patient till I come to release you—both patient and silent!"

Then he put the agitated girl aside and opened the office door. Coleman at once strode forward to meet him.

"There's nothing to it, Jimmie," he cried, frowning darkly. "This sheet

plainly shows that both orders were printed on yonder machine."

"And this girl——" began Coleman, staring disappointedly.

"Take her away, Jimmie," Boyd curtly interrupted. "Possibly the sight of a stone cell and a barred door will make her confess the truth. Stop a moment —you'll want this forgery! The devil take it, I'm blessed if I now can tell which is the genuine."

"I can do so, Mr. Boyd," Cashmere hastened to interpose. "It's the one folded lengthwise. I noticed that when I put it in the safe last night."

"Are you quite sure?" queried Boyd, hesitating.

"Certainly I am. I have had entire charge of it——"

"That's quite enough, Mr. Cashmere, since you're so positive," smiled Boyd, with a nod of approval. "Here you are, Jimmie, and you may as well retain both orders, since both may be required to convict this girl. If I can get anything out of her, Cashmere, I'll telephone the facts to you or to Mr. Bragg. Sorry to have been able to do no more for you, gentlemen, but I think we yet may force the girl to confess. It's beastly business for one of her years."

Weeping bitterly, the girl already had been led away, and Mr. Felix Boyd now hastened to overtake the departing officers.

II.

"Lie low, Jimmie! Quietly, old man! Yonder comes our quarry, unless I'm much mistaken."

With the muttered warning, Mr. Felix Boyd crouched lower in the damp shrubbery, drawing the Central Office man with him, and both fell to watching the approaching figure, for a moment plainly revealed by the light of a street lamp which she had passed.

It was dark enough in the silent suburban grounds where the two men long had been waiting and watching. Not a star relieved the ebon gloom of the heavens, and the stillness was broken only by the fitful wind through the neighboring trees. The place was Fordham, approaching nine o'clock, more than six hours after the arrest of Mary Hart in the office of Stanwood & Bragg.

Even if informed of the observations and doings of Felix Boyd at that time, but few persons could have discerned the occasion for his subsequent movements. Only a keen analyst, one thoroughly familiar with every phase of crime, and with all of the methods and devices employed by professional crooks, could so quickly have detected a necessity for this night visit to Fordham.

Here in a dwelling half hidden amid elms and beeches, Mr. John Cashmere, though still a bachelor, kept house with an elderly maiden aunt, passing as many of his nights at home as offered nothing worthy his remaining in town. It was an antiquated wooden house, with broad verandas and ill-kept grounds, through which a narrow gravel walk made in from the secluded street.

Only the front hall and one room back of the parlor were lighted, as Boyd already had discovered through a side French window with interior blinds, which opened upon one of the verandas. He knew, too, that Cashmere was at home and his aunt absent, for he had seen the one arrive earlier in the evening, and the other depart a half hour before.

In reply to Boyd's caution, Coleman presently muttered:

"You're right, Felix. She's entering the gate."

"I expected as much, Jimmie. Let Cashmere alone to want the stuff in his hands without needless delay. I've not lost sight of him since we arrested the Hart girl, so I know he cannot yet have received the plunder. Hence it was safe enough to expect his confederate out here to-night."

"We might as well nab her out here, Felix, before she enters the house."

"Not quite as well, Jimmie. There's a bare possibility that she has not brought the goods with her. We must land the gems or our job will be but half done."

"That's true," admitted Coleman,

grimly. "How are we to make sure? Can you see anything through that French window?"

"No, Jimmie, nor hear anything. The interior blinds are closed. I tried that before Cashmere sent his aunt from the house. I can easily discover, however, whether or not the girl has brought the goods with her."

"How so?"

"By calling openly on Cashmere," explained Boyd. "If he hustles the girl out of sight before admitting me, which would be entirely needless under ordinary circumstances, it will be safe to assume that she has delivered the goods."

"By Jove, that's not so bad!"

"We'll wait a few moments after she enters, that he may not fear I have discovered anything, and possibly shadowed her out here. Ah, she has decided to come in. No more, Jimmie, till she's under cover."

For several moments the girl they were watching had paused doubtfully at the front gate. Now she was hastening up the gravel walk, however, and presently the light from the hall door fell upon her form and features. She was a flashily dressed young woman, with a dash of rouge in her cheeks, and possessed of enough beauty of face and figure to have hit the fancy of the man who quickly answered her ring and admitted her to the house.

"Are you alone here, Jack? Is everything all right?" she nervously whispered, as she stepped into the hall.

"Right enough, and I was alone until you came, Stella," said Cashmere, closing the door. "You're a half hour late."

"Couldn't help it," tersely answered the girl, now indulging in a coarse laugh. "You ought to be pleased that I'm here at all, instead of gracing a private apartment at the Tombs. All right, eh? Then it's Long Branch or Atlantic City for me, Jack, the coming summer."

"Not if the court knows itself," Cashmere roughly growled, as he led her into the lighted library. "You'll remain right here in New York, the same as usual, Miss Harper, and don't you make any mistake about that. We've been too friendly, mind you, for me to invite suspicion by letting you turn spendthrift too soon after this job. If anything, you'll carry less sail than usual, until after the muss has blown over."

"Faugh! I hadn't thought of that danger, Jack," she laughed again, with a toss of her head. "I reckon 'twill be a bit wiser to go slow for a spell. I'm not looking for bangles any more eagerly than you are. How did things go at the store?"

"Soft enough, Stella, as far as I could see."

"Then we've turned the trick all right, and there's the stuff to show for it."

She had opened her waist while speaking, from which she drew a small cloth parcel, carefully tied and sealed, and complacently tossed it upon the library table.

Cashmere's dark eyes lighted while he hastened to examine it.

"They all should be here," he cried, approvingly. "I see you've not broken the seal."

"I should say not!" exclaimed Miss Harper, shortly. "Didn't I promise not to open it? I'd not break a promise given you, Jack."

"Not in a deal of this kind, eh?" laughed Cashmere, now seating himself at the table to carefully open the package.

"Nor in any kind of a deal," the girl pointedly rejoined, taking an opposite chair. "Yet what queers me, Jack, is why you took this chance. I've always thought you had money to burn."

"Wall Street, wine suppers and the likes of you, Stella, make a man's money fly like dead leaves in a September gale," Cashmere rather bitterly answered. "I was down to case cards, Stella. That's why I ventured this job."

"Well, it has turned out all right."

"I think so."

"As for my part in it, Jack, it really was too soft," laughed the girl. "Not even a ripple of excitement. The old chap at the bank window—his name is

Randall, eh? Well, he dished out the package of gems without a sign of suspicion. I actually winked at him through my brown veil, he looked so easy. That veil, along with the hat and raincoat you provided, enabled me to easily turn the trick. Yet I'll not be seen in that rig again, you may gamble on that. I say, Jack, it's a bit tough on the other girl, isn't it?"

"The other girl may go to blazes."

"Certainly, for all I care. I shan't lie awake nights on her account. Once with the goods well tucked away, Jack, I bolted for home and remained there till dark, just as you directed. I'm to have the price agreed, mind you. Having nailed the sparklers for you—oh, oh, aren't they beauties?"

The sight of the open package had evoked from her a series of delirious little screams, as she bowed eagerly forward to view the jewels displayed.

On a square piece of velvet contained in the parcel, which Cashmere now had spread open on the table, lay half a hundred choice unset stones — diamonds, sapphires and rubies, radiant with myriads of scintillating beams, a dazzling display indeed in the rays of the hanging lamp above them.

"Beauties—I should say so!" exclaimed Cashmere, feasting his eyes upon them with grim exultation. "They are as fine a lot as we have imported for years. They'll keep me above water for a while longer, at all events, and when I have realized upon them and have the cash in my jeans—hark! By Heaven, there's the doorbell! Slip into the parlor—where it's dark—till I learn who rang! Not a move from you—not a sound—whatever happens!"

The clang of the bell on the front door had resounded through the house.

In compliance with the desultory phrases that had issued with affrighted vehemence from Cashmere's lips, suddenly grown gray as ashes, the girl darted beyond the drawn portière between the two rooms and concealed herself in the parlor.

Cashmere, meantime, quickly refolded the gems in the parcel and thrust it into his pocket. Then he caught up an evening newspaper, aiming to give color to his solitude, and strode through the front hall and opened the outer door.

Mr. Felix Boyd, with his hands thrust into his pockets, stood waiting in the vestibule.

"I say, Cashmere, why don't you have a telephone?" he cried, with a genial laugh. "It would have saved me a jaunt out here to-night. I tried in vain to reach both you and Bragg by wire, then needs must come out here."

Though ghastly pale for a moment, Cashmere had his nerves well steadied before Boyd ended his glib remarks, and his color began to return. He uttered an ejaculation of surprise, adding quickly:

"Is it indeed you, Mr. Boyd?"

"None other," laughed Boyd. "I hope you'll pardon my coming to your home on a business matter, but I could not well defer it until morning."

"Certainly—you've done just right," cried Cashmere, with a heartiness designed to cover the perturbation caused by his first secret misgivings, which Boyd's manner now had somewhat dispelled. "Come into the library. I'm alone here, and was half asleep over a daily newspaper. Not a word in it about the robbery, by the way, nor about that Hart girl. I wonder that the reporters did not get onto it in time—the dickens! You're not hurt, are you?"

"No, no, not in the least! I hope you'll excuse me. I didn't observe the ottoman on the floor. I haven't injured these blinds, have I? How infernally clumsy!"

With a move so cleverly executed as to entirely preclude suspicion, Boyd had stumbled over an ottoman lying near the library table, and had pitched headlong against the blinds of the French window. He scrambled up while hurriedly making his apologies, at the same time readjusting the disordered blinds, and his startled companion failed to detect the one rapid move for which the entire episode was designed.

With amazing dexterity, while replacing the blinds, Boyd quietly shot

back the bolt securing the French window.

In the silence of the adjoining veranda, scarce a foot away from the glass pane, stood the Central Office man, smiling grimly in the surrounding darkness.

"No, no, you have not damaged the blinds," laughed Cashmere, hastening to kick the ottoman into one corner. "I at first thought you had broken your head, however."

"I should have had my eyes open," said Boyd, taking the chair Stella Harper had vacated. "The fault was all my own."

"Well, well, there's no harm done, Mr. Boyd;" and Cashmere resumed his former seat at the table. "Upon what business have you called at this hour? Presumably about the robbery."

"Exactly."

"What about it? Has the Hart girl confessed?"

"No. She's as dumb as an oyster."

"Then you have not located the gems?"

"No, not yet. But I hope before long to do so."

A wicked gleam leaped up in Cashmere's eyes, but vanished almost instantly. Not for a moment had his gaze left Boyd's inscrutable countenance, yet now he drew his chair a little nearer the table between them and glanced furtively at one of the drawers within a few inches of his hand.

Boyd, smiling faintly, had lounged back in his chair and sat with his thumbs in the pockets of his vest, an air and attitude of unconcern that rather perplexed his observer.

"Yes, I hope soon to locate them, Mr. Cashmere," he repeated, when the latter vouchsafed no reply. "Not, however, through any confession by the Hart girl, for she persistently asserts her innocence."

"Absurd!" growled Cashmere. "The evidence is irrefutable."

"So I am inclined to think," nodded Boyd. "Incidentally, however, she has disclosed one fact about which I wish to consult you."

"What fact?"

"She states that her raincoat, also the hat and veil she wore to-day, were purchased at your store."

"Well, suppose they were? What of it?"

"Only this," replied Boyd. "I wish to know if you can suggest any way by which we might trace persons who have purchased similar garments? In that way, Cashmere, we might hit upon some clew——"

"Utterly impossible," Cashmere curtly interrupted. "We probably had in stock a hundred raincoats like that worn by the Hart girl. There is no way to learn who has bought them. Besides, of what use would it be? The crime must have been committed by some girl familiar with the firm's signature, or she could not have executed the forgery."

"That's true enough," Boyd again nodded. "Furthermore, now that you speak of it, I think you said you had entire charge of the order signed by Mr. Stanwood. In that case, it cannot have fallen into the hands of another, who might have used it for a guide in making the forgery. We already know that, Mr. Cashmere, upon your own positive assertions made this afternoon."

Cashmere's reply hung fire for the fraction of a second. Though he vaguely apprehended some evil from this abrupt digression by Boyd, he could not conjecture at what he was driving, yet he dared not venture denying his previous assertions.

"Why, yes, that is what I said," he presently rejoined, still vainly searching Boyd's face.

"And you are quite sure you had the genuine order, Mr. Cashmere, and not the forgery?"

"Sure—of course I am!" growled Cashmere, impatiently. "What an absurd notion! Stanwood himself gave me the order directly after signing it. I know absolutely nothing about the forgery."

"Presumably not," Boyd rejoined, with odd suavity. "Yet there is one curious fact about forgeries, Mr. Cashmere. Evidently you never have heard of it."

"What do you mean?"

"Only this," smiled Boyd. "Forgeries sometimes are executed by an overlaying and tracing process, by which an exact facsimile of a signature may be obtained. It is universally admitted, however, that no person can possibly write his signature twice exactly alike, and when two such signatures are found it is absolute evidence that one of them is a traced forgery."

Neither the voice nor the bearing of Mr. Felix Boyd had undergone the slightest change, yet by slow degrees Cashmere's face had become as white as the linen at his throat. With eyes darkly burning, with his every nerve strained to its utmost tension, he gradually moved his hand nearer the drawer at which he previously had glanced, until he could quietly draw it open.

"Well, what is that to me, Mr. Boyd?" he presently asked, a bit huskily.

Boyd appeared oblivious to the move his questioner was attempting to make undetected.

"Well, Cashmere, it affects you quite seriously," he replied. "You have positively asserted that you alone had the order bearing Stanwood's signature. While in his private office this afternoon I very easily discovered that the signature on the forged order is an absolute likeness of the genuine. In other words, Mr. Cashmere, it is a traced forgery. Of course, you see the point. Such evidence admits of but one conclusion."

"You intimate, Mr. Boyd, that you are about to charge me with having committed this crime," Cashmere hoarsely said, with ominous deliberation.

"Well, to be perfectly frank with you, sir," answered Boyd, without moving from his position; "I began to suspect as much when I noticed your anxiety to fix the crime upon another. Furthermore, when I observed on the window of your own private office obvious indications that the forgery had been traced by placing the two orders against the glass pane, I was convinced not only of your guilt——"

"Stop a moment!"

White as a corpse, with a murderous light in his frowning eyes, Cashmere had drawn forward till his breast touched the edge of the table.

"So that was what you were doing in the private office, is it?" he added, with venomous resentment. "You charge me with having traced that forgery, do you?"

Boyd stared across the table at him and nodded.

"Also with having used Miss Hart's typewriter to print the duplicate order, for which you remained in your private office after she departed yesterday afternoon," he coolly rejoined. "It was clever work in a way, Cashmere, your providing a confederate with outer garments to correspond with hers, and insuring that the trick should be turned when she went out alone this noon. Yes, clever work, in a way, Cashmere, but the tracery alone is sufficient to convict you. I'd have arrested you this afternoon had it not been necessary to locate your confederate, who then had the stolen goods."

Cashmere sat listening without a muscle moving.

"Are you now better prepared to do so?" he demanded, darkly. "You still have to locate both the girl and the gems."

"Both are here, Cashmere, or you'd not have concealed her before I entered, declaring yourself alone. I saw her arrive here——"

"Stop a moment! To whom have you disclosed these suspicions?"

Boyd saw what inspired the question, yet evasively rejoined:

"Well, not having been able to reach Mr. Bragg, with whom you possibly may adjust this matter, I have deferred mentioning my discoveries — hello! what are you going to do with that?"

"Insure that you shall never mention them! If you move hand or foot, Felix Boyd, I'll press the trigger and seal your lips upon this affair forever."

From the drawer beside him Cashmere had whipped out a revolver, instantly covering the breast of his hearer.

Boyd had expected nothing less; in

fact, had invited this very obvious self-betrayal, and he smiled indifferently.

"Better not resort to that, Cashmere," said he, without moving. "You'll find it more agreeable to pay the penalty for forgery than for murder."

"I shall do neither!" Cashmere fiercely rejoined. "You've not disclosed your suspicions—you were mad to admit it! I'll sooner take your life than suffer you to reveal——"

Boyd waited to hear no more. A faint rustle of skirts in the adjoining room warned him that the girl concealed there, till then too alarmed to venture moving, now was about attempting to escape. While Cashmere still was speaking, while still threatened by his leveled weapon, Boyd raised his knees with a lightning-like move and pitched the book-laden library table so violently against the former that he was hurled backward in his chair to the floor.

Mingled with the crash that followed, the voice of Boyd, as he sprang at the prostrate man, rang like a trumpet through the house.

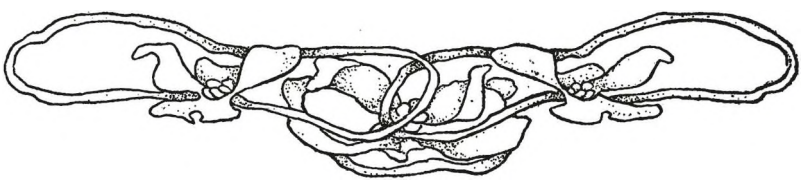
"Lively, Jimmie! Leave this fellow to me! Get the girl in the front room!"

Before the first word was fairly uttered, Coleman had dashed open both the window and blinds, and came bounding into the room. A glance at the couple on the floor told him that Boyd already had the situation well in hand, and he darted into the front room.

There in the semi-darkness Miss Harper was making a strenuous effort to clamber through one of the front windows. In much less time than is required to state it, the Central Office man had her in his arms.

When he returned with her to the library, he found Mr. Felix Boyd seated upon the floor, complacently examining the package of stolen gems, and with Cashmere frowning in irons beside him.

(*The next story in this series will be "The Case of the Expert Accountant."*)



MISUNDERSTOOD

THE daughter of the house was pounding away at the piano like a human pile driver, and the faces of the assembled guests bore traces of acute mental anguish. Suddenly the "music" ceased, and the company, in order to remove all possibility of its resumption, burst into a salvo of applause. The proud and happy mother of the performer approached the guest of the evening, old Herr Zwillbier, who was stamping his feet and clapping his hands like an unemployed cabman on a frosty morning.

"And what do you think of my daughter's execution, Herr Zwillbier?" she inquired, smiling sweetly upon the old gentleman.

"Your dorder's vot, matam?" he cried.

"Her execution," replied the somewhat astonished lady.

"'Er egsecution!" shouted the professor; "'er egsecution! Matam, I gongratulate you! Ven vos 'ee to be? Ven vos 'ee goming off? I to be presend will efery efford make!"

And in his excitement he shook his hostess violently by the hand and almost burst into tears.

The Two-Handed Claymore

By Charles Carey

Author of "The Van Suyden Sapphires," Etc.

CHAPTER XII—(*Continued*).

SO Roberta sat desolate and forlorn in her cell in the somber old jail, and watched the hours glide away. The long, yellow rays of the sunset — the last sunset but one, she gloomily reflected, that she would ever see— streamed through the narrow, barred window and lay in a golden glory on the stone flagging of the floor.

It were idle to deny that she was frightened. She was literally crushed with fear, overwhelmed with dumb, shuddering horror. She had been unable, at first, in any degree, to grasp the import of Valdes' merciless order, and even now she could only dimly realize that she, Roberta Bruce, of New York, was under sentence of death, condemned to be shot as a spy at sunrise Friday morning.

It must be a horrible nightmare, she assured herself over and over again. Presently she would awake to find the glad morning sun shining in at the windows of her little Harlem flat, and the dumb waiter's shrill whistle announcing the arrival of her rolls and coffee. She pinched herself vigorously in an effort to make the hope come true; but the granite walls about her lost none of their solidity, the iron bars cut her off as relentlessly as ever from the sky and the sunlight. The barefooted, yellow uniformed sentries pattering up and down the corridor bore every semblance of a sinister reality.

She raged up and down the narrow confines of her cell like some caged creature maddened by its desire for liberty; and then, exhausted and half swooning with the sickening sense of fear, sank down upon her miserable cot, wide-eyed, nerveless, starting with apprehension at the slightest sound.

In her calmer moments she reverted, at times, to those romantic dreams of her girlhood, when she had sentimentally dwelt upon the glory and the beauty of sacrificing one's life upon the altar of duty.

Ah, the reality of it was a very different thing! Here was she, caught like a rat in a trap, with no hope of escape, no prospect before her save— and she shuddered again as she recalled Monteith's lugubrious words— "that pleasing one of being stood up before a stone wall, with a bandage over one's eyes, and in front a squad of greasy Spanish monkeys to mangle you into kingdom come — shocking bad marksmen, those Spaniards, as a rule!"

Her vivid fancy created this final scene for her with a wealth of ghastly detail. All the grisly stories of military executions she had ever heard or read of rose to her mind: the slaughter of Maximilian and his generals by the Mexicans; the unspeakable atrocities of Weyler; the revolting butchery of the "Gadfly" in Mrs. Voynitch's somber romance of that title.

She strove to dispel these torturing suggestions from her brain, to regain a grip upon her faculties, to reason calmly, and try to formulate some method of deliverance. In vain. Her facul-

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This series began in the August issue. The back numbers can be obtained through any newsdealer. Price, ten cents each.

ties refused to co-ordinate, she was shaking from head to foot with nervous tremors. Crouched in a huddled heap, she gnawed at her finger nails, tore her hair. For the time, despair had driven her as wildly insane as any denizen of Bedlam.

The coarse food which had been brought her remained untasted; her face was grimed and streaked with tears, her attire awry. The seconds, as they passed, seemed to her each a century of agony; yet she strove to clutch on to them as a miser to shining pieces of gold slipping through his fingers.

The consul came to see her, and endeavored to condole with her, to bring about some resignation to her inevitable fate. He offered to forward any last messages she might desire to send. She refused to accept the possibility of the execution actually taking place, and insisted that he must find a way to save her.

Casting herself at his feet, she clutched his knees, and begged, prayed, implored him to do something.

"My poor child," he said, "I have tried my last resort. I have used every influence at my command. Valdes hates Americans, and is determined to offer you up a victim on the altar of that hatred."

"Oh, there must be some way!" she besought. "Cable to Senator Wallace. He will move heaven and earth before he will let me be sacrificed!"

The consul sadly shook his head. "The cable is cut," he said. "We have had no communication with the United States for the past ten days."

The severance of this last faint hope, the very desperation of her peril, brought a sudden inspiration to Roberta. The memory came to her of that night in August, when on the deck of James Douglas' yacht she had talked with a quiet, reserved Scotchman. At parting he had held her hand, and had said, with a world of meaning in his tones: "Miss Bruce, I weel ken it's no likely thing to happen; still, in this warld one can ne'er tell. And, gin ye should e'er be in ony trouble, I only ask ye to send me word. Should it be in man's power to aid ye, ye will no' find Andrew McNeilis lacking!"

Like a light in the darkness about her, the recollection flashed a new hope to her soul. Leaning excitedly over, she drew the consul's ear close to her lips. "How close are the insurgents to the town?" she asked.

"About two miles," he answered; "but"—whispering cautiously—"place no dependence on them. I have absolute assurances that McNeilis does not intend to attack before next week."

"Can you get a message through to him?"—breathlessly.

"Ye-es"—dubiously. "I suppose it could be done; but"—hastily—"I beg you will build no hopes on such a chance. McNeilis cannot do it. He is by no means ready. An attempt at this time would only result in failure."

His objections weighed not a whit with her. Her lips had set in a stubborn, obstinate line. "Listen," she said, imperiously. "You send word to McNeilis, and send it at once, that I, Roberta Bruce, am to be executed by Valdes' order at sunrise on Friday morning, and that the only way to save me is for him to take the town before that hour. Send him that," she added, "and I have no fear that it will not be done. And make no mistake; for remember it is the life of a countrywoman that is at stake!"

The little consul looked at her admiringly. Her very certainty had infused him with new energy and new hope. "Miss Bruce," he said, determinedly, "the message shall be delivered!"

"Then hurry, hurry," she urged. "Don't stand here talking, but send it. Every minute now is worth a century."

At daybreak the next morning a ragged little half-breed surrendered himself to one of the insurgents' outlying pickets, and demanded to be conducted to McNeilis' headquarters.

He found the ever-alert Scotchman consulting over some question of military discipline with a tall, flaxen-haired youth, who, with considerable ostenta-

tion, was discharging the duties of officer of the guard.

McNeilis read the note and, without comment, handed it over to Frederick. Only the gleam of a well-formed resolution in his eye, and the tense, tigerish expression which had come to his face, told the emotions which that message had aroused in his breast.

"Roberta Bruce!" exclaimed Frederick of Lucania, in agonized tones, as he let the slip fall from his nerveless fingers. "Good Heaven! What have I done? What have I done?"

Then in broken accents, and with bitter self-accusation, he told McNeilis the whole story.

"But what can we do?" he cried, despairingly. "We are not ready to attack."

McNeilis' anger broke, and the red scar across his brow stood out in a vivid scarlet line.

"Ready to attack, is it?" he roared, with an oath. "Ready or no ready, we'll save that lassie! Or if we don't," he muttered, as he turned away, "God help ye, Frederick o' Lucania; for I'll slay ye wi' my own hand!"

CHAPTER XIII.

There was so much to be done, and the time was so pitilessly short.

A scant twenty-four hours—one revolution of the earth upon its axis—yet in that brief span an army had to be conquered, a city taken, a nation's sovereignty transferred, and the life of a woman saved.

And, overmastering as were Andrew McNeilis' ambitions, intense as was his desire to regain the scepter of government he had lost, it is but justice to declare that the final accomplishment was the one which counted with him.

His manner was cold and self-contained as ever while he perfected the arrangements required by this sudden call to action; but underneath that calm exterior a very ferment of clashing emotions was seething in his soul. It was inexpressibly sweet to him that in her hour of need she should have looked to him for succor; it was torture to think of her as in peril; gall and wormwood to him to reflect that he might fail.

Oh, if he were only ready! If he had only hastened his preparations in the last fortnight. A thousand unavailing regrets sprang to his mind as he thought of things which might have been done, and which, if now encompassed, would immeasurably have increased his chances of success.

Yet to any other, depreciation of the progress he had made with the material at his hand must have seemed hypercritical indeed; and even now, as he moved about among his forces, laying his plans and overseeing every detail, the swift order which followed in his wake was little short of miraculous.

McNeilis was not one who would ever lose a kingdom for the want of a horseshoe nail. His rise in life had been due as much as anything else to a sort of canny foresight which enabled him to meet the requirements of every emergency as it appeared. Still, for all his careful supervision, and despite the willing temper of his troops, he knew that in the present contest the chances were woefully against him. If he was to win, it must be by good generalship alone.

He had but twenty-two hundred men under him as opposed to the six thousand defenders of the city; but even this disparity of numbers troubled him less than did his alarming shortage of ammunition.

"Let your men use their cutlasses," he warily cautioned his generals. "Save the powder; and at 'em wi' the cauld steel, whene'er the opportuneety offers."

The plan of his attack was strategic. The city of San Juan, it should be understood, stretches out in an irregular semicircle around the shores of its crescent-shaped harbor. Right in its center is the plaza, or public square; and from this extends back a wide avenue, the Prado, terminating at a considerable eminence, the hill of San Marco, which commands the entire city, and affords a wide view of the country for miles around.

On the top of this hill Valdes had erected a substantial blockhouse, and in addition had arranged succeeding lines of intrenchments with barbed-wire breastworks all the way down the slope which faced toward the enemy.

There were also lesser moles at each end of the city's crescent, and these, too, were strongly fortified; but the possession of San Marco was manifestly the key to the situation.

McNeilis' plan was to open with a feint upon this stronghold, and at the same time to attack in force the terminal moles, believing that the taking of the latter would not only dishearten his opponents, but serve to draw away a portion of its defenders from the main position, and thus render it easier of capture. If he were successful in storming San Marco, the town would have no other alternative than to capitulate.

It was half an hour before nine on Thursday night before he was ready to move. He himself took the center to direct the operations against San Marco, while the left wing was intrusted to Alvarez, and the right to Colonel Parades, a gallant though overreckless officer, who had served with him in former campaigns.

McNeilis advanced with about one-third of the troops in his division, driving in the pickets, and firing two volleys in the air to locate the enemy's position. The reply of the government forces showed that they were chiefly massed, as he had surmised, about San Marco hill.

Carrying out his prearranged tactics, he then kept sending squads forward to make feints, and deceive the enemy into the belief that an attack was contemplated in force.

Meanwhile he was getting his artillery into position, and at ten o'clock commenced a heavy fire, shelling the lower intrenchments of the hill.

This was the signal agreed upon for the advance of his two wings, and simultaneously they opened on the right and left.

Alvarez found the opposition to him weaker even than had been supposed, and with a spirited charge led his men up the hill and over the breastworks, taking the position within half an hour after the first shot was fired.

So far McNeilis' maneuvering seemed to be working out with the precision of clockwork. Swift word was carried to Valdes, who was superintending the defense of San Marco in person, that the left mole had fallen, and the right was seriously threatened, whereupon he immediately drew off with fully two-thirds of the combatants at that point, and dashed to the relief of the distressed garrisons.

The din now was something terrific. All around the town were two parallel lines of spitting flame, and with the roar of artillery and the crackle of musketry, it seemed as though the heavens would fairly split.

McNeilis saw that his instant had come. He called out a thousand men which he had held in reserve, and, ranging himself at their head, led the way direct to San Marco hill.

Over the level ground they swept, and, with a wild howl from their thousand throats, dashed forward up the first steep declivity.

Hurrah! The first trench is gained. A moment of battering encounter; sixty seconds of wild, swirling combat; then over it they go, kicking loose the entangling strands of wire about their feet, trampling upon dead and dying, the battle lust in their throats, the gleam of slaughter in their eyes, the fierce exaltation of war carrying them on.

Volley after volley is fired squarely into them; but there is no recoil, no wavering to their splendid surge. Up, up the hill they climb, surmounting trench after trench. There is no time to fire and load. Every wrist swings a keen machete, and in a constant hand-to-hand struggle, with long, slashing strokes of their dripping knives, they fairly hew their way through the compact mass of their opponents.

The dauntless Scotchman in their van seemed to bear a charmed life. Once, about halfway up the height, he had staggered in his charge; but it was

only for a second. None save himself knew that a glancing shot had hit him in the mouth, and had torn three of his upper teeth away.

The blockhouse, the point for which they strove, was equipped with rapid-fire, small caliber guns, and the energy with which the half-naked, sweating gunners operated them was a sight to make one's blood leap.

Had they been able to aim, nothing could have saved McNeilis' contingent from utter annihilation; but the greater part of this hail of bullets passed over the stormers' heads, leaving them unscathed.

At every point Valdes' men fought furiously; but flesh and blood is not made which could stand before such an impetuous onset, and with one final volley squarely into the gleaming faces of their foes, the defenders fled. The blockhouse and San Marco hill were taken.

Valdes came foaming back to find himself outgeneraled, his troops in flight, his main defense in the hands of the insurgents.

It had been won at fearful cost, however. Of the thousand men who had followed McNeilis to the hill, only five hundred had been able to reach the summit. Moreover, almost one-half of his ammunition had been used up; and to still further add to the difficulties of the situation, word was brought that Parades, at the southern mole, had been repulsed with heavy loss, and that Alvarez, although retaining the position he had won, was held in check, unable to advance to the aid of his commander.

Valdes, a veritable madman now, was raging in the midst of his retreating soldiery; and, indeed, desperation seemed to have bred a very genius of mastery in him, for presently he was actually able to stay the rout, and to re-form his fleeing forces in lines behind the barricades along the Prado.

McNeilis instantly scented the danger to himself in this new move; but he was unable to prevent it. His men were spent for the moment, and fume and chafe at the delay as he might, he could not drive them forward.

It was already after midnight, and before he could reach the plaza McNeilis knew that he would have to fight his way two miles down the Prado, where an enfilading fire could be rained upon him every step of the way from the windows along each side.

It would all be so fruitless, too, this forcing of his men into a slaughter pit like that, when, with San Marco hill in his hands, the ultimate fall of the city was a certainty. Ay, the ultimate fall! But, if Valdes chose to resist, it might be hours before that end was accomplished.

On the other hand, he had planned to repay with interest the wrong he had endured through this ancient adversary of his, to crush Valdes once and for all, and to put him where never again would he be a menace to the peace of Aureata. Yet, to do this, he must either sacrifice his devoted men or sacrifice Roberta Bruce.

It did not take McNeilis long to decide. With one sigh to record the extinction of his cherished revenge, he put the temptation from him, and accepted a distasteful alternative.

There had come a lull in the firing; both sides were resting after that bitter struggle about the blockhouse, taking stock of their losses. Now, in the quiet, McNeilis sent forward an orderly under a flag of truce, bearing to Valdes liberal terms of capitulation: a surrender with the honors of war; amnesty for his soldiers; safe conduct out of the country for himself and his generals. The sole proviso which he appended was that Roberta Bruce should be delivered to him at once, safe and unharmed.

Valdes—mordacious, viperish to the last—spying the joint in the other's harness, sent back the taunting answer: "Come and get her—if you can. But come before sunrise. I remember my son!"

Evil-hearted he might have been, that Spaniard; but he was brave. Rather than live, an exile shorn of his honors and dignities, he preferred to perish beneath the ruins of his falling kingdom.

McNeilis wasted no time in further parley; but, grim and silent, he read the message, twisted it into a wisp and ground it to earth beneath his heel. He gave a curt command to his orderly, and the remnant of his army arose from its recumbent rest upon the furrowed hilltop and formed into battalions.

"Forward!" rang out the bugles, and steadily they advanced, marching down the slope toward the Prado, bristling with death; their faces set toward the distant towers of the palace on the plaza.

One moment and, except for the muffled drum-beat of their marching feet, all was as quiet, as peaceful, as serene as a country village at midnight; the next, and the shuddering air was torn with the sharp, crackling detonation of musketry, the thunder of cannon, the cheers of the victors, the shrieks of the vanquished, the savage uproar of two snarling armies tearing at each other's throats.

The broad avenue had become a hell of flame and fire and sulphurous smoke; a whirling maelstrom of ruthless butchery, of clashing swords, clubbed muskets, merciless bayonet thrusts; an inferno of blood and passion.

Who can tell the story of that grappled fight along the wide, boulevarded street? Assuredly no one who was in it. Such a one might, perhaps, have vivid, disjointed recollections of incidents happening to himself; but the ebb and flow of the battle, the succession of advances and retreats, the swift action of the entire drama must indeed seem to him like the hazy figment of a dream. Give a comprehensive description of each separate attack or repulse? Impossible.

Every house along the road was filled with Valdes' marksmen, and from roofs, doors and windows they poured a torrent of destruction down upon the invading troops. How did any escape? That is one of the mysteries of war. Fate's protection to her favorites is a better shield than the stoutest Harveyized steel that was ever forged.

Inch by inch the ground was contested. The Scotchman knew that he was winning; but his progress was pitifully slow. His men were being decimated, his powder was almost gone, and the old world was spinning relentlessly around toward the gates of the morning.

He could give no orders in this crowded press, there was no opportunity for maneuvers. All he could do was to point the way, place himself at the head of his men, and fight as fearlessly, as recklessly, as they.

About two-thirds of the distance down the Prado had been made, perhaps, when one of those unaccountable crises which arise in a battle occurred. The street ahead of the insurgents was clear for fully two blocks; but at that point was a barricade. It was not more formidable than the others they had taken; yet for some reason the men balked at it and hung back. McNeilis on horseback was ahead, and, waving his sword, tried to induce his men to come on. At his side rode Frederick of Lucania.

Perhaps it was the overtaxing strain of this effort, for, strenuously as he had continued to fight, McNeilis had been wounded three times and was growing weak from loss of blood. But suddenly, while he still urged them on, he reeled in his seat, threw up both hands and toppled to the ground. The soldiers, seeing him fall and believing him slain, cast down their arms and started to run.

Dazed and prostrate though he was, the fallen leader realized that swift disaster was swooping down upon him. Unless the attention of the wavering line were instantly recalled, nothing could avert the imminent stampede. Overhead the sky was growing gray, and in the east was the first faint flush of dawn.

No, by Heaven! He must not fail! His indomitable spirit forced new energy upon his jaded frame. Springing to his feet, he vaulted into the saddle, and with a ringing yell of defiance dashed down the street alone. Up to the barricade itself he rode, and, scorning the storm of bullets which whistled

about his ears, discharged his carbine into the very faces of the foe. Nor did he deign to return until his horse was literally shot to pieces underneath him.*

Encouraged by the daring bravado of his example, his men once more swept forward to the attack, and the battle was on again in all its fury.

Frederick of Lucania, however, stricken by panic when he saw McNeilis fall, had fled, and now in a perfect frenzy of terror was lurking along unfrequented byways, stealing through dark thoroughfares, making his way toward the shore.

Arriving finally at the dock, he beheld a large vessel out in the harbor, just swinging to her anchorage. From her bow streamed forth the blinding radiance of a searchlight, its brilliant shaft moving hither and thither over the town, swiftly picking out the different scenes of the thrilling spectacle there being enacted.

Hastily Frederick wrenched loose a small boat from its moorings and rowed out toward this ark of refuge. As he drew nearer, he made out that she was a man-of-war. Then the haze lifted, and he read her name. She was the United States armored cruiser *Bridgeport*.

In response to a hail, he gave his name and errand, and was quickly taken aboard. Immediately that he was on the deck, he found himself surrounded by a group of officers solicitous for news.

"Oh, it is awful!" he gasped, hysterically, in reply to their questions. "McNeilis is killed; the insurgents have stampeded; everything is lost!"

A tall man, with hair prematurely gray and clad in civilian dress, coming on deck at this moment, pushed his way through the crowd.

"And Roberta Bruce?" he demanded, peremptorily.

"She is to be executed at sunrise," mumbled Prince Frederick, his shamed eyes sinking to his boots.

Lieutenant Clifford, U. S. N., was already assembling his marines on deck preparatory to disembarkation. The tall civilian stepped over to him.

"I am going with you, Clifford," he said, quietly.

"All right, senator," responded the officer, unconcernedly. His preparations for the coming "scrap" were engrossing all his attention. "The more the merrier, you know. Are you armed?"

Wallace produced his revolver; then his glance happened to fall on the antiquated sword which still dangled at the refugee insurgent's hip. He strode back to the prince.

"Give me that claymore," he curtly bade.

Frederick hesitated; but there was something in the other's compelling gaze which brooked no denial, and he sulkily unbuckled the weapon from his side and handed it over.

"I guess no one has a better right to wear it," commented Wallace, shortly. "And now," he whispered to himself, tensely, while a sob of anxiety rose in his throat—"now to set Scotland free!"

The morning came apace; and black, bitter despair settled in McNeilis' breast. Cloudless and unblemished, the day was rolling into view, the east already all aflush with brilliant rose and gold. It was minutes now till sunrise, and he was still a hundred and fifty yards from the jail.

Only a hundred and fifty yards! A man might easily have stepped the distance in thirty seconds. Yet here the way was blocked; for before the grim old edifice Valdes had drawn up his men to make their last, desperate stand.

Can you imagine two gladiators facing each other, both so maimed and bruised and battered that neither has strength enough to deliver the final blow which will bring with it the palm of victory?

So these two shattered cohorts stood and glared at each other in the cool sweetness of the morning—bloody, battle-stained scarecrows that they were;

* *This exploit was actually performed by General Parades during the Venezuelan revolution of 1899.

not a man on either side who did not bear some reminder of that long night's deadly tourney—and groaned because they were too spent to give their adversaries the *coup de grâce*.

McNeilis, tottering, stumbling in his stride, seeing strange visions all about him, hearing strange voices in his ears, while he wearily strove to hold his brain to the stubborn purpose he had maintained throughout the hours, drove forward again and again upon the barricade before the jail doors, In vain. He could not force it. Exert the last remnant of his failing strength, and he could not take it in time.

He shook his clinched fist at the brightening sky. He raved. He swore. He struck wildly at his own men. He would have charged the barricade alone had not preventing hands restrained his madness.

And then the miracle happened. Suddenly, out of the fog of acrid smoke which hung above the plaza, rose a ringing Yankee cheer, and down upon the flank of the jail's defenders bore a flying wedge of blue.

Caught between two fires, utterly disconcerted by the appearance of these unexpected allies, Valdes' men broke and fled in terror.

The way was clear at last; and McNeilis, leaping the piled-up barricade, sped forward up the steps of the prison. At the door, however, he met another hastening man—a civilian, who clutched in one hand a smoking revolver, and in the other a gigantic sword of antique pattern, dripping now, and red.

Together they raced through the entrance and along the corridors, brusquely demanding their way from frightened sentries in yellow uniforms, who would fain have fled before them.

At last, as they had been directed, they came to the door of cell No. 32.

Together they pushed it open, and together they entered. Thank God, she was still there! Kneeling beside her cot, as she had knelt throughout the livelong night, her lips were moving in prayer.

Wide-eyed, tremulous, she sprang to her feet at their intrusion, scanning their faces with a glance of questioning dread; then a glad cry of happy recognition welled up from her very heart.

The claymore fell clattering to the floor; and straight as a bird to its nest, Roberta Bruce went to the sheltering arms of Wallace, outstretched to receive her.

The Scotchman, weak from his wounds, worn by the fierce excitement of the conflict, raised his hand feebly to his heart, reeled, tottered and sank in a dead faint upon the pavement.

And the sun, rejoicing in purple and crimson, rose above the horizon, and poured a flood of golden glory through the bars of the window.

It was another day!

THE END.

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4477. "Call of the Wild March" . . . . . Losey

Life Guards Military Band

61152. "Departure of a Man of War" . . . . . Russell Hunting

Pryor's Orchestra

4476. "Song of the Gondolier" . . . . . Mazzacabo

Mandolin Solo by Valentine Abt (orch. acc.)

4495. "Angel's Serenade" . . . . . Braga

Tenor Solo by Harry Macdonough (orch. acc.)

4499. "Honeymoon Hall" . . . . . Bratton
4500. "In Dear Old Georgia" . . . . . Williams and Van Alstyne

Contralto Solo by Miss Corinne Morgan (orch. acc.)

4493. "Lullaby from Erminie" . . . . . Jacobowski

Tenor Solo by Byron G. Harlan (orch. acc.)

4494. "The Message of the Old Church Bell" . . . . . Leighton

Bass Solo by Frank C. Stanley (orch. acc.)

4487. "The Skippers of St. Ives" . . . . . Roeckel

Songs by Billy Murray (orch. acc.)

4483. "I've Sweethearts in Every Port" . . . . . Keith
4486. Parody on "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree"
4488. "The Whole Damm Family" . . . . . Von Tilzer

Coon Song by Rob Roberts (orch. acc.)

4492. "Dat Ain't Nothin' but Talk" . . . . . Smith

Favorite Hymn by Harry Macdonough (organ acc.)

4482. "The Lamb is the Light Thereof" . . . . . Stebbins

By Frank C. Stanley

4479. "Near the Cross" . . . . . Doane
4480. "He Leadeth Me" . . . . . Bradbury

By Macdonough and Stanley

4481. "Let the Lower Lights be Burning" . . . . . Bliss

Duets by Collins and Harlan (orch. acc.)

4484. "Central, Give Me Back My Dime" . . . . . Howard
4485. "Hey, Mr. Joshua!" . . . . . Kemble

Vaudeville Specialty by Spencer and Jones (orch. acc.)

4491. "Every Little Bit Helps"

Baritone Solos in Spanish by Emilio de Gogorza orch. acc.)

4496. "Jose Maria" . . . . . Hernandez
4497. "Los dos Princesas" (Son los bailes de Mascara) . . . Caballero
4498. "El Capitan de Lanceros" (Sevillana) . . . . . Hernandez

Soprano Solos by Mme. A. Michailowa

61139. "Lullaby—Jocelyn" (violin obligato) . . . . . Godard
61140. "Oh, Sing to Me" . . . . . Dluski
61141. "Dearest Name" (Caro Nome), Rigoletto . . . . . Verdi
61144. "Serenade" (flute obligato) . . . . . Gounod

Duets by Mmes. Michailowa and Tugarinoff

61142. "Russian Folk Song" . . . . . Dorrgomyschki
61143. "The Sea Gull's Cry" . . . . . Grodski

Tenor Solo in Italian by Aristide Rota (chorus and mandolin orch.)

61149. "Funicoli Funicola" (Canzone Napoletana) . . . . . Denza

Tenor Solo in German by Erik Schmedes

(k. k. Kammersanger with chorus)

61150. "Arie des Dalibor aus 'Dalibor'"

Baritone Solo in German by Robert Leonhardt (orch. acc.)

61151. "Die Musik kommt" (The Music Comes)

Soprano Solo in German by Gertrude Runge (orch. acc.)

71027. "Arie der Titania aus Mignon" (Titania's Song from Mignon) Thomas

Sea Chanties sung by the Minster Singers

61145. Sea Chanties No. 1
(1) "The Capstan Bar"
61146. Sea Chanties Nos. 2 and 3
(2) "Blow My Bully Boys"
(3) "Sally Brown"
61147. Sea Chanties Nos. 4 and 5
(4) "Whiskey Johnny"
(5) "Shenandoah"
61148. Sea Chanties Nos. 6 and 7
(6) "Rio Grande"
(7) "Blow the Man Down"

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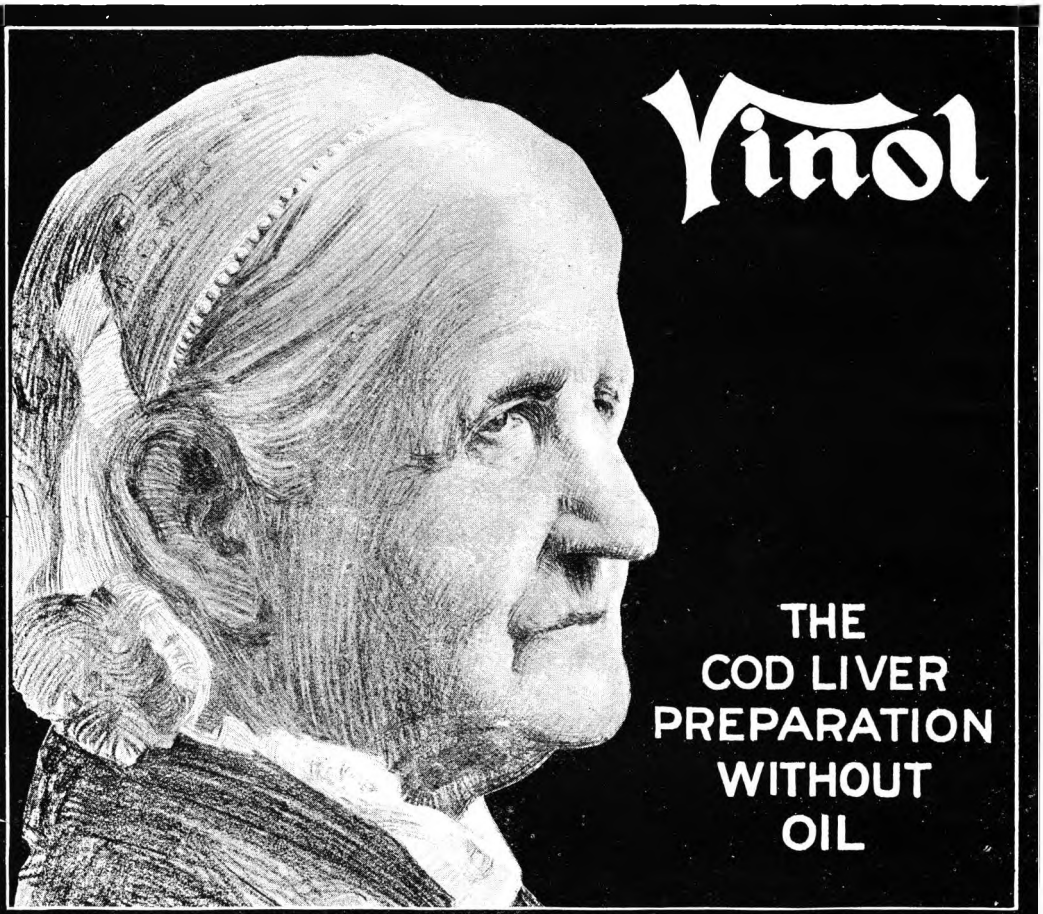

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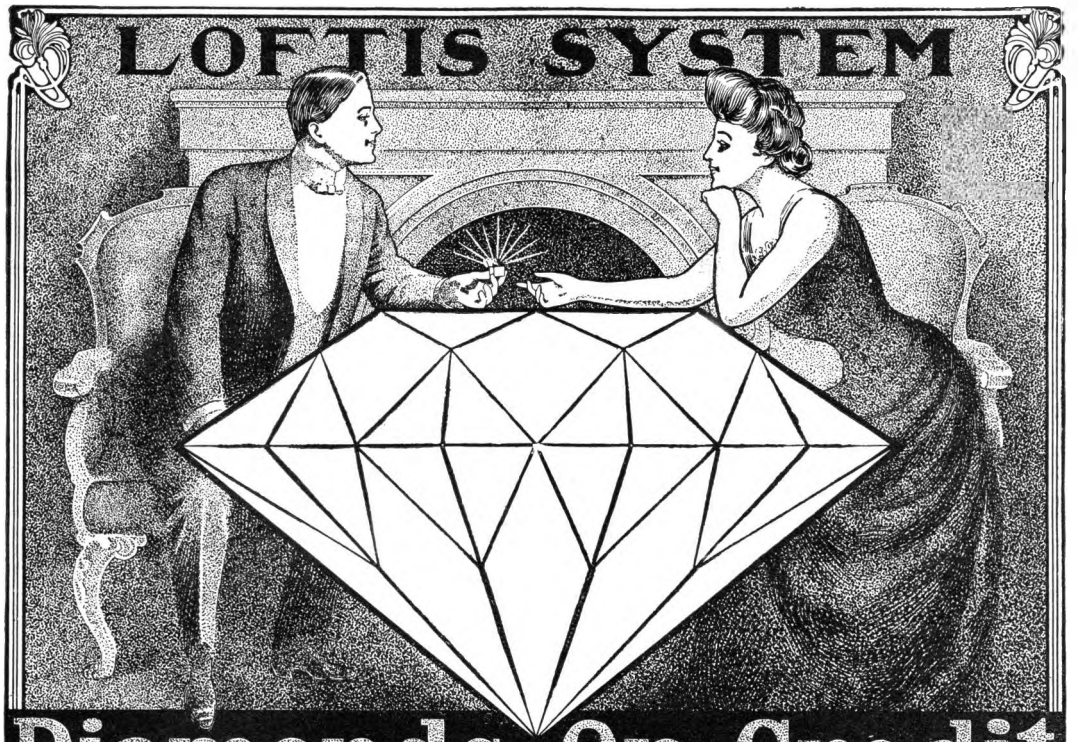

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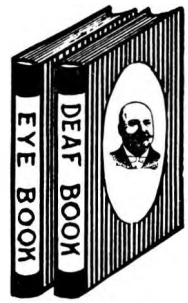

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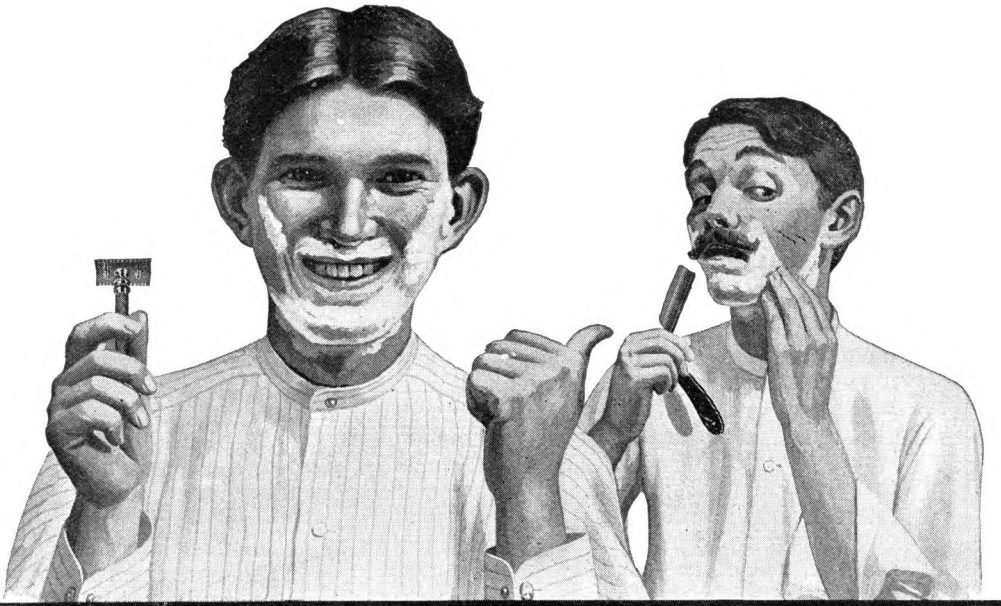

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The November number of AINSLEE'S will be the best that we have published this year. It has been made up chiefly with the idea of furnishing our readers a wide variety of short stories of the kind in which a strong, vital, full-blooded interest predominates. Our aim every month is to present a list of fiction in which there is not a single dull page. Of the November number we are sure that it will be said that every page is brimming over with interest.

We wish to add here that we are almost ready to make announcement of some matters that will be of the highest importance to magazine readers. These announcements will probably come in the December number.

In the November number *Miss Marie Van Vorst's* new serial, **"The Warreners,"** will be continued. The second installment fully sustains the extraordinary interest in this remarkable study which the opening chapters aroused.

The author of the novelette is *Miss Geraldine Bonner,* who has the distinction of having written "The Pioneer," one of the best selling books of the year. The new story, **"The Castlecourt Diamond Case,"** is a mystery tale, with a striking plot, well developed and most interesting.

The number will also contain another of *Joseph C. Lincoln's* characteristic stories, **"His Native Heath"**; an absorbing automobile story by *Robert E. MacAlarney,* entitled **"In the Garage"**; a remarkably strong and original story by *Eleanor A. Hallowell,* **"The Second Best"**; a fine story of the West by *Joseph Blethen,* **"The Journalists"**; one of Alaska called **"The Test of the Wilderness,"** by *Ada W. Anderson. Mrs. Wilson Woodrow* will continue her brilliant **"Conversations with Egeria."**

One of the special features will be a delightful Thanksgiving tale entitled **"Not According to Schedule,"** by *Mary Stewart Cutting.*

Julien Gordon (Mrs. Van Rensselaer Cruger) will have a timely and striking essay on **"The Social Power of Ambassadors,"** and *Lady Broome* will discuss some new phases of American and English society.

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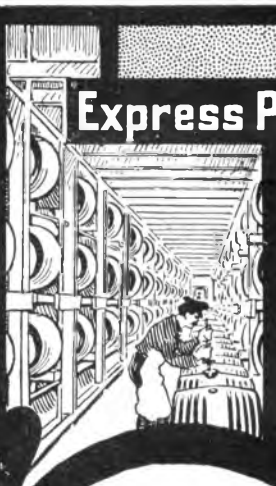

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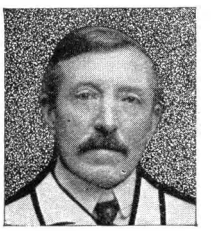

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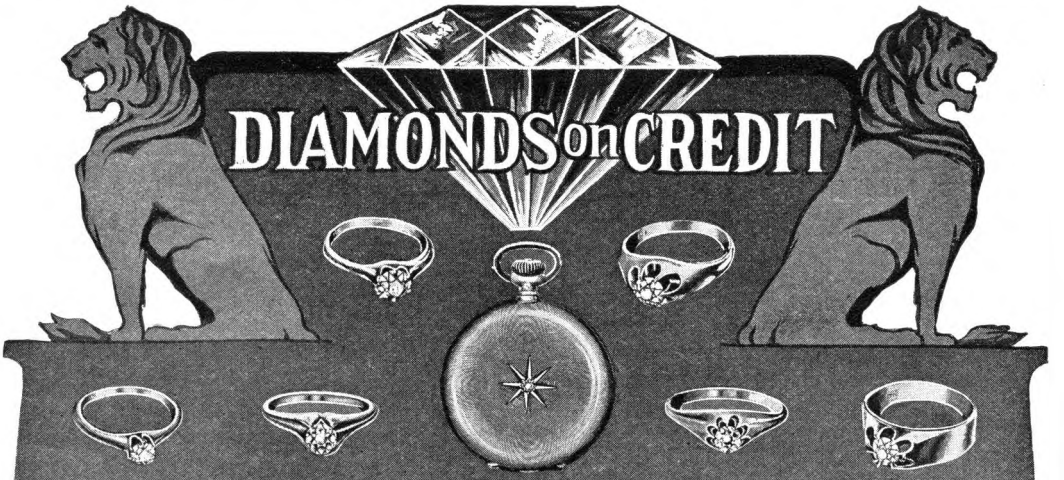

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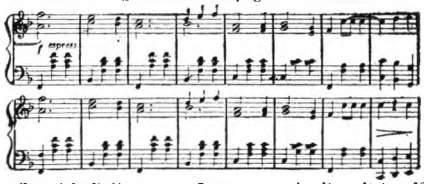

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Other remarkable features, taken haphazard from a very lengthy table of contents, are as follows:

"The Balance of Power" BY CUTCLIFFE HYNE
A McTurk story—the best yet.

"A Plunge Into the Unknown" BY RICHARD MARSH
A new serial of surpassing interest.

"In Chinatown" BY CHARLES K. MOSER
A weird sketch of low life.

"The Mamori of Shinzaburo" BY CLINTON DANGERFIELD
Dealing with a Japanese soldier's sacrifice.

"The Coming of Angel" BY B. M. BOWER
One of this author's inimitable cowboy stories.

"Winslow, Navy Half-Back" BY PHILIP C. STANTON
A strikingly original football story.

"The Mysterious Heathwole" BY HOWARD FITZALAN
A serial which is exciting comment.

The above, of course, represent but a small portion of the contents of this admirable number. It has been the aim of the publishers to issue a magazine without a dull page in it. When you have read the December POPULAR, we feel sure that you will be glad to testify to their success. It will be for sale on all news-stands on the 10th day of November.

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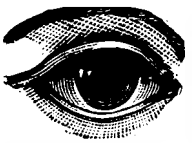

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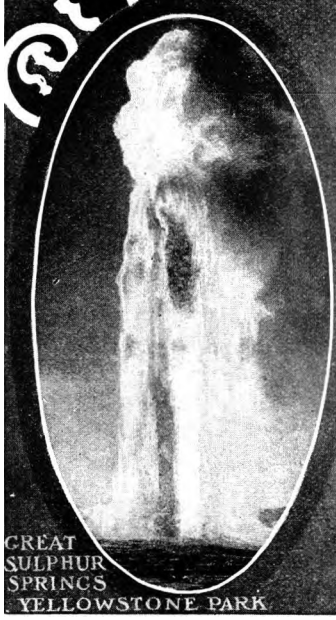

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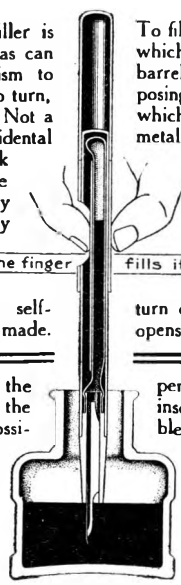

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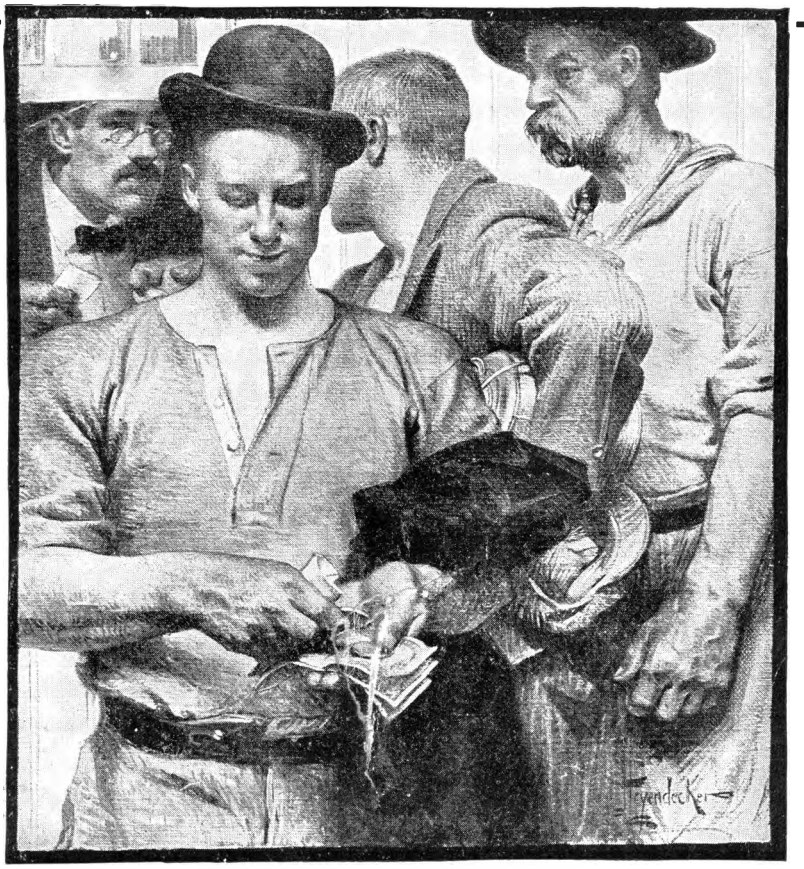

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